

Taita Hills Teacher - a Year in East Africa

Mbale-Dabida, Taita Hills, Kenya:
Part 1: September 1973 to December 1973



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CHAPTER 1: WELCOME TO THE TAITA HILLS

September 1973

Journey to Kenya

The journey to Kenya – Nairobi and the Taita Hills – is described in excerpts from my first letters home, and notes based on my diary entries...

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale [pronounced 'Em-Ba-leh'] on 12 September 1973:

Well! So much to relate and less than a week gone! I am writing this now on 12th (Wednesday) aiming to post it at Mombasa on Friday...

We took off 75 minutes late. We circled over Windsor, and hit the coast at Brighton – my last view of Britain. A few minutes of blackness gave way to the lights of the Channel Islands and the French coast... Over France, then we crossed the French Riviera and followed the coastline of Italy through to Sicily – the moon clearly reflected in the Mediterranean waters. We ran into gathering cloud before reaching the North African coast. I had a sleepless night in various uncomfortable positions. Dawn broke suddenly, the darkness on my right rapidly replaced by views of arid plains punctuated by dry river courses. Spectacular pink mountains and possible glimpses of Lake Rudolph [Turkana]. Breakfast saw us crossing more and more fertile country until we reached Lake Naivasha, where we began our descent to Nairobi. We circled to the south of the city, crossed the twin rail tracks of the Nairobi to Mombasa railway line, before landing at Embakasi Airport, to the east. Fantastic views of parched semi-desert stretching away to hills in the east...

Moment of truth – the wheels touched the tarmac and we entered Africa. I stepped outside. The temperature? 57 degrees [Fahrenheit]! A come down from temperatures in the 80s in London before we left – I really will have to get used to this *cold* weather! Nairobi airport was extremely efficient with health check, passport check, immigration, luggage collection and customs – all over within half an hour of landing (08:30 Kenyan time). We were met by Reverend John R, who drove us through Nairobi, with its landscaped roundabouts, Jacaranda trees, white buildings and red earthworks – these were my first impressions – to St Julian's, a guest house near Limuru, 20 miles west of Nairobi...

Limuru and Nairobi

It was Saturday 8 September 1973, the morning we arrived in Nairobi. We were a group of eighteen young men and women, volunteers with the CMS 'Youth Service Abroad' (YSA) Scheme, travelling to Kenya for postings (mostly in pairs) as teachers at Anglican Church sponsored 'Harambee' (non-Government, self-funded) secondary schools. We were a diverse group, from different parts of the United Kingdom, and from a variety of church backgrounds. Most of us were school leavers, and I had just celebrated my 18th birthday. The CMS representative, the Reverend John R, met us off the plane, and we all piled into a minibus, and were driven through Nairobi to St Julian's, near Limuru, 20 miles to the west and at an altitude of nearly 7,000 feet. This was a beautiful CMS guest house, a 'colonial' mansion, reminiscent of 'British East Africa' in the early part of the twentieth century. As I wrote in the letter, "It was almost as if we were back in England – with silver tea pots, coolness, green grass and 'civilisation'". The idea was that we could recover from the long overnight flight in comparative comfort.

The letter continued, "Soon, however, I was to discover the idiosyncratic phenomena of Africa – the sun goes straight up – and then straight down – no messing about. By 10 o'clock it seemed as if the sun was almost vertically overhead. It was mostly cloudy that first day, but when the sun eventually appeared it bathed us in a gloriously dry heat – much more comfortable than the harvesting sun in Lincolnshire." During the afternoon

our CMS hosts gave us a rather sobering lecture on health and hygiene, emphasising some basic practices such as boiling all water and milk before consumption, and prompt application of antiseptics and dressings for cuts, scratches and insect bites. Outside, a group photograph of us was taken; I was at the back, at the base of the rainwater tank.

My letter continued, "After dark the characteristic, nostalgic noise of crickets and cicadas filled the air, and there was the magical, hauntingly beautiful sound of African singing in the distance. The sky, having cleared, revealed a completely different pattern of stars, and the moon with its face curiously turned (so to speak, on its side). I was accommodated in a wooden annexe with fellow YSAs Mike, Peter and Stephen. The first night in a dark continent..."

The next day (Sunday), I awoke refreshed after a good night, emerging from the depths of sleep: Must-get-out-of-bed, go-downstairs, put-the-coffee-pot-on, draw-the-curtains, listen-to-the-8-o'clock-news... No, no... hang on, wait a minute, where am I? This is... AFRICA!

We were driven to Limuru Bible College, three miles away, arriving just in time for a children's service conducted in Swahili. "*Baba yetu...*" [Our Father] and "*Yesu anipenda*" [Yes, Jesus loves me – sung unaccompanied, except for a solitary drum]. After the service we were taken round the college by students, and I had my first experiences of *chai*, Kikuyu, and chameleons. In the afternoon we played 'vicarage-standard tennis' on a hard and red-dusty court. John and Shirley R came and gave us a final practical briefing, with some more sobering stories of previous YSA mis-haps, including one about a YSA volunteer who was seriously gored by an elephant. The day concluded with an evening service in the St Julian's chapel. John R gave us a very relevant talk on 'service' – being served by Christ, and then going on to serve others.

On Monday morning we left St Julian's, and were driven to the CMS Office and guest houses on the hill outside the City of Nairobi, just above the Anglican Cathedral. Leaving our baggage there, we were taken to the Hilton Hotel as a focal point, and then had time for some shopping – Kenyatta Avenue, Jacaranda Chemist, Woolworths, Kolpro's (for clothing), and a bookshop – and I was done! After lunch at the Hotel Ambassadeur, I saw some of the other YSAs off to Kisumu and Murang'a in *matatus* [taxis]. It was a great spectacle: "You tek my taxi!" "No, you tek mine! He only going as far as Thika!" "He taxi no good!" I then wandered around Nairobi taking some photographs, and feeling a bit low with a slight sore throat. Nairobi struck me as a bright, friendly, modern, fast-moving city. I had some tea (to ease my throat) at a café called The Honey-pot, and had no qualms about chatting with the person next to me – we had an animated conversation, ending in his giving me his card – he was the Kenyan representative for an American Insurance Company! I then visited the modern Roman Catholic Cathedral, with its quiet spaciousness and beautiful stained glass: the late afternoon sun bathed the Nairobi skyline in a gentle light.

But Nairobi showed its darker side too: the unemployed queuing at the Ministry of Works; shoe cleaners on the streets, beggars, cripples – and, on entering Uhuru Park later that afternoon, a classic 'hard-luck' story. In some ways it was quite amusing, as it was identical to the story John R had quoted in the YSA briefing the day before – maybe it was the same person. He explained that he was studying for Year 12 examinations, he had good academic prospects but not enough money to go to school, but he could be earning 500/- a day if only he could procure "this two-wheeled cart" from a Kenyan Asian. He wanted £5 for it. "I couldn't possibly give that much!" Ah, but he'd let me have it for £2 if I paid the rest later. His father was killed during the Mau Mau rising a few years before. No, he had no possessions to pawn. I listened carefully to his story, and eventually gave him 2/-, which I felt was an appropriate amount. But before parting with the money I took the opportunity to witness to this man in Uhuru Park, and tried to share with him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As I recall, he seemed to listen, and went so far as

to come with me to the Roman Catholic Cathedral I had just visited, and I prayed for him there, and he thanked me. Whether this was just a manipulation on his part in an effort to extract some money from me, or whether his interest in spiritual things was genuine, I shall never know. But who knows? Perhaps on that day the seeds of eternal life were sown in that person's heart. I pray that it was so.

I walked back to the R's house (next door to the CMS office), where I stayed the night with John and Shirley and their family. Bath, dinner and relaxed conversation – which included admiring their nine-year-old son Malcolm's pet snake!

By bus to Wundanyi

The next day (Tuesday) I was up at 6 am to catch the 07:00 Wundanyi OTC [Overland Transport Corporation] bus, which left Nairobi Bus Station about half an hour late. Taking the main road to Mombasa, going south-east, the city streets and boulevards gave way to dry scrubland just past Nairobi Airport. We travelled through the Township of Athi River, and then diverted left off the main road to the Town of Machakos, where a friendly civil administrator offered me *chai* (hot, sweet, thick, milky tea). Then, on through desolate, mountainous country to Sultan Hamud. We stopped to pick up some Maasai warriors, one of whom sat in the front seat next to me, complete with spear in hand! We had lunch at Kibwezi, feeling hot and tired; and then we entered the Tsavo National Park, where we saw elephants and baboons, very close to the road because of the current drought. Presently the Taita Hills appeared on our right in the distance, and we reached Voi about 3 pm – a colourful, arid market town.

The bus, which had been almost empty when we came into Voi, suddenly filled with market shoppers returning to the towns of Mwatate and Wundanyi in the Taita Hills – sacks of coal, bananas, and other bundles were loaded on to the roof rack. The road to Mwatate was level and straight, and we travelled quickly past sisal estates, but the ascent into the Taita Hills brought a dramatic change. A slow climb of steep hairpin bends gave us superb views over the coastal plains – and ahead of us were precipitous peaks, rocky cliff faces and outcrops, waterfalls, residual forests, and primitive homesteads clinging to the slopes – almost a strangely oriental scene, like Malaya or rural Japan, but without stepped terrace farms and rice paddy fields. Miss Flora, a young Taita lady, sat next to me, and taught me some of the basic ki-Dabida greetings: “*Kwa sinda mana?*” “*Da sinda to...*” [hard to translate, but literally ‘abide safely’, equivalent to ‘How was your day?’ ‘I’m good, how are you?’ etc.] – until we reached our destination, the Government Town of Wundanyi, where I was met by Don and Lyn S, and their young children, Anne and Iain, at around 4.30 pm. I took a photograph of the OTC bus, just after it had arrived in Wundanyi, with a few local children gathered round it.

Later that evening, Don took me for a walk down the steep hillside and briefly showed me round the house where I would be living, at the foot of the Mgalu valley; but for the first few nights I stayed with Don and Lyn, in their bungalow-style house on a hillside overlooking the valley. Peter M, a Christian teacher at Mgalu High School, from the Kamba tribe around the Machakos area, had dinner with us and read bedtime stories to the children.

First days at Mbale

I awoke early the next morning, my first day in the Taita Hills – it was a fabulous, bright morning, and I watched the rising sun against the blue of the hills across the valley. Don took me down to Mgalu High School, where I was introduced, and met members of staff and students. My first experience of morning Assembly, in the white-washed Form III classroom, was the singing of the well-known hymn, in a sort of breathless, disjointed, rhythmic way: “Just as I am, without one plea... O Lamb of God, I come... I come!” After Assembly I attended my first lesson (in Form I) with Don, which was English. Don invited me to tell the students about myself, so I spoke very authoritatively (in a commanding

voice in order to establish easy control) about farming in Lincolnshire, and about Engineering. After the lesson I met the other members of staff – Peter M, who had joined us for dinner last night, Aggrey O, from the Luo tribe in Western Kenya and a graduate from Nairobi University, who is to share the house with me, Crispin M, George T and Flora M, all from the local Taita tribe. At the end of afternoon lessons I played soccer, managing to bruise my foot badly and get very breathless because of the high altitude (about 4,000 feet). In the early evening, shortly after dark, I walked down the hill to my house, taking a few books with me. Aggrey was not there, so I returned and had dinner with the S family, where I was staying – we listened to some of the Jesus Christ Superstar musical on tape, and the radio news on BBC Worldwide (more IRA bombs in London).

The next day, Thursday, I 'sat in' on various lessons, as a 'guest teacher' – this was part of my orientation. The first three lessons were with Form III, English with Peter M. Again I was bombarded with questions about England – this time at a more advanced level: demonstrations, strikes, Northern Ireland, the church in England, agricultural methods and industries. Lessons 4 and 5, also with Form III, comprised Religious Education (RE), taken by Flora, focusing on the early part of the Synoptic Gospels. Lesson 6 took the form of an English language crossword with Form I. After six lessons on the trot I was whacked! I spent the afternoon marking Form I English (53 books in all) – crosswords and grammatical exercises. Later that afternoon I walked up the hill to Maynard's Primary School (which has a main Hall) to see the Drama Group in action. I thought it was an excellent presentation, very well dramatized. It was in Swahili, and way beyond my ability in that language, but the girl sitting next to me kindly translated for me as we went along.

At 6 pm, just after dark, I went to see Aggrey at the house. George and Crispin were also there. After some discussion we went, supposedly, for an 'evening walk'. In fact, as I soon discovered, they took me to the nearest local beer house, which turned out to be an interesting experience, to say the least. Not being a drinker by nature, I found the local African 'maize beer' rather repulsive – it tasted a bit like salty water, or aspirin dissolved in water. Unable to find my way back in the dark, I was detained, I thought rather aggressively, by Aggrey. At length, after much argument, and having mastered only a few 'mils' of the beer, Crispin and George managed to persuade Aggrey to let me go, and brought me back to the road that led to Don and Lyn's house, explaining that Aggrey could be a very stubborn person. I had certainly seen his less attractive side. That evening I felt diffident about living in the same house as Aggrey; however, he said he may well leave at the end of the year, so I reckoned it might be a case of just sticking it out.

Mombasa and Shimo-la-Tewa

The next day, Friday 14 September 1973, I was summoned out of the first lesson to explain to Harrison M, the Headmaster, who I was and where I'd come from. Clearly there had been a breakdown in communication – Harrison, Aggrey and the other staff members had not been informed of my arrival: hence the hesitant welcome I had received!

After attending a Maths lesson with Aggrey, who appeared to be in good control of the class, the S family and I set off for Mombasa. Our first stop was the colourful African market at Wundanyi, where we picked up some fresh fruit and vegetables to take to missionary friends in Mombasa. Don and Lyn had also arranged to pick up Cephas, the Headmaster of a nearby High School. We had lunch at a service station on the outskirts of Voi, and spent a brief time watching puffer trains, much to the delight of Anne and Iain. The weather felt soporific as we left the highlands of Taita, and we began to feel the effects of the fierce tropical sun. After crossing the causeway into the Town of Mombasa, we made our way directly to the Cathedral office and saw Richard (the

Bishop's right hand man, standing in for the Bishop as he was away in Nairobi), in order to clarify my position and role as a teacher at Mgalu High School, since that school was an Anglican one in the Diocese of Mombasa, and therefore ultimately under the control of the Bishop.

My first impressions of Mombasa were recorded in a letter to my parents, written from Mbale on 19 September 1973:

Saturday was spent buying a Chinese pressure lamp and cooking things, in the very oppressive, heavy heat, as it was a cloudy day. We drove round Mombasa Island, through the famous elephant tusks archway on Kilindini Street, past the docks and on to the sea front at dusk. We watched the gentle waves breaking on the coral reef, with palm trees sweeping the twilight beaches – my first sight of the great Indian Ocean! As we were watching your films of Lamu and Mombasa at Legbourne, Dad – then such faraway, unreal places – little did I realize that in two short weeks I would be there! [Here I was referring to the ciné films my father used to take on board his survey ships, to send home to my mother, who could watch them on the projector at home. HMS Owen was surveying in the Indian Ocean in 1961-2, and these films were taken during that time.]

Mombasa in fact is a terrific place! A mixture of European, Indian and Arab cultures – no high-rise flats or Hilton hotels as in Nairobi. There's a wonderful narrow street called 'Bia-Shara' running the entire width of the island, from north to south, very narrow and lined each side with Arab or Indian *dukas* (small shops) selling antiques, coloured shirts, carvings, and other miscellanea. You fly back through the centuries, until you turn round to find you're looking at a Lyons ice cream van! We stayed at the guest house of CITC (Christian Industrial Training Centre), which overlooks the North Creek – which is spanned by the famous Nyali Pontoon Bridge...

In the late evening we all had a swim at the Missions-to-Seamen pool – which was very refreshing after a hot day. I was then taken by Ken F, the CMS missionary in charge of CITC, to a Charismatic Christian Fellowship Meeting at the J's family (also CMS missionaries) at Shimo-la-Tewa, a small town about 20 miles north of Mombasa along the coast. This meant we had to cross the Nyali Pontoon Bridge, which, as the above letter described, "looked very romantic by moonlight."

I recall that the meeting, which was attended mainly by English and American missionaries, with some Kenyans, was very inspiring, and I found it exciting to discover that Christians are the same anywhere. At one point during the course of the meeting a prophecy was given – it spoke about trials and suffering – and I did not pay any particular attention to it at the time. But at the end of the meeting the person who had spoken the prophecy came up to me and said he thought that the prophecy applied *particularly* to me! This took me by surprise, and I found it somewhat disconcerting, but it set me thinking. It certainly proved to be true during the difficult series of events that unfolded over the coming months... We returned to Mombasa somewhere around midnight.

On Sunday morning we arrived at the Cathedral just as the Swahili service was breaking up. There I met my employer, the Bishop of Mombasa, The Right Reverend Peter M, and also shook hands with the Archbishop of Kenya, the Right Reverend Festus Olang – the Cathedral had been packed because of his presence there. We attended the English service taken by the Reverend Canon Desmond G, the Provost of Mombasa Cathedral. I noticed that the weather had much improved owing to some rain the previous night; there was a fair wind and a few heavy clouds.

We left the CITC guest house mid-afternoon, and the road seemed to climb quickly, once we were clear of Mombasa. The scrub-land appeared dark against the sun's slanting rays. Endless stretches of road opened before us, and the blue line of the Taita Hills loomed ever nearer, until we reached them at dusk. We stopped off at Wusi, just off the road between Mwatate and Wundanyi, and called in on Miss Kate C, the CMS missionary who had founded Mgalu High School some three years previously, and who

was now Headmistress of Murray High School, a prestigious Government girls' secondary school. Dynamic and vivacious, she struck me as altogether a remarkable lady – she gave us words of wisdom to encourage us amidst the present frustrations of the Mgalu school situation.

Early experiences at Mbale

I spent Monday afternoon moving into our house and unpacking. In my diary I wrote:

It is indeed a wonderful house with spacious rooms, a good kitchen with a gas stove (to which we applied a new LPG cylinder), and kerosene fridge on the way. My bedroom is especially well furnished.

A steep red-earth driveway led down from the main (but unsealed) Mbale-Iriwa road to a covered porch at the back of the house. The back door opened on to a central corridor, with doors on the right leading to my bedroom first, then Aggrey's bedroom further along. The bathroom and kitchen were off to the left, and there was a side door from the kitchen to an open area containing the main circular rainwater tank and other smaller rectangular tanks for river water. A short walk from the kitchen door past some banana trees led to a small out-house, the *choo*, ['long-drop' toilet]. There was, of course, no electricity, and no running water or sewerage.

The living room and dining room were at the far end of the corridor, and there was a 'front door' which we kept permanently locked. If you went out of the kitchen door and turned sharp right, and followed a cement path running along the side of the house, then turned sharp right again, you reached the verandah that spanned the full width of the front of the house, where there was a small wooden table and two or three wooden chairs. The most stunning feature of the house was the view from the verandah, which was superb. The narrow 'garden' of grass and flowering bushes fell precipitously away to a series of steep hills, and down to a valley bearing right, then curving left, until it fell away into the desert plains of Tsavo, and distant hills so clear you could almost reach out and touch them. In the far distance you could see the flat-topped mountain peak of Kasigau, some 40 miles away towards the coast!

When I first moved into the house in mid-September, there had been no rain for several months, and the countryside was in a state of drought – parched, brown hills and clear blue skies. When I first checked the main rainwater tank, it seemed to be almost empty, with the water level at about 7 or 8 'rings' out of 24. When you turned on the tap only a dribble of water came out, and it took ages to fill a *sufira* (handle-less saucepan) with water that I could boil to make tea. These were the climatic conditions I experienced when I moved in, and so the view from the verandah was ever clear and spectacular. But then in November the rains began, and the hills – almost overnight – turned green. When the rains came, the clouds rose up from the valleys below and mists closed in and swirled about the house. Then it was like a ship at sea, fogbound or storm-driven, shut off from the outside world and all its troubles – a place of perfect privacy, perfect freedom. I learned later that this house, called the 'Diocesan House', had been Miss Kate C's home when she founded Mgalu and became its first Headmistress, and she used to park her Land Rover in the porch at the back of the house, but I was unaware of this 'history' at the time.

After unpacking, I climbed back up the hill to Don and Lyn's house. Don showed me how to work the pressure lamp. I put the glass casing on one side, and on returning from the kitchen accidentally kicked and broke it! The casing is only replaceable in Mombasa, but Don and Lyn were going there at the weekend – so, one Chinese pressure lamp out of action for a week! Later in the afternoon I walked down the main road to the village of Iriwa, where I bought some tinned fish and other basic groceries. The shopkeepers there were very appreciative of my laconic ki-Dabida (about seven words)! I spent the evening marking Maths books and preparing the first meal in the new house, with Aggrey.

On Tuesday morning I met Catharine W for the first time – the Reverend Andrew and Catharine W and family were CMS missionaries living ‘next door’, so to speak, up the hill between our house and Maynard Primary School. She had written a long, interesting ‘welcome’ letter about Mbale-Dabida, and life in the Taita Hills, which arrived at my home in Lincolnshire exactly on 7 August 1973 – my eighteenth birthday! It was good to meet her at last, and she drove me, in a pinkish Renault 6 (nick-named the ‘Pink Panther’), to Wundanyi, as it was her shopping day. It was market day, and I was amazed by the bright colours of fruit, vegetables, linen and clothing – a vivid contrast to the drab shops of rural Lincolnshire. After spending *an hour* in the Kenya Commercial Bank cashing traveller’s cheques (one quickly learns the art of patience), I had leisure to wander round the open-air food market. I was staggered at the prices: piles of tomatoes for only 10c (½p) a pile, a large cabbage for just 50c (2½p), watermelons and pineapples for 1/- each, carrots and potatoes also very inexpensive, 1 kilo of good quality beef for only 3/50 (50p per pound in the UK). I walked back – a three mile journey, mostly downhill – and had oat porridge for lunch.

After lunch I taught my first lesson: RE (Religious Education) Form III, teaching the students to make their own notes on the Temptations of Christ. After school it was ‘*Harambee* time’, which involved carrying cement blocks for the new classrooms, which were still, sadly, annoyingly, at the foundation stage. Peter, Flora and I were invited to dinner with the W family, although Andrew had not yet returned from Nairobi and Mombasa – a good English roast, which did not come amiss, and cheery conversation and Christian fellowship till late. It was a dark, moonless night, and the tropical stars were incredibly clear.

On Wednesday Aggrey and I installed the kerosene-powered fridge, and made *sima* (stiff maize porridge) for lunch – it turned out to be a surprisingly good meal, but very heavy and filling. I spent the afternoon reading and writing letters. ‘Agriculture’ at the school involved watering the gardens (a few rather sorry cabbages), with muddy river water carried in *debes* [empty kerosene tins]. Some of the students kindly offered me some sugar cane to chew on – another ‘first’ experience. I prepared for teaching the following day, and cooked steak and chips for dinner on my own. Aggrey came in very late, rolling drunk and reeking of ‘beer’.

On Thursday I helped teach Don’s English class: “You are a Voice of Kenya (VOK) radio commentator. Write a commentary on Uhuru Day from Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi.” An afternoon class comprised Singing, led by Peter M – hymns and praises in full African style. I was struck by the tremendous enthusiasm, and incredible clapping rhythms. The language barrier was of little consequence: “*Asante Bwana*” [Thanks, Lord] was all one needed to know – and indeed this was the essence of all their singing; but later in the day I got caught in the cross fire with Aggrey and George, who disapproved of what they called ‘emotional fanaticism’. Then on Friday there was a Christian Union (CU) meeting in Form III. My diary records:

The place was packed – a thrilling sight, particularly for Peter who has laboured hard, and suffered many frustrations, to see such a miracle take place at Mgalu High School, as is taking place at this very moment. A time of song (both English and African style), and testimony. I’ve never seen anything quite like it – singing and preaching with great enthusiasm! At times the noise was terrific. There seemed to be an openness, a complete lack of embarrassment or self-consciousness, characteristic of the Kenyan people as a whole, that I found very refreshing and attractive. And while it is possible to question the depth of their understanding of the Christian Faith, the sheer zeal of these young Christians is something to be admired...

In the evening, Andrew W dropped by, having just returned from Nairobi and Mombasa. I clearly remember him turning up on my doorstep, after dark – a tall, handsome figure,

well-spoken and articulate, and with a positive air of confidence and capability that I found instantly reassuring. We quickly found we were on the same wavelength, and 'of one mind'; our communication felt natural, and our conversation, especially about spiritual matters, flowed easily.

Letter to my parents dated 26 September 1973

The next few days are described in a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, dated 26 September 1973:

I think I've settled into the house by now, though I got a bit of a shock, when returning at dusk on Saturday. With no lights on in the house, I observed a ghostly figure reclining on Aggrey's bed. A woman's voice – I got a hurricane lamp. Was she a friend of Aggrey's? No, she was his wife! She also had their two-year-old daughter with her. She had travelled all the way from Nairobi that day, to find Aggrey out and with no one to meet her! I had not been warned of her coming (let alone Aggrey himself), but apparently this is the African way – you just drop in unexpectedly on relatives. Anyway, Mrs O is here for the week, and treating us to some good African cooking!

Another domestic incident: on Monday, Aggrey called me to the back door. A snake, writhing around with a lizard stuck in its mouth, just outside the back door! We hurled stones at it until we got its head. I then got a photograph taken of me holding it up by its tail. It was green, about 2½ feet long, with a yellow underside. Mrs W 'fears' that it might have been just a harmless grass snake, but I am reluctant to admit it or to believe that it was! I have been assured that snakes are frightened of humans, and so should not intrude into the house.

Last Saturday I climbed to the top of a nearby ridge, 1,500 feet above Iriwa. The inhabitants of the houses I passed were pleased to show me the best route up. Frequently, not only did they point me in the right direction, but sent one of their children to escort 'the white stranger with a camera' to the next turning point. Such is the hospitality, friendliness and openness of Kenyans. Another example: it is considered the height of bad manners not to exchange greetings with everyone you meet on the road – "Kwa sinda?" "Da sinda". "Kwa sinda mana?" "Da sinda to" (in ki-Dabida). Anyway, the top of the ridge commanded a fabulous view – right over the Tsavo plains and the sisal estates just outside Voi, and towards Kasigau, a mountain about the height of Stac Pollaidh [in north-west Scotland] which I can see from my bedroom window, about 40 miles away; southwards almost into Tanzania; and westwards to Wesu rock and Wundanyi. Immediately below me: the Mbale District and Iriwa spread out like a map. I took some photographs, and when I go up again I shall do a sketch.

That afternoon, Mr W took me to a Government school near Wundanyi to see a foundation-laying ceremony by the local MP (reminiscent of Haileybury Speech Day). The schooling situation is that if you attain a certain grade at the end of primary school examinations you gain a place at a Government secondary school. Those who fail can only receive secondary education at Harambee schools, where the students have to pay fees. Thus Mgalu is composed of students who are either not so bright, or badly taught – quite a challenge for teaching! The classrooms for Forms III and IV are still at foundation stage: our \$1,000 question which was 'find the right angle' has been abandoned: it now stands at 'find the horizontal and the vertical'!

As to my appointment, Mr W assures me that as a YSA volunteer I was posted to Mgalu High School long before the current over-staffing crisis. However, the Headmaster Mr Harrison M refuses to allow me to teach until the official forms, signed by the Bishop, arrive from Mombasa. Communication is very slow and sometimes frustrating. As you always say, Dad, and now I *heartily* agree with you: Centralised Administration is a Great Mistake! Mr S and Harrison M have been battling it out in Mombasa, with Richard and the Bishop. Mr S assures me that Mr Harrison M is being removed (hopefully by the end of term), to be replaced by a strong, Christian Headmaster, and that two thirds of the present staff are due to be transferred to other schools – one of them by the end of the week,

which means I'll definitely be teaching by next Monday. Until then I have had rather less on my hands than I would have wished: helping marking, learning Swahili (the most logical and easiest language imaginable), but I should be able to prepare for the syllabus courses I shall be conducting for the rest of this week.

There are some terrific people around here that I'm getting to know. Christianity here is by no means shallow or artificial. Students who have become Christians tend to get very excited and worked up – but there is a genuineness and maturity in Peter M, who has laboured hard, and suffered many frustrations, to get the Christian Union at Mgalu into the shape that it is. The W's too are wonderful missionaries, always full of hope and calm, a great help to me during the present staff upheavals...

Prayer Mount, Aggrey High School and Mbale Church

The climb up the ridge behind the village of Iriwa on my first Saturday in the Taita Hills was significant, in that I discovered a mountain that I would later call 'Prayer Mount'. Although I did not reach the 'summit' on this first ascent, there were several later occasions when I climbed Prayer Mount. I gave the mountain this special name because it commanded superb views over the entire Mbale District and beyond – out over the hills and on to the plains, dappled with the blue-grey shadows of clouds, away from the 'island' of the Taita Hills, to where my far-reaching gaze could make out the beginnings of the outside world. Here I could pause and meditate, and so to speak 'pray over' the various crisis situations I was facing – immediately below me, or away beyond the horizon.

On this occasion I set out at 08:30 on Saturday morning to climb up the ridge above Iriwa, taking a route up a steep spur through several *shambas* [farms], then on through forests of ferns and palms. Though this was not (as I was later told) the really old residual forest of East Africa, I nevertheless felt myself slipping back through time into a primeval woodland. A rocky outcrop afforded my first view over Mbale, and my gaze took in the road to Wundanyi past Espy's corner, the W's house, over the bridge and on through Iriwa – almost every house in the area visible. The two photographs I took link together to form a striking panorama of the Mgalu valley, and panning to the right, the ridge above the path leading up to Wundanyi. Everything looking parched yellow-brown in the grip of a severe and prolonged drought.

That afternoon Andrew W took me to Aggrey High School, near Wundanyi, for a foundation-laying ceremony. Looking around the buildings, which included a well-equipped science laboratory, one could well understand why Government school students are to be envied! The foundation plaque for the new school hall was laid by the Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, and also the MP for Wundanyi. This was the Honourable Minister Shako, who was also the organist for Shigaro church. It so happened that on Christmas Day, Andrew W and I went to this church for the main morning service, and Minister Shako was there, playing traditional (African-style) Christmas carols on the organ! The proceedings at Aggrey High School, which were conducted mainly in Swahili, ended with the National Anthem, during which the Kenyan flag was raised, and the Pledge of Loyalty given: "to strive to build this country in the living spirit of our motto, *HAR-AM-BEE!*" The word '*Harambee*' is a Swahili word that means 'Pull together', or 'Everybody strive together', and it is a popular Kenyan motto. So, when the Minister ended his speech by shouting this word loudly, it was like a rallying cry, with everybody joining in a rousing chorus – it was a heart-warming experience!

That evening I was invited to have dinner with the W family, and afterwards we went out on to the expansive lawn in front of their house and gazed at the stars: Pegasus, Cygnis, Saggiarius, the Summer Triangle (Arcturus, Deneb, Vega), and Jupiter. Through Andrew's powerful binoculars we could see four of Jupiter's moons – like tiny pin-pricks of light, evenly spaced in a perfectly straight line, because we were observing their

orbitals side on. We also saw the uncanny glow of a bushfire down on the Tsavo plains, in the far distance.

The next day was my first Sunday in the Taita Hills, and I attended Mattins at the Mbale Anglican Church, which was situated further up the hill, just above Maynard's Hall. The church was full, the men in white shirts or suits, the women brightly dressed. It was a normal, Prayer-book Mattins service, but – in true African style – it lasted nearly two hours! The sermon was preached by the Reverend John N, using a mixture of ki-Swahili and ki-Dabida. After lunch with the W's, we all drove over to Murray High School to see Miss Kate C. The S family and Peter M were there as well, so it was a like a family gathering! I attended the students' Christian Union meeting, where the guest speaker was Cliff B, from the UK. Once again the singing was pursued with rare zeal.

Ngangao Forest

The next week, at the school, was fairly uneventful, and I spent some time learning Swahili and beginning a cataloguing process for the library. The highlight was setting an English dictation for Form I. I made the mistake of selecting a passage from 'Journey to the Jade Sea' by John Hillaby, which included several difficult words such as 'horns', 'promptly', 'plunged', and 'rifle'. Together, the class generated a total of 27 permutations of 'rifle', including 'rightfull', 'right food' and even 'rough wog'!

On Saturday morning Aggrey and I set out to walk to Wundanyi. We were picked up by an English couple driving a Datsun, members of the Trinity Fellowship, who had stayed with the W's overnight and were on their way back to Maseno [in Western Kenya]. They kindly gave us a lift into town, and once there we shopped for groceries, having abandoned plans to go to the Kenya Commercial Bank because of the end-of-the-month cash scrum.

In due course the W's picked me up, and we drove uphill past the peaks of Wesu and Yale (pronounced 'Yah-lay') to Ngangao ('Ng-gang-gao'), a mountain plateau surrounded by 'the old residual forest of East Africa'. We had a picnic lunch in thick, but very cool jungle – a beautiful forest of old trees and enchanted ferns. The air was filled with the magical sounds of tropical birds, and possibly monkeys, the wind sighing overhead. But then we were shocked into reality when on setting out for the highest point, Catharine very nearly stepped on a snake! Long, thin and bright green, it slithered away along the lower branches of a bush, coiling itself around them – a green mamba, the first snake the W's had ever seen at Ngangao. Unpleasant too were the safari ants, which were adept at penetrating socks and trousers! Such hazards overcome, we climbed through the coolness of the forest, enjoying the distinct visual beauty of each kind of tree, and inhaling the rich fragrance of strange flowers and ferns. Deciduous vegetation suddenly gave way to pines, where the silence was deepened by the rich red carpet of pine needles under our feet.

Presently we emerged on to an expanse of smooth grey rocks interspersed with pine trees and gorse bushes (looking almost like the Highlands of Scotland), from which the view was sensational. Immediately below us the densely populated and fertile Taita plateau stretched away, rising gently towards the highest peaks – Vuria, Yale and Wesu. Behind us, in the distance, lay the township of Voi, distinct in the sunlight, and the Tsavo plains – a patchwork of sunlight and shadow. In front of us the plains of Tsavo West stretched away into Tanzania, and Kilimanjaro – its peaks hidden by cloud. Panning from the left, the North Pare mountains in Tanzania overlooked Lake Jipe on the border – a strip of light clearly visible without binoculars; and where the mountains jutted out like a promontory on to the plain, stood a single white building, Eldoro Secondary School, 50 miles away! Bushfires sent out slanting columns of smoke, in Tanzania, to the right towards Taveta. Panning further to the right, the lower slopes of Kilimanjaro itself, a huge grey-blue silhouette, rose above the dark grey desert plains.

We made our way back down through the forest, pausing to observe palms and firs growing side by side, and a tree against the sun covered in bearded lichen. And so we descended back into the Taita Hills, again looking distinctly oriental in the grey clouds and mists.

On Sunday (30 September 1973), Mrs O and her daughter Winifred left in the early morning, Aggrey accompanying them as far as Voi. I went to Kenyatta High School, near Mwatate, with Andrew W for Communion (in English), followed by a Christian Union meeting in which I was asked to speak for two or three minutes. Public speaking, unprepared, was quite a test – but I think my words were well received. I was then shown around the school: a Government Boarding Secondary School with three streams up to Sixth Form A level – very superior, with dormitories, well-equipped class rooms, laboratories and workshops. Being on the plains, the atmosphere was hot and sleepy compared to that of Wundanyi.

Revival and commitment

In a summary of the year written in 1978, shortly after I left Cambridge University, I wrote:

When I arrived in Taita, revival was in full swing – part of the great East African Revival, sweeping across the continent like a bush fire ablaze – the ‘Breath of Life’, as described by Patricia St John. At Mbale, students were witnessing to one another; many were being saved, and some were baptized with the Holy Spirit. During the morning service on Sunday 30 September 1973 at Kenyatta High School, Mwatate, I came before the Lord in prayer and, as an act of commitment, asked him:

1. to make me a soul-winner – one able, by the Holy Spirit’s power, to lead others to a personal faith in Christ, that he would grant me the gift of evangelism and the privilege of seeing people saved and born again: “You shall receive power when the Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses...” (Acts 1 v 8);
2. to make me above all a man of prayer – one who knows how to pray with power – for the conversion and salvation of sinners, for sanctification and maturity in fellow Christians, that “Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3 v 17) enthroned as Lord: “Pray at all times in the Spirit... for all the saints...” (Ephesians 6 v 18).

Brief Historical Notes on the Taita Hills

1850s – Johann Krapf

Despite early contact with missionaries, little is known of the Taita before the Kenya Christian era (mid-1800s onwards), although the existence of six major divisions (or clans) would suggest that the Taita are in fact an amalgam of several different peoples, who probably arrived in the present-day Taita-Taveta District in separate migrations possibly spread over several hundred years.

As to why they migrated here, this would most likely have been to avoid cattle raids and attacks, from both the Maasai to the west and the Oromo-speaking peoples from the north, and migrations by people who had lost their herds in such attacks. The hills, with their steep, fortress-like flanks, were an ideal refuge, being not only easy to defend, but also well-watered and lush, making agriculture a more than viable economic alternative to herding.

In the 1850s, the Reverend Johann Ludwig Krapf, the first missionary to travel to the Taita Hills (*en route* to ‘discovering’ Kilimanjaro, together with Johannes Rebmann), was positively enraptured by what he saw as:

Its rich variety of mountain, hill and dale covered by the most luxurious vegetation! I could have fancied myself on the Jura Mountains near Basel... so beautiful was the country, so delightful the climate. Our way through plantations of Indian corn and beans, past small herds of cattle ... then along fields of sugar-cane and banana, till we descended into the valley with its rich pasture lands...

In this lovely green country of hills and valleys and running streams, exhilarating air that puts new life into limp and tired Coast residents, the natives are naturally brisker in their movements than those of the lower lands, and they have not so many unwholesome microbes to contend with! This beautiful land, however, cannot be reached without passing over the dreary and monotonous plain...

The name Taita itself is commonly said to originate from ki-Swahili-speakers, who heard the inhabitants of Sagalla describe the region as “Teta” (‘defensive’, ‘quarrelsome’ or ‘aggressive’). By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Swahili had corrupted Teta into Taita and the name came to be applied both to the entire area and to its principal inhabitants. True or not, this story – as well as linguistic similarities between ki-Swahili and ki-Taita – points to the historical involvement of the Taita with the Swahili-dominated caravan trade. It is known for a fact that the Taita participated in the caravan trade with the Pare and Usambara in Tanzania, with which they traded ivory and rhino horn in return for manufactured material goods.

Things changed suddenly – and violently – at the end of the nineteenth century, when the British began construction of their railway from Mombasa on the coast to Kampala in Uganda, which included a branch line from Voi to Taveta on the border with German East Africa, now Tanzania. To build the railway, the British needed both the land it would pass along, and the ‘pacification’ of the tribes whose territories they passed through. Obtaining the land was easy enough – they simply stole it. But obtaining ‘peace’ was more difficult, and the Taita, along with the Giriama, Kamba, Kikuyu, Kisii, the Nandi and the Elgeyo were all the receivers of brutal and vicious ‘patrols’ which many times ruthlessly killed men and women and exterminated their stock.

With the railway, of course, came European culture and religion. Attempts to convert the Taita to Christianity began in earnest after 1885, when the Church Missionary Society (CMS) began to spread its activities inland, and by 1892, the first Catholic Mission was established at Bura, which is now Bura Girls High School. Mbale Mission Centre, near Wundanyi, followed in 1900, and then what is still one of the biggest Taita Churches, at Wusi Mission, in 1905.

More than a century of contact with Europeans and Christianity has considerably ‘westernized’ the Taita, although they have culturally also been exposed to Kenyan influences, notably from Kamba and Kikuyu traders. Yet despite these changes, the Taita remain a remarkably homogenous group, due in part, I have no doubt, to the respect they continue to show their ancestors...

(Source: Jens Finke (2000 to 2007), Traditional Music and Cultures of Kenya, a multimedia encyclopedia dedicated to Kenya's tribes and people)

1910s – Richard Maynard

MAYNARD, RICHARD ABSALOM (b. c. 1870 [in Queensland, Australia]; d. 5 February 1953). Anglican missionary clergyman. Maynard went to Kenya in 1894, being the fifth missionary to be sent out by the Victorian CMA which had been formed in 1892. In 1903 he married Miss M A Austin, an Hon CMS missionary. He was made deacon in 1910 and ordained priest in 1912. After missionary service on the Kenya Coast, he and his wife commenced a mission station among the waTaita at Mbale in 1910, where they worked with great acceptance until 1921. They then worked at Dabida, also in the Taita Hills until they retired in 1933. He was archdeacon of Mombasa from 1926 until 1933.

Besides having the overall responsibility for pastoral and evangelistic work among the waTaita, Maynard translated the New Testament and the Prayer Book into ki-Dabida and compiled a hymn book in that language. [I recall the beautiful ki-Dabida language sung by the members of the Mbale Anglican Church.]

In recording appreciation of their 38 years' missionary service, the CMS stated: 'His work as an evangelist, trainer of native teachers and clergy, and translator of the Scriptures, laid foundations on which much of the present work in Kenya is built'. They retired to England where he had a notable ministry in Eastbourne.

(Source: Keith Cole, unpublished ThD MS 'The Growth of the Indigenous Church in Kenya'; in A History of the Church Missionary Society of Australia, 1971.)

CHAPTER 2: TRIALS IN THE TAITA HILLS

October 1973

A day of acute frustration

Monday 1 October 1973 turned out to be a day of acute frustration. First, there were no signs of a delegation from the School Committee having seen the Bishop at Sungululu – to ask him to transfer one of the other members of staff to a different school and to authorise my appointment as a teacher to the Mgalu High School. Then, to crown the situation, Mr Harrison M was ‘ill’, and was therefore not in a position to make any decision. I therefore spent the morning wondering whether I should step in as Duty Master, because Don was officially ‘not on duty’. A headache and peculiar insides, resulting from eating undercooked cabbage for lunch, did little to improve my feelings – and by evening Assembly time I was ready to drop. However, what annoyed me most that day was the Staff Room atmosphere of petty slandering, quarrelling and mutual distrust: “I wouldn’t believe everything that Don tells you. How do you know that he isn’t trying to mislead you? Oh yes! According to Don...” Needless to say, I had my own reservations as to whom to trust, whose advice I should take and whose I should discard. As recorded in my diary:

The days slip by, and there are no visible signs of improvement. The future seems entirely to be in the hands of higher powers. All the while, the students suffer...

A morning of acute sorrow

The next day, Tuesday 2 October 1973 was a day, or rather a morning, of acute sorrow. The Headmaster, Harrison M announced the news that Peter M had been transferred – by order of the Bishop – to Kituri High School, Werugha. The news was greeted by a wail of lament by the students. A member of the staff when the school first started three years ago, Peter was surely the most admired, respected and best loved of all teachers. This was a blow for the administration of teaching in the school, as this left us with one Arts teacher and four Scientists. It was a blow too for the members of the Christian Union which, particularly during the previous two weeks, had flourished under his strong, ‘fatherly’ leadership. I helped Peter pack up his house – a tiny *kibunda* – and had a sorrowful, yet resigned, last meal with him. Then there was a meeting of the hostel students at Maynard’s, at which he gave a few final words of encouragement and closed in prayer.

I did some teaching in the afternoon, and helped some of the students with their ‘prep’. I realised that – the forms not having arrived and my salary still unpaid – I would have to go with the W’s to Mombasa, in order to get matters such as my appointment to the school sorted out with the Bishop once and for all. Francis M, the Student Chairman of the Christian Union, called an emergency meeting. It was a time of tremendous encouragement, in spite of Peter’s leaving, in which Francis spoke with great clarity and conviction, which I found admirable. Later that afternoon I saw Don, whose only wish, at the time, was that Bishop M would come to the school and personally put a bomb under it! I had dinner with the W’s, who were of a distinctly more optimistic frame of mind.

Day trip to Mombasa

On Thursday morning I was up at the W’s house at 6 am for breakfast, as the sun rose above the eastern hills in a sudden blaze of red. We set out by car at quarter to seven, winding our way through the villages of Iriwa and Figinyi, down the Mbale valley. I was able to see my house after a good 20 minutes of twisting and turning – the mud-road was as if someone had tried to construct a ‘Scalextric’ model car track layout using only curved pieces! We contoured down, gradually losing height, until the road suddenly

levelled and straightened out, and after crossing two or three dry river beds, we emerged on to the Mwatate to Voi tarmac highway. We then proceeded through Voi to Mombasa, stopping briefly to take a cutting from a succulent, flourishing desert rose. We were in town by half past nine and made our way straight to the Diocesan office. We chatted with Miss Grace C, the Bishop's Secretary (an Australian CMS missionary), while Andrew had a private word with the Bishop of Mombasa, The Right Reverend Peter M. After cool refreshments in Grace's flat, I was ushered into the Bishop's presence, where I recall that a very cordial and pleasant conversation took place. The outcomes, in brief, were as follows:

1. The letters of appointment and my salary package had not been sent off to Mbale, because the Bishop, quite honestly – and apologetically – forgot!
2. A Letter of Appointment was written (in Swahili) to Mr Harrison M, the Headmaster of Mgalu High School.
3. My salary was fixed at 500/- a month, with all taxes paid by the Diocese. 1,000/- was to be given to me, immediately, in cash – being my salary for September and October.
4. Mr George T was to be transferred immediately to Cephas' school, and Miss Flora M was to be transferred to Kituri High School.
5. The Bishop confided to us his real intention (as yet not even a promise, yet I could not see how things could be otherwise): at the end of the year Mr Harrison M was to be removed, and Peter M would return to Mgalu as Headmaster! His transfer to Kituri was, the Bishop said, designed as an opportunity for him to consider the work which lay ahead.

The Bishop's Letter of Appointment (dated 4 October 1973) reads as follows:

DIOCESE OF MOMBASA

Mr M, Mgalu High School, PO IRIWA, Via-VOI

Mpenzi Baba, Salamu sana. Tafadhali umpe kazi mtakavyo panga katika Staff. Mr Hall amewekwa huko

[Literal translation: Dear father, many greetings. Please provide (him) work depending on how you plan to arrange your staff. Mr Hall has been posted here.]

Wako [Yours], Peter Mombasa

After the meeting we bought some fresh citrus fruits in the market, then had lunch with the F's at CITC. The afternoon was spent shopping in the unforgettable Bia-shara [*bazaar*] Street. This turned out to be early Christmas shopping, so that I could post presents for my family back in England in time for Christmas. I settled on a wicker basket for my mother, which was to form a useful container for the other gifts. I remember there was intense rivalry between two adjacent basket shops – *his* basket was much, much better quality, far better value than the other. As the one was going strong at 18/-, and the other's price had fallen to 10/-, I bought the latter. I then procured a *kitengi* [traditional coloured] shirt for my brother at 30/-, where no shop window price fell much below 45/-. For my sister a carved stag, priced 8/50, for which I paid 7/-; for my father, an engraved brass mug, originally priced at 25/-. The vendor, seeing that I was a hard bargainer, immediately cut the price to 15/-. I tried furiously – including staging a dramatic exit from the shop (twice) – to get the price down to 10/-. "It's bent at the bottom. Now if it wasn't bent, I'd gladly pay 15/-, but as it is..." "*But the engraving round the top, is it not beautiful? Well worth 15/-. I've already lowered it by 10/-*" "From 25/-? Only some fool of an American would buy it at that price!" "*I bought it myself for this shop for 14/-.*" But with Catharine's help I managed to get it for 13/-!

We then drove across the pontoon bridge to Nyali Beach – a beautiful scene of white sands, turquoise sea, breakers on the reef about a mile out, wooden fishing 'dug out' boats moored at the water's edge, a large cargo vessel out to sea steaming towards Mombasa, and a small *dhow*, following the coastline southwards; palm trees and slanting sun. We swam in the sea, which was translucent and warm, and then picked up some

fresh fish from a boat that had just come in. Back to Mombasa for some final shopping, *samosas* and *chai*. We hit the trail for home around half past five – a beautiful time for travel, as the setting sun shone through the palms and flat-topped thorn trees of the coastal plains. We reached Voi on nightfall, and climbed through the hills back to Mbale by moonlight. We enjoyed the fresh fish cooked for dinner, and later that evening I was able to tell Don about the Bishop's decisions, as the S family were to leave for Turi (in Western Kenya) the following day.

Thomas' grandmother

The next day, Friday, one third of the school went on safari to Tsavo East. In some ways I was sad to have missed out, but the numbers were full when I put my name forward. But this wasn't really such a disappointment, as my Letter of Appointment to the school had just been signed, and I did not really want to leave the school at this juncture. I spent a happy morning teaching informal Mathematics in Form III and English in Form II, and I spent the afternoon helping Thomas M and a friend with O-Level Cambridge papers in Maths.

I went for an evening walk with 'Baba' W – a 20 minute sprint up to the top of the Iriwa ridge: it was a beautiful time of day to travel, when the slanting rays of the sun give a warmth to the villages and hills below. We saw Lanner falcons, clearly and closely, augur buzzards, and the distinctive Wahlberg's eagle. Dusk afforded us a dramatic view of the solar system: Venus, the moon and Jupiter in a straight line – no other stars visible – with Mars following up from the east.

On Saturday morning I had a ride with the W's up to Wundanyi to collect forms for opening a bank account. I walked back down, a three mile journey following the ridge path, and practising Swahili with everyone I met: "*Ninataak kilo moja wa mpunja mzuri. Nitafundisha Mgalu, Jumatatu au Jumanne. Jambo. Jambo. Habari? Mzuri – yako? Eyh! Mzuri. Salama.* ["I would like one kilo of good rice. I will teach at Mgalu, on Wednesday or Thursday. Hello. Hello. How are you? Good, and you? Yes, good. Greetings."]

Around 3 o' clock in the afternoon Thomas and his friend picked me up to take me to Thomas' home – or rather, his grandmother's house, since he lived in Taveta, some 50 miles away on the Tanzanian border. We saw a snake on the roadside on the way (making my average one snake sighting per week!), and encountered the locally famous 'mad runner' as we entered the village – he was a tall, strong-looking man who just never stopped running and panting, and had a wild look in his eyes, but was otherwise friendly enough. We arrived, after a long walk following narrow winding paths, at Thomas' mud-brick house, where his grandmother was there to greet me. I was invited to sit down on a wooden chair in a dark, smoke-filled room, with *kukus* (chickens) around my feet, and my hosts kindly provided me with a plate of chopped up sweet potatoes, which tasted very like roast chestnuts, and *chai*, followed some time later by a hard-boiled egg. I was introduced to various aunts, an uncle, and several small children. After some hilarious attempts at mutual language-speaking, the subject of Mgalu's state was discussed, and the story emerged that on Thursday a number of Form II students had been expelled owing to a refusal to attend lessons in protest against Peter M's transfer the previous Tuesday; however, this later proved to be only a rumour. It was clear that the school at that time was pretty well at 'rock-bottom' – and things, if they were to 'go' at all, could only go uphill. I walked home by moonlight, after a very successful and enjoyable evening.

On Sunday morning I awoke to discover that Aggrey had not returned the previous night, which caused me some consternation. But after a leisurely breakfast, I went to the Mbale-Dabida church for the 10:30 am service. Once again the church was full of people in their best clothes, the women very brightly dressed. The service was a full two-hour

Mattins and Communion – all in ki-Dabida. Then in the later afternoon I attended a Christian meeting at Maynard Hall led by Flora, during which I was asked, without warning, to give a short talk to the assembled company, numbering about 50. I spoke in clear, simple English, and my ‘talk’ was then translated phrase by phrase into Swahili by Flora, who was acting as an interpreter. I thought this was a great arrangement – her speaking of the Swahili translation gave me time to think of what to say next!

The wheels begin to roll...

Over the next two weeks I felt the wheels beginning to roll at last, leaving me with a series of impressions:

Tuesday, the first really active day, began with a staff meeting that lasted four hours. We compiled a completely new time-table: I was to teach 32 periods a week – Forms II and III for English; Forms I to III for RE; and Form III Physics – a fair workload for a novice teacher! The time-table was arranged with much ease and cooperation, leading to – in everyone’s opinion – a highly satisfactory result. Next we reappointed the School Captain and Prefects, choosing students who were mature and had a sense of responsibility. Finally we compiled a comprehensive list of rules, resolving to improve, beyond measure, the standard of School Discipline. It seemed that Aggrey, and not Harrison, was the driving force behind the meeting, and I felt that was to his credit. My extra-curricular responsibilities included being Library Master, Music Master, Assistant Housemaster of ‘Chui’, and Sponsor to the Christian Union. There were two houses – Chui, meaning ‘leopard’, and Simba, meaning ‘lion’. There was great mirth and merriment when I realized, and publicly admitted, that *Simba* did not mean ‘tea’! ‘Simba’ was the trade name for a popular brand of packet tea in the Taita Hills, and the packets were labelled, in large red letters, ‘Simba’.

One morning the Bishop took morning Assembly, and then set off in his Land Rover, with Grace and Flora, bound for Kituri High School, near Werugha, in the high country above Wundanyi. The previous day, news had come through that Flora, the RE teacher, had been transferred to another school – this news was greeted with a mixture of resignation and exasperation. As I recorded in my diary:

The situation is past all pretence of seriousness. It really is quite laughable: we now have five Scientists and zero Artists! The Bishop has failed to grasp one important fact: you can’t make members of staff teach subjects about which they know *nothing*.

On Friday, we witnessed the first of the heavy, ‘short rains’, which intensify around November and December. It was my first experience of the hard, heavy, tropical rain, and I trudged up the path from my house, and around the school, with an umbrella and Macintosh. The lesson I was teaching in Form II was temporarily abandoned, owing to the noise from the rain hitting the roof, and to the fact that students at the back of the class were slowly drowning. Since the new classrooms were still under construction, Form II had to be accommodated in a galvanised iron ‘shed’ next door to the W’s house – this was far from ideal, as it became unbearably hot during sunny days, and (as we had seen) prone to flooding during rainy weather.

Then there was a day when I was teaching RE to Form I, and for some reason decided to read aloud several chapters from the Book of Exodus, resulting in a sore throat! I had lunch at the students’ hostel – this consisted of a huge helping of stodgy rice (which was very similar, both in consistency and taste, to the more traditional stiff maize porridge) and brown beans on a metal plate, washed down

with a tin mug of very hot and sweet cocoa, which had the effect of anaesthetising my sore throat.

Saturday brought soft and intermittent rain all morning, but – armed with my umbrella and Mackintosh – I walked the three miles up to Wundanyi to open an account at the Kenya Commercial Bank. There I learned that war had flared up between Israel and Egypt, that Russia had been supplying arms to Egypt, and that Britain was sending troops to Israel.

Towards the end of the following week, the Government Inspector for Kenyan schools – an Englishman, Mr N – came to visit. He listened in on my Form II English lesson, which included a class discussion on the Art of Précis. Fortunately the lesson went well, and the students were alert and cooperative. He did nevertheless warn me about the danger of my ‘not being heard’ – he pointed out that my strong British accent could prove to be very foreign to them! Then he made several constructive criticisms to the Mgalu staff, including the pressing need to obtain some apparatus for scientific demonstrations. Some of Harrison’s reactions were cause for amusement, especially with Aggrey, but we gained the overall impression that Mr N was the sort of person who got things done – and so we finished the week on a high note of optimism.

Bus to Nairobi for half-term break

Friday 19 October 1973 dawned after a disturbed night – snatches of sleep came and went like shadowy visitors, vanishing as soon as you realised they were there. 4:45 am brought the alarm into action, and by 5:15 a substantial breakfast of oat porridge, eggs, toast and coffee was under way. Aggrey and I left the house promptly just after 6, with suitcases distressingly heavy, and a cold hurried walk ahead of us. We reached Wundanyi just on 7 am, and the OTC bus left 10 minutes later. I remember it as an exciting journey winding down the edge of the Taita Hills towards Mwatate – a dramatic view over the Tsavo plains with a watery sun breaking through the thick grey oceans of cloud. The weather cleared steadily as the bus made its way from Voi to Kibwezi, and just as we passed Hunter’s Lodge, on our left the clear blue shape of Kilimanjaro rose above the clouds and the nearby hills – breathtaking as the distant clouds drew aside to reveal, for a few fleeting moments, the rounded snow-capped peak.

Just as on the way south some six weeks previously, we turned off the tarmac road and diverted on to a gravel road to the Town of Machakos, where the vibrations were so intense that the front windscreen shattered in a shower of splintered glass. In consequence the rest of the journey was, to say the least, draughty, and for the front seat passengers somewhat wet, as presently it began to rain. We stopped in Machakos, where I met the very same Government official, at the same café! Finally, we reached Nairobi with its familiar skyline arrayed before us. Immediately the bus arrived at the station we were accosted by taxi-pushers who stuck to us like leeches until Aggrey, somewhat enraged, told them quite plainly to make themselves scarce!

We waited for a few moments till Mr [Harry] C arrived, and Aggrey telephoned his wife to make arrangements to be picked up. Mr C, who with his wife Olive were missionaries and my appointed ‘Town Cousins’, drove me to their home, and we enjoyed a relaxed family evening reading stories to the four children: Judy (9), John (7), Elizabeth (5) and Philippa (3), and listening to Brahms’ 4th Symphony. Early bed and a good night’s rest – in the first European civilization for six weeks!

Kenyatta Day

Saturday was Kenyatta Day, the 21st anniversary of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta’s escape from prison, and the 10th year since Independence. After a leisurely breakfast, we reached Uhuru Park just on 11 am, the time at which the prayers and speeches were to begin.

The crowds were immense – a colourful spectacle of people, the park full of brightly coloured flowers and plants, and pools with fountains. The complete Nairobi skyline formed a backcloth well-suited to the occasion: high-rise offices, hotels, the Roman Catholic Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, and the climax of technical achievement, the new Kenyatta Conference Centre – all built during the past ten years. The President, escorted by scores of police mounted on motorbikes and Mercedes cars containing Members of Parliament, Ministers of State and Ambassadors, filed along Uhuru Highway in procession. Mr Daniel Arap Moi, the Vice-President, and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta himself made speeches from the covered dais, whose roof and columns were covered with red, green, black and white coloured cloth, the colours of the Kenyan flag. The President was dressed in a leather jacket, and carried his famous white horse-hair ‘fly-whisk’, which he waved from time to time. He spoke first in English, then in Swahili. I couldn’t really remember what he said, except that he ended with the familiar “Hara-a-a-ambEE!”

All the tribes of the Earth, it seemed, then filed past him in procession, leaping and singing and dancing, beating their drums and waving painted shields and spears. The ceremony was both colourful and meaningful. As I recorded in my diary:

One warms to the fact that all the country is behind her President – grateful for his work and resolved to follow his leadership: a sign that the country is moving in the right direction, unmistakably *forwards*. Mr C is reputed to have said, on leave in England, “Well, whatever else you can say against Kenya, it’s good to be in a country that is moving forwards!”

Opening service for St John’s Pumwani

One of the reasons for travelling to Nairobi for the half-term break with Aggrey was that he had kindly invited me to the opening service for St John’s Anglican Church, Pumwani, which was near Aggrey’s family home. So on Sunday morning I took the bus to Pumwani, in the eastern suburbs of Nairobi, arriving at the New Flats close to ten o’clock. Aggrey was not in, as he had already entered the church. I was running slightly late, but a very helpful church elder gave me admission at the last minute. I remember watching the new Vicar symbolically knocking three times at the door. The service itself was led by the Archbishop of Kenya, with Richard M also present. There was an assortment of choral singing including *The Heavens are Telling the Glory of God*, from Haydn’s *Creation*. It was a very modern church, and looked rather like a university lecture hall. Both the floor and the roof were set on a slant, higher at the west end, to give an ‘auditorium’ feel. Several jokes were made about St Johns revealing a ‘new slant’ on church architecture, or at any rate portraying a ‘modern angle’!

There was a salad lunch for everyone after the service, and I met Richard H, a fellow YSA, outside the church. I then relaxed briefly in Aggrey’s flat, meeting once again Mrs O and Winifred. In the afternoon we visited the Nairobi Natural History Museum and Snake Park – there were snakes galore, the most sinister of which were the puff adders, not to mention ungainly giant tortoises and contented crocodiles! I was invited to dinner with Mr and Mrs O, Aggrey’s parents, who were keen Christ-followers, so that we enjoyed some good Christian fellowship, while we dined on rice, meat, potatoes and cabbage. Aggrey drove me back to the C’s via the Kenyatta Hospital, where Job (Aggrey’s brother) was studying.

Exploring Nairobi and back to Mbale

Over the next couple of days I explored Nairobi, meeting one or two friends, taking ‘artistic’ photographs of Nairobi buildings, as examples of the modern architectural design that permeates the city, walking around Uhuru Park and photographing a full, three-part panorama of the city skyline. I attended Mass in the Roman Catholic Cathedral, which turned out to be one of the most moving services I have been to. Aggrey and I spent some time looking round the main campus of Nairobi University,

paying particular attention to the Physics and Engineering Faculties, and modern architecture.

The following day I left the house at 7 am, saying sad goodbyes to the C's. Aggrey and I made our way back along the Mombasa road. When we reached Voi it was clear that no further rain had fallen during our absence, and the Tsavo plains were dry as parchment. We took the bus to Wundanyi and then had an arduous walk back home with very heavy suitcases. As we arrived back at Mbale, the bus from Wundanyi to Mombasa (via Mbale) came along, taking the exact route we had just walked – if only we had known!

Christian Union Rally at St Mary's School, Lushangoni

On Saturday morning, I attended a Christian Union rally at St Mary's Lushangoni. I set out early and cashed a cheque at Wundanyi bank, and also paid in my salary cheque from 'Peter Mombasa' for 500/-, making it the second time he has paid my October salary! I then met the 20 or so members of the Mgalu Christian Union, and together we walked up to St Mary's, the Roman Catholic school nestled beneath the tall cliff face of Yale.

As I recorded in my diary:

We arrived there at 11 (an hour late), and I sat in the front row with Peter M. Almost immediately I was asked to give a short introductory talk – at 5 minutes notice! Mrs M then spoke, very clearly and gently, till lunch time. Nearly all the leading secondary schools in the area were represented – Murray, Aggrey, Kituri, Mwangeka and St Mary's. It was good to meet many of the students from those schools. The afternoon began with testimonies and choruses. The Mgalu members sang a beautiful Swahili chorus, which will long remain in my mind: *"Amezaliwa, amezaliwa... mNazarethi, wa Daudi; ni fura-a-a, wa watu wote..."* [He was born, the Man from Nazareth and from David; all men rejoice – a Christmas song.] Francis then spoke, brilliantly, for some minutes, including his latest anti-drink slogan: Guinness for POWERLESSNESS! The next speaker was Ambrose, the new Headmaster of Aggrey High School. For the next two hours I witnessed some of the most dynamic preaching I have ever heard: a sublime combination of humour, intellectual appeal and power. The events of the day were enough to give one the impression that Kenya really is a Christian country – and seriously so. I publish the programme here in full – though after the lunch break the suggested course of events was not followed:

ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, LUSHANGONI.

CHRISTIAN UNION RALLY – 27 OCTOBER, 1973.

PROGRAMME.

MORNING SECTION:

9.45 – 10.00	HYMN AND PRAYER
	"WELCOME" – S. MWAKESI
10.00 – 10.30	<u>SINGING AND TESTIMONIES:</u>
	1. St. Mary's High School
	2. Kituri High School
	3. Aggrey High School
	4. Murray High School
10.30 – 10.55	"LET US SING CHORUSES"
10.55 – 11.00	SHORT BREAK
11.00 – 12.00	Speaker: "ASSURANCE OF SALVATION".

12.00 – 1.15 L U N C H.

AFTERNOON SECTION:

1.35 – 2.00

1. C H E E R U P !!!

2. Hymn and Prayer

2.00 – 2.30

SINGING AND TESTIMONIES:

1. Mwangeka High School

2. Kenyatta High School

3. Mghalu High School

“Let us all sing choruses”

2.30 – 3.30

Speaker: “HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS”.

3.30 – 3.35

S H O R T B R E A K

3.35 – 4.00

QUESTIONS ON THE TWO TOPICS

4.00 – 4.30

TEA AND “SPEECHES AT THE SAME TIME”.

B L E S S I N G P R A Y E R.

GO IN PEACE ALL MY BRETHEREN! COME AGAIN NEXT TIME. (Isaiah 12:2)

[Behold, God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid;

For the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,

And he has become my salvation (Isaiah 12 v 2)]

The diary continued:

I tried to round up the Mgalu students for a prompt departure after the rally ended at 5 o’ clock. We were back in Wundanyi by 6, and miraculously we arrived back at the hostel exactly on 7 – when it was literally *just* light enough to see the road. I had a long talk with Willingstone (Form III boy, very tall) on the way back. I would very much like to stay with him in the holidays – he lives between here and Voi. I had dinner with the W’s. The stars were once again fantastic – the Pleiades, Mars and Jupiter, Orion rising in the east, exactly on the astral equator. In three months’ time Orion will be vertically overhead, dominating the entire sky. To the south, constellations I have never seen before...

To the summit of Prayer Mount

As recorded in my diary:

Sunday 28 October 1973 – Oat porridge and toast on the verandah, enjoying the beauty of the fresh morning sun. Very hot day. Mattins: “*Kwala na kwala, Amin.*” Busy day writing letters, and marking English homework – a rare gem: “According to my health I am just like a fiddle”!

The next day, Monday, was a Muslim public holiday. After a busy morning helping Form II with English, and Patrick with Maths, in the late afternoon I walked down to the village of Iriwa, and then clambered up the ridge, to the top of the same mountain I had climbed about a month before, and which I later called ‘Prayer Mount’. However, this time I took a much easier and prettier route, reaching the moorland top that marked the true summit. The view was heavenly: east and south-east to Sagalla and Kasigau, towards the coast ridge; north over the Tsavo plains towards the Hatta plateau (geological earthfall); and west towards the higher peaks of Vuria, Yale and Wesu; the town of Wundanyi, the road and the cross-country path via Serenyi; and down over Iriwa and the Mbale valley. I watched a truck crawling painfully up the road – it seemed to take literally hours to get from the Mdongo-dongo Bridge to Mwasungia. The scene was much enhanced by the declining sun bathing the hillsides in a warm glow, which contrasted with the deepening

valleys. As darkness was approaching, I dropped quickly down, reaching Iriwa exactly 20 minutes after leaving the summit. Rushing down the zig-zag deep-cut paths was a bit like skiing – ‘stem-christie-ing’ with the sides of my feet!

Tuesday turned out to be a successful day’s teaching, with the Form III Physics class appearing to understand what ‘power’ was, and having at last acquired the ability to measure current in amps and resistance in ohms. Jackson, my ‘helper’, came round at lunch time so that he could make a *mwanza* [start] on his *kazi* [work]. Wednesday was the last day of October, and for the Form III RE lesson we embarked, somewhat by accident, upon a stimulating discussion on predestination and free will. Later that day, with the Christian Union Committee we discussed proposals for the Mgalu Students’ Sunday Service, to be held once every second week.

The pure, hard African light...

(from ‘The Real Africa’, written a few years later)

This is a land of blacks and whites, where distinctions are as clear as the pure, hard African light – the vivid contrast of landform in sharp relief against the deep blue sky, or the dazzling brilliance of the sky at night. In spiritual terms you are either ‘saved’ (*nimeokoka*) or ‘not-yet saved’ (*bado kuokoka*) – everyone seems to know exactly where they stand. Thus it is easy to see how people can turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the power of God.

Those who are Christians rejoice as they walk together in the light, for they know that they have been delivered from the dominion of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of light – the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son, in whom they have redemption and forgiveness of sins. Such is the joy with which they sing, ‘Born, born, born again, I’m glad I’m born again... born of the Spirit, water and blood’ (*Nimezaliwa kwa mara ya mpili... kwa Roho, maji na damu*), or ‘I’m so glad that Jesus set me free, I’m singing Glory Hallelujah! Jesus set me free!’ Such is the exuberance and zeal with which the new converts sing and testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. You are either ‘in the Kingdom’ – part of God’s family – or you are outside. Either you are saved, or you are not. Black and white. No greys, no compromise...

The great truths of the Christian life are learned and expressed in song – such as the quiet, slow devotional ‘Oh, the blood of Jesus, it washes white as snow’ (*Damu ya Yesu, husafisha kabisa!*) Another verse goes, ‘My brother, let’s go forward (together) in peace’ (*Ndugu, twende mbele kwa Imani...*)

In Kenya there is a sense of belonging, for the new convert, to a family – the Body of Christ – a sense of togetherness, oneness, and wholeness in being one. It means losing your individuality in order to become part of the one body – the living fellowship of true believers – sharing together, ministering to one another, not kept apart by differences of colour, age, nationality or background, but working together as a team, complementing one another with different gifts and skills in the task of effective witness and outreach.

This ‘coming together’ of God’s people is something Africans find natural, but as Westerners we find less easy – so much of Western culture and philosophy has emphasized the individual rather than the corporate aspect of our lives – and this is no less true of the Western Church, with its emphasis on private devotions and individual accountability towards God. But when the Spirit comes, barriers are broken down, and healing and reconciliation begin to take place.

Then we can truly sing, as they sing in Kenya, ‘We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord’. In this realm, as in others, we have so much to learn from our African brothers and sisters. From their background of family and community life,

when they become Christians they do not naturally become 'lone rangers' – neither should we, as members of Christ's Body, the living Church throughout all the world...

CHAPTER 3: THE BEAUTY OF THE TAITA HILLS

November 1973

Hard working days

As recorded in my diary:

Thursday 1 November 1973 – Jackson is brilliant: my eyes were nearly dazzled by the brightness of the polished baths! Dinner with the W's – Andrew had just returned from a long conference at Kilifini, near Mombasa, and was thus very tired.

Friday 2 November 1973 – Catharine W's Swahili translation of *Cogito ergo sum* (Latin for "I think, therefore I am") is quite superb: *Kama nilivyofikiri, hivyo ndivyo nilivyo!* James (from Kenyatta) and Sammy to dinner. The end of my eighth week here in Africa. Work is hard, and the pace of life here is FAST. Life seems almost fuller than in the 'Oxbridge' [Oxford and Cambridge Entrance Examinations] term at Haileybury – though perhaps less intellectually stretching. A weekday time-table:

- 06:30 Rise
- 07:05 Breakfast (maize porridge, toast and coffee)
- 07:40 Assembly
- 08:00 Lessons 1, 2 and 3
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 Lessons 4, 5 and 6
- 12:15 Lunch break (*ugali*, vegetables, tea)
- 14:00 Lessons 7 and 8
- 15:20 Prep
- 16:00 Prep ends
- 16:15 Games (soccer), clubs, activities
- 17:00 Closing Assembly
- 18:00 Housework, homework or seeing people if necessary
- 20:00 Dinner (main meal) – to be prepared, cooked, eaten and washed up
- 20:45 More work if necessary
- 21:30 Bedwards, wash, 'bath'
- 22:00 Lights to be blown out [Dietz or pressure lamp]

Saturday 3 November 1973 – Hard working day marking essays and preparing lessons. Dinner with the W's and Flora. Listened to Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, which brought tears to my eyes. Solar system very clear: Venus, the Moon, Jupiter, Mars – all in a line on the astral equator.

Sunday 4 November 1973 – Went to church with Aggrey – the service lasted over two hours. Singing by the waTaita *dadas* [womenfolk] was magnificent. In the afternoon I walked up on to the ridge above Iriwa, following the very beautiful ridge path. I sketched the Mgalu valley from the top, until it started raining. *Mvua kidogo* [light rain], so I took shelter and tea at the nearest house. The children looked at my pencil sketch and were quick to recognise their school, Maynard's! I walked beyond, and round to the right, entering a green cool valley, flanked on all sides by ridges, and dominated at one end by a spectacular hill which I was unable to climb [I later named it 'Kulal', after a mountain near Lake Turkana]. The vegetation and beauty were utterly different from that of the Mbale valley. For a while I forgot I was in Africa – the prospect before me was reminiscent rather of Switzerland or Sweden. I returned at high speed, in order to be

back at Iriwa before dusk. I fell (twice) – which will perhaps teach me to treat steep paths with greater respect! In the middle of the night I had an argument with Aggrey concerning the use of drink. Result: an agreement that he would not drink during term time.

Monday 5 November 1973 – Form II set for KJSE. More time for marking and planning. Planned structure for Mgalu Students' Service – hopefully Peter M will give the first talk. Played soccer and (accidentally) handled the ball no less than three times in the course of 5 minutes!

Thursday 8 November 1973 – A good day. Nothing wildly exciting or spectacular. Time spent setting end-of-term examinations. Harambee work involved cutting grass with *pangas* in preparation for Harambee Day.

Friday 9 November 1973 – Fetched water for the visitors tomorrow from the Mdongo-dongo tributary (a waterfall). *Mvua imekuja* [the rain has come]. Our rainwater tank level has now risen from 5 rings (out of 24) to 11. The only thing is – there's a lizard or something stuck in the pipe and we can't get any water out of it!

Harambee Day – and a day of 'blacks and whites'

Saturday 10 November 1973 was HARAMBEE DAY. The morning was spent getting chairs for visitors. The programme started 1½ hours late, but it then proceeded roughly as follows [transcript of the official programme]:

PROGRAMME YA KUCHANGIA MGALU HARAMBEE HIGH SCHOOL:

10TH Nov. 1973. [PROGRAMME FOR CONTRIBUTIONS...]

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Saa 5.00 (11.00 a.m.) | Chakula cha alasiri kwa wageni walioalikwa
<i>[Afternoon food with invited guests]</i> |
| Saa 6.00 (12.00 Noon) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Kufika katika kiwanja cha Mgalu
<i>[Arrival at Mgalu field]</i> (b) Maombi kuongozwa na Padre Hubert M
halafu Archdeacon J. K.
<i>[Prayers led by Padre... afterward by...]</i> (c) Kwaya kukaribisha wageni.
<i>[choir welcomes visitors]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mgalu High School 2. Kwaya ya Kilili 3. Kwaya ya Mothers Union 4. Kwaya ya Figinyi Primary School. |
| Saa 6.30 (12.30 p.m.) | Hotuba <i>[speeches]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Mwenyekiti
<i>[Chairman of the School Committee]</i> (b) Chief Herbert M (c) D.C. (au D.O.) (d) Hon. J.L.M. Shako
<i>[Minister of Wildlife and Tourism]</i> |
| Saa 7.15 (1.15 p.m.) | Kuchanga kuanzishwa <i>[commence donations]</i> |

Saa 10.00 (4.00 p.m.) Kwaya nzuri iimbe na kufungu kwa maombe.

[best choir to lead singing and prayers]

I sat with the W's, Miss Kate C and Peter M, underneath the makeshift corrugated iron covering, while Archdeacon Jeremiah K opened with a prayer; zealous songs were sung by the choirs of Mgalu and the Pentecostal and Anglican Mbale churches. These were followed by speeches by various District Officers, and ending with a superb address given by the Hon Shako, the Wundanyi Minister (MP) – for one thing he spoke very resolutely against drink, which is a brave thing for a Government official to do. A diversion from the formal proceedings was offered by a very 'happy', but slightly eccentric, old man, who would occasionally blow his whistle and stand up, shouting through a paper loud-hailer: "Mgalu-mgalu-mgalu-mgalu-mgalu-MGALU!"

Finally a list of completed *Harambee* contributions was read out by the Chairman of the School Committee, accompanied by loud applause in the following style: clap! clap! clap! (pause) clap! clap! clap! (pause) clap! clap! clap! (pause) CLAP! The crowds, who were gathered at the head of the Mgalu valley in front of the 'stage' were then invited to surge forward in the true spirit of *Harambee*. The response was terrific – Mbale people, mostly women, came with their one or two shilling notes, or even 5 or 10 shilling notes, and for a solid hour or more the money poured in. Minister Shako gave a continuous commentary throughout: something like "*sasa shillingi tano MAKOFI* [now, five shillings, CLAP!], *Mama Mwachoni shillingi mbili MAKOFI, na shillingi kumi MAKOFI, sasa shillingi kumi na moja MAKOFI, asante sana kwa shillingi tano MAKOFI...*"

The level of giving quickly soared into the thousands – Voi alone had raised nearly 1,000/-. Then there was auctioning – *kukus* [chickens], *mayai* [eggs], wood, sugar cane. I bought five enormous pawpaws for *shillingi nne* [4/-], and I immediately gave one to Catharine W. David J, a VSO volunteer from Taru School, between Voi and Mombasa, came on his motorbike. I was interested to hear his impressions of the country and work, as he had been in Kenya for 15 months. Finally, the reckoning of the accounts: Grand Total 7,996/- announced, and immediately and spontaneously (I can still remember Andrew W eagerly reaching into his pocket) more money flowed in to reach the auspicious eight thousand shilling mark. The final total was 8,037/- (nearly £500), an incredible achievement!

I then discovered that Peter M was unable to come to the Mgalu Student Service the next day, which meant that I was faced with the task of preaching – in this very first school service – my very first ever sermon! So I spent the evening in urgent preparation. It rained hard. The tank was now full, and we discovered that some 'joker' had closed the outside tap, which was why we couldn't get any water out of the tank! Thereafter the water system worked beautifully.

The next day, Sunday 11 November 1973, which happened to be Remembrance Day, the Student Service was scheduled for 09:00, my having requested that the time for the hostel breakfast would make this possible. The hostel breakfast was, therefore, ready by 10 past 9! So I spent about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour chasing the students up – it was almost a case of recruiting my own congregation from the start! Eventually at 09:50 the service began, and it was attended by nearly 50 students, mainly hostellers. However, of the staff, only the Headmaster, Harrison M himself, turned up, a state of affairs that made me very disappointed, as I had especially asked the members of staff to come and give me 'moral support'.

Well, the service went with a real swing – choruses, hymns and prayers, readings led by the students. The programme was designed as follows:

1. HYMN 90
Followed by selected choruses

2. PRAYERS i) Adoration, worship
ii) Confession of sins
3. READINGS – one Old Testament reading and one New Testament reading, related both to each other and to the talk
4. HYMN 211 “Rock of Ages, cleft for me...”
5. THE TALK – (That’s me!)
6. HYMN 99
7. PRAYERS i) Thanksgiving
ii) Intercession
8. Selected choruses followed by HYMN 271
9. THE GRACE

To be frank, though I was somewhat apprehensive about preaching for the first time, I found the actual talk (or ‘sermon’, for want of a better word) a thrilling experience. I preached about the words of Jesus: “Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1 v 15) – to my mind, important subjects. I kept close to the Bible, partly in defiance of the many so-called ‘modern ministers’ with which we (in Britain) were afflicted, who preach their own fairy-tales and who expound clever theories at the expense of the truth contained in God’s Word, the Bible. Thus in my sermon I did my best to avoid anything of that kind. The service went well, and many students expressed their appreciation of it, advocating that it had been a success.

An hour later, the Mgalu Christian Union set off for Kituri High School, near Werugha, a town above Wundanyi. It was a fascinating journey winding up through the hills, now much greener with recent rain. We bypassed the village of Sungululu and reached Kituri at 13:30, greeted by Peter M and Martinah (the CU Chairperson). The meeting began at 15:00, and the atmosphere was terrific. The Mgalu students in particular were pleased to see Peter again. After a meal together, we left for home. We met the Bishop of Mombasa on the road, as he was driving up towards Werugha in his Land Rover. He got out and talked to us, and then he drew Peter and myself aside, and assured us that he was going to send Peter back to Mbale in January as the new Headmaster of Mgalu! Terrific! (Peter had already been told about this.) A couple of minutes later an empty bus bound for Wundanyi passed us, then stopped and gave us all a free lift there. Singing various choruses in the bus was a deafening, though exciting, experience. The singing continued all the way till we reached Mbale– such had been the spirit of the day!

No sooner had I got home, however, than I found that a very different progression of events had taken place here. From what I could piece together from Aggrey, there had been a regular *furor* between Mr W, the Padre, and Aggrey and George. I heard the full story from Andrew when I went up to the W’s house for dinner. The ‘*Mdongo-dongo Boogie*’ (= dance with immoral connotations, accompanied by binge drinking) had been forbidden, as the licence had been withdrawn by the church. Anyway, the dance had then taken place – allegedly under the sponsorship, but not under the supervision, of Aggrey and George – IN OUR HOUSE! In MY house! Fortunately I had taken the precaution of locking my own room! Flora had observed that several members of her Church Youth Club had left her meeting and gone down to the house, so Mr W and the Padre went down to investigate, and found the entire house full of Mgalu students, various primary school children, as well as students from Aggrey High School; all had been charged 50 cents, and were dancing, ‘boogie-fashion’, to a record-player. The dance was stopped immediately, the participants summarily dismissed, and the following morning (Monday) Aggrey and George were busy battling things out with the Padre, Mr W, Mr Harrison M, the Mbale Chief and the Chairman of the School Committee! The end result was a series of unpleasant relationships, a lot of hot air, much frustration on the part of the W’s and others – and on my part a mixture of disappointment and ‘fed-up-ness’ (for want of a better word) – and finally, a scandal throughout the entire Mbale

Location, for which I felt partly responsible, as it was *our* house that had been used as the dance venue!

But after all of that, I enjoyed a relaxed evening with the W's, listening to Mozart and Brahms, and generally chatting over the day's events – a day, perhaps, of 'blacks and whites', in the true African spirit.

Teaching and African choruses

As recorded in my diary:

Monday 12 November 1973 – The following letter is the result of today's discussion. Would that such an atmosphere may continue:

Good afternoon, Hope you are fine. Sorry I was not able to come for lunch. Had a meeting with the Vicar and Rev W in the morning. We had a cordial discussion, which ended in an atmosphere of understanding upon which apologies were exchanged. Jackson tells me you have the gas now. Fine. I will be coming at about 4 pm to change for football. Greetings from Hellen. She has a new maid now. Yours, Aggrey.

Felt like death, with a heavy tiredness and headache – partly due, I expect, to the prevailing weather. Group singing during games time, as it was pouring with rain. A relaxed evening meal of tea, brown bread, fried eggs, fish, good-quality rice, and banana and paw-paw salad.

Tuesday 13 November 1973 – W's off to Mombasa. Moved bundles of sticks and helped maize plantation for Harambee afternoon. The waTaita seem to be inherently lazy – unlike, as Aggrey tells me, the other tribes of Kenya. Certainly the local attitude to anything that resembles 'work' is a refreshing contrast to the rat-race mentality of Britain.

Wednesday 14 November 1973 – Africa hospitable at the moment – she is mercifully kind to me. Stimulating lessons. Wrote home at length, using school duplicating paper. Early bed, overslept till 07:05 the next morning – help!

Thursday 15 November 1973 – Extensive shopping at Iriwa: everything looking so much greener and more beautiful. Discussed at length a terrific poem by John Mbiti with Form III: "Time moves fast... Round turns the earth, Round itself round... matches burning the night... Time moves fast, bitterly fast." Wonderful time reading letters from home, which included one of the best Snoopy cartoons I have ever read. I sat on my favourite tree stump, commanding a view over the great Simba vs Chui League Soccer International, played for the first time on green grass. Listening to the now familiar African choruses from the school: "*Amini, amini nakwambia, Amini, amini ujumbe mpya; yeye aliye amini mwana ana-o uzima*" [Truly, truly I say to you; truly, truly this is the good news; he who believes in the Son has eternal life...]

Friday 16 November 1973 – Physics and RE revision with Form III. Christian Union in the afternoon: Bible study groups on Psalm 27, KSCF style. Split into three groups. The first meeting of its kind I have experienced out here (group Bible study), which is the norm in Britain. The emphasis here seems to be so very much more on singing and praising, rather than on discussion and study. As St Paul wrote, "For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge" (2 Peter 1 v 5). I wrote home at length, enclosing some Snoopy cartoons.

A bad night – Aggrey came in, mentally uncoordinated and apologising profusely for disturbing me, some time after midnight.

Also, to show the importance of paying one's debts on time!

To the School Master: May I remind you of your debt with me Sh 3/20 for milk supplied by me on 10th together with three empty bottles. Please give them to the bearer. I am yours, Dairy Woman.

Favourite tree stump

(from 'The Real Africa', written a few years later)

At the end of October I received a letter from a member of my family with disturbing news... there was a pause, and then the inevitable storm broke – and though coming from afar, it seemed as if I was being bombarded from all sides at once. As in the upheavals at Mgalu, so once again I seemed to be caught in the cross-fire of a situation that was not of my own making. In many ways it was providential that I was not in England – the outrage and hysteria and bitterness within my family were unpleasant enough when I felt the reverberations 5,000 miles away, and after a time-lag of some 10 days.

The unreliability of the postal system caused problems of its own, and in one letter home I had to explain the local situation by admitting that postal communication with Mbale depended upon:

1. the efficiency of the Voi postal administration;
2. the reliability of the Voi to Iriwa bus service;
3. the competence of the Iriwa post-mistress; and
4. the loyalty of the runner between Iriwa and Mgalu!

One occasion I remember vividly – sitting on the terraced slopes of the 'amphitheatre' that formed the head of the Mgalu valley – overlooking the games field where a soccer match was in progress. I sat on my favourite tree stump, reading family mail – when the hiatus was at its height. I could hear the exuberant, rhythmical singing of the Christian Union from the school buildings below. I looked up and watched the game of soccer. It had been raining recently and the terraced hillsides were a rich, vivid green. The warm evening sun was about to dip behind the far range of hills. Suddenly I felt completely at home – here in Mbale, Kenya. How beautiful and hospitable Africa was! At that time in particular I felt that Africa was mercifully kind to me...

Swahili phrases

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Friday 16 November 1973:

Thank you very much indeed for your letters... Actually I read them sitting on my favourite tree stump, half way up the hill below the Maynard teachers' houses on that side of the valley, shaded by some trees and commanding a superb view of the great Simba vs Chui League Football International Match taking place below me – for the first time on *green grass* (as opposed to brown earth)! Actually I usually play, but I wasn't feeling very energetic on Thursday. Blue sky above, slanting rays of the sun, and enthusiastic singing coming from the school building in the valley below – now familiar songs, mostly in Swahili, which I find I hum to myself almost without thinking!

I was delighted with the Snoopy cartoon. Yes, Snoopy says, "Happiness is a piece of fudge caught on the first bounce." I disagree. Happiness is a Friday evening, relaxing on the verandah with its superb, clear view of Kasigau Mountain, drinking Earl Grey tea, eating toasted scones with home-made lemon marmalade, and reading Snoopy [from Peanuts] cartoons! Oh yes, and whistling Rachmaninoff, Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Bach chorales, hymns, choruses or Christmas carols on the wooden Snake-charmer [recorder], which, believe me, is worth its weight in gold. I spend many a restful hour, sitting outside my mud hut in the cool of the day, charming the snakes – if any happen to be around!

I am writing tonight because I fear that next week will be chock-a-block with the invigilation and marking of exams. I'll try and drop a line midweek, though.

One thing I notice about the local language is that many of the Swahili words are wonderfully onomatopoeic and superbly expressive. As I mentioned previously, the word

dudu ('doo-doo'), meaning 'insect', has connotations with 'doodle-bug' – i.e. unpleasantly destructive vermin. On a more domestic level, the expression as you knock at the door (if there is one), wanting to enter someone's house or mud hut, is "*Hodi!*" (pronounced 'hodee') – to which the (automatic) answer is "*Karibu*" ('ka-ree-boo'), meaning 'welcome!' I expect that expressions like these will come naturally to me after my return (you will have to put up with Swahili-isms every other sentence!) *Mafuta* ('ma-foo-ta') is 'kerosene' – never called kerosene, even by *wazungu* (Englishmen).

The word for 'cow', as in the Bishop of Mombasa's name, is *ng'ombe* ('eng-orm-bay'), which is phonetic, if you imagine a cow going "*eng-ooooOooooORrrmbay!*" Similarly, the ki-Dabida for dog is beautifully onomatopoeic: *mbwa*. Yappy African dogs: "*Mbwa! mbwa! mbwa! mbwa-bWA-bWA!*"

The word for a din or squawking noises made by many children – crying or wailing – is *kalele* ('ka-ley-ly'), as in "the children were making a regular *kalele* when I came in." A child is *mtoto* – plural *watoto*. Small = *dogo* with an appropriate conjugatory prefix. Thus, *watoto wadogo walifanya kalele* = "the small children were making a racket."

Finally, the unbeatable word, meaning literally 'sharp' – used for knives, sour fruit and sour people. The word is *kali* ('car-ly'), e.g. *kisu kali* = a sharp knife. But, for example, the Mgalu story goes that a wonderful Headmistress though Miss Kate C was, she could also be very *kali* indeed, if students did not pay their fees on time (I'll leave that to your imagination!).

Well, it's getting late. The crickets are chirping. The stars are shining. The night is moonless and black. Banana leaves are gently swaying in the breeze. The house is empty – rather spooky it can be too! Early start tomorrow, to be at Wundanyi Bank by 08:30 when it opens – unless you're first in the queue the waiting time is approx. 1 hour for any single operation! The W's are thinking in terms of an afternoon's outing tomorrow, which will be a welcome break – the first time I've really 'got away' since half term.

So – oh yes, the final word. The Swahili equivalent of *voilà!* or 'OK, that's fine'. *Bas!* Pronounced between 'bass' and 'bus', 'Bahs!' If you're satisfied, you lift up both hands, as if to silence an audience, and say – in a deep, resonant, authoritative voice, "*BAS!*"

So that's all. *Bas.*

One thing have I asked of the Lord

(from 'The Real Africa', written a few years later)

*One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple (Psalm 27 v 4)*

Times I remember when the house was like God's house, filled with praise and intercession. "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 14 v 2). Hours at a weekend, alone in the house, pacing up and down the corridor, or to and fro across the front room, the view from the verandah: green hills falling away into the desert plains; distant mountains so clear you could almost reach out and touch them.

Better still were the days when the rains came, when the clouds rose up from the valleys below and mists closed in and swirled about the house. Then it was like a ship at sea, fogbound or storm-driven. Shut off from the outside world and all its troubles – a place of perfect privacy, perfect freedom. Then I could really take time to pray – for the fearful situations at hand – that the flood-tide of God's salvation and grace and blessing might be poured out, as a torrent of water

revives a desolate land: “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom...” (Isaiah 35 v 1, 2)

On fine days it was wonderful to go up ‘Prayer Mount’, which looked over the Mgalu valley and commanded superb views over the entire Mbale Location and beyond – out over the hills and on to the plains (dappled with the blue-grey shadows of clouds), away from the ‘island’ – to where your far-reaching gaze could make out the beginnings of the outside world. Here you could meditate and pray ‘over’ the entire situation – immediately below you, or away beyond the horizon...

Jacarandas and Mlungu trees

So, as indicated in my Friday letter, the next morning was Saturday, and I made a very early start for Wundanyi, taking a short cut in the fresh day’s dawn, and reaching the bank precisely at 08:30 – *saa mbili na nusi* – when it opened. In town I met Peter M, Mrs S, Julias R, Martinah (from Kituri High School), and an American missionary who had just moved up into the hills to work at Werugha Pentecostal Church.

After lunch I left with the W’s, intending to climb Susu, the mountain rising above Wusi. However, no sooner had we started out than it started to rain. We took rapid shelter under a palm bush, which held the main force of the rain at bay for a limited period. But we emerged just 10 minutes later, *very wet*, and slithered back down to the car! We visited Liz at the Farmers Training College, a curious Scandinavian ‘oasis’ of advanced civilization in the middle of nowhere. We then tried a second ascent of Susu, but squalls of rain were sweeping towards us across the plains – so we abandoned the climb for another day, and dropped in at Murray High School to visit Miss Kate C on our way back. The colours after the rain were simply magnificent: rainbows, the soft pink glow of the setting sun on the plains, the Sagalla and Kasigau mountain ranges a rich blue in the near distance, violet Jacarandas, and coral-coloured, soft pink ‘Mlungu’ trees. And in the distance, fabulously clear, the lower Pare Mountains of Tanzania, perhaps as far as the Usambara mountain range, just inland from Tanga, 70 miles away!

Duty Master

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 21 November 1973:

I’m afraid – sad though I am to say it – that I am writing this letter sitting up in bed, having retired earlier this morning with a severe headache and general fluey feeling. I was warned yesterday, by Mr W, that there was a bug going around, so I presume this is just it. I feel the same as I did – now almost a year ago – at the end of last Christmas term at Haileybury, after my Cambridge results, during the famous flu epidemic there. Sorry if this is not clear or coherent – sustained concentration is difficult – I am doing my best! Actually I hadn’t really been feeling well since Sunday, but – perhaps rather foolishly – I carried on, hoping it would pass after a series of good nights’ rests.

Well, this morning – I don’t know what to make of Aggrey; I would say almost semi-dipsomaniac, semi-schizophrenic – try living with one of them! Anyway, he was drinking heavily last night, and he came home in the very early morning, waking me up (as usual). Anyway, this morning at 06:40, while I was dressing, he burst into my room, still far, far gone, uttering a torrent of incoherent abuse and accusations, telling me in so many words (so *many* words) what a useless Duty Master I was, and why hadn’t I done this, and why hadn’t I done that, and why didn’t I know how the school was – and this thing and that thing and the other thing – in fact what a hopeless person I was altogether!

Well I pushed him gently out of the room, taking the precaution of locking the door, and took it all with a large pinch of *chumvi* [salt]. I at least like to get *dressed* in peace! How Aggrey managed to sober up before the school examinations began, if only slightly, I don’t know! However, he still smells strongly of beer, so I don’t know what the students think of all this.

What has rather compelled me to keep on my feet is that we are doing the school exams – invigilation for 7½ hours yesterday, and then marathon marking (on which I’ve scarcely started). I think a combination of this – intense work, the increased heat, bad nights etc. has put me out of action – so I’m enjoying a brief respite. To think, only last term (4 or 5 months ago) I was *taking* exams – now I’m *invigilating* them! Poor friends back at Haileybury taking Oxbridge Exams! The work however is not without its humorous side. Yesterday, marking Physics, we had students measuring current in Ohms and power in Amps – and one student, obviously unwilling to commit himself either way, measured something in “Ohmps”!

Floating dream...

As recorded in my diary:

I have only a hazy recollection of the next 48 hours. All I know is that I was flat on my back in a kind of floating dream, a euphoria of forgetfulness, ‘out of the land of the living’. Mrs W came down, acting as a nurse (bless her!), diagnosing my state as one of utter exhaustion, possibly catalysed by a flu bug, and perhaps aided by a touch of malaria! I spent the first night at home, and moved up to the W’s for the next day. I listened to some music: Schubert’s Trout Quintet, Beethoven’s First Symphony and Handel’s Messiah. In a waking dream, my eyes completely unable to focus, bog-eyed, blotto. I still have difficulty in distinct close-up vision – that’s why I’m writing so slowly...

A cyclorama of events and impressions and aspirations and hallucinations, and disconnected imaginings swimming circling illogical in my mind. Britain, England, Cambridge, people home-life farming Scotland gliding flying mountains bedsitters examination cold cosiness bright lights red paper frozen milk leaden skies torn clouds icy stillness fog and silence epidemics illness food distribution telephones people dreaming white sheets lighted winter cities carols cathedrals skiing blue skies white rocks dark trees starry nights dancing and drink swirling forwards pressure on and on drama spring trees wet leaves quiet foliage rains darkness white water music death-beats drumming a tight bank to starboard and down swirling through the clouds suspended above the world the rush of wind the whistle of wings lower straighten up wheels down hard grass fresh silence cool wind...

Catharine and the Dietz lamp

(from ‘The Real Africa’, written a few years later)

Late November, 1973 – illness, after an unpleasant brush with Aggrey (who was drunk), and an unsuccessful attempt at invigilating and marking examinations... I spent the afternoon lying flat on my back, in a kind of floating dream, my eyes completely unable to focus...

It was then that a wonderful thing happened. I suddenly came to – Catharine had come into the room, with a Dietz lamp, as the light was beginning to fail. She had brought me a plate of home-made scones and a pot of tea. Outside and overhead there was a deafening roar – the unforgettable, delicious sound of heavy rain falling on the *bati* [tin] roofs. The oppression of the hot and sultry atmosphere lifted – and the long-awaited arrival of rain brought thankfulness to our hearts: “Joy is like the rain...”

Storm clouds at sunset

I recall the next few days as a series of impressions:

On Friday, after a couple of days ‘out of the land of the living’, I got up with an effort, after a good relaxed night. A November morning of mists and cold. Still *hapana mzuri* [not well]. Still not really ‘in the land of the living’. But it was a relaxed day, up and doing. I managed some marking in the evening. An American couple living at Wundanyi came to visit the W’s in the evening, and I

welcomed an invitation to join them for the evening meal, for some conversation and fellowship.

On Saturday I managed to walk up to Wundanyi, and further on to Wesu Hospital, perched beneath Wesu Rock – a very good establishment with an electricity generator. The whole countryside looked much greener and fresher after the recent rain. Members of the Kituri Christian Union came down, and we spent the afternoon together at Mgalu. It was good to see Peter M again – he is staying with the S's overnight. I read, for the very first time, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which is the first of the Narnia books by CS Lewis. A student notice posted outside the main classrooms read: 'Is this a school or a beer house?' – which is a sign that the situation at Mgalu is desperate.

On Sunday I felt down again, but I revived considerably during the second Mgalu Student Service at which Peter was preaching – a terrific sermon, full of wisdom, clear thinking, simplicity and challenge. Surely we need more preachers like this in our churches in Britain! Attendance – about 30 hostellers, and the service started over ½ hour late. In the afternoon John and Sue K came over from Werugha – a wonderful American couple (anthropologists) from Southern California.

At dusk I witnessed one of the most incredible sights I have ever seen – storm clouds billowing turbulently towards us over the hills, caught by the last glow of the setting sun. Contrasts of sky-blue, golden-yellow and deep grey, where a nearer cloud, bulging uncannily forwards, partially covered a much higher, thinner cloud belt. Heavy greys and pinks over the distant hills; flamingo pink and lilac where thin wisps of cloud merged with the blue sky; a curious duck-egg blue-green colour at the edges, where offshoots from the main cloud mass crept along the ridges of the valley on either side of us; an ever-changing array of mysterious colours – their beauty vanishing with the failing light.

Then at half past six we set out for Murray High School, encountering thunder storms and heavy rain on the way. Everyone was there: the S's, Peter, Levi M and Miss Kate C, or 'Aunty Kate', as she was affectionately known. It was the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols followed by a Nativity Play – full of angels holding blankets and saying, "And the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid!" Margaret W (aged 3) was particularly enthralled – she had decided that in her next Nativity Play at Mbale around Christmas, Aunty Kate is going to be an angel!

On Tuesday the hostellers were late for school again because of wet firewood. Why they don't store sufficient wood inside at night so that it will be dry the next morning I can't think – it seems such an obvious solution to such a simple problem! It had rained heavily during the night, so I took a dawn walk (with the sun rising above wisps of mist) to the bridge over the Mdongo-dongo to see the river in full flood – very rocky and precipitous, with a torrent fairly thundering past, the water bright red-brown with churned up earth and sand – a dramatic experience. A hard working and productive day, including a lively Physics lesson explaining elementary electrical theory – a case of 'back to square 1' following abysmal exam results. I pretended to be an electron going through a resistor – a very painful process! In the English lesson I showed the students some photographs of my home back in England – there were some blank looks of amazement on their faces!

The sky was an unbelievable sight. A crescent moon setting in the west, with the dark part uncommonly bright – we reckoned that she was enjoying full 'earth-shine' – in line with Jupiter, Venus and Mars. By 10 o' clock Orion was well up, with Sirius, as bright as a planet, now some way above the horizon. The rain had

made the atmosphere amazingly clear, and the stars flashed like burning fires. My mind went back to Britain – I could have been wandering aimlessly up and down the Art school on a wet Sunday afternoon, or deafened by uproars in the Dormitory Classroom – but that is now a thing of the past, 5,000 miles away. *This is Africa*. The shapes of banana leaves against a star-bright sky. Terrific!

Medical mishaps

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Tuesday 27 November 1973:

This last week has been coloured by a few medical mishaps. Today I ripped open the top of my finger on a thorn down at the river (not serious!). Yesterday morning I burned the back of my throat in an attempt to wolf down porridge rather too quickly – better now, but I was sucking peppermints like billy-oh yesterday.

And of course last week! I hope it wasn't cause for too much alarm. Indeed I am now much better, though not perhaps 100%. In a few days I shall be able to say, "According to my health I am just like a fiddle!" [student quote]. Yes, quite a dramatic experience. Soon after I sent off my last letter, Mrs W came down, acting as a nurse (being qualified as such). She is wonderful! I was given aspirin and quinine – in heavy doses – just in case I had malaria. For the next 48 hours I was on my back in a kind of floating dream, a kind of euphoria or limbo of forgetfulness – 'out of the land of the living'. The next day I moved up to the W's and listened to some Beethoven and the Trout Quintet, surrounded by pillows (to keep my head from exploding, or so I thought) – unable to read as one eye could hardly open, and the two together were completely unable to focus – absolutely blotto! Eventually on Friday morning, after many, many hours sleep, I banked to starboard, spiralling through the clouds, down, down, level out, straighten up, wheels down, LAND!

I came back to earth and spent a relaxed weekend, doing a little work, but taking life fairly gently. It was diagnosed as severe exhaustion, catalysed by a flu bug, and possibly aided by a touch of malaria! I think a culmination of various pressures – bad nights (not due to coffee, as I rarely take it after breakfast, and we have a delicious chocolate drink, Nestlé Milo); pressure at school, setting, invigilating and marking examinations; the generally touchy atmosphere in the staff room; an inconsistent relationship with Aggrey – meaning that the atmosphere in the house is never completely relaxed – and, to be honest, the current family hiatus and uncertainty not playing an insignificant part.

And if you think, really an *inevitable* culmination, aided by the much less obvious psychological strains (which I was warned about) – being in a new country, being a householder for the first time, learning a new language, adapting to a new way of life, experiencing a very different – though agreeable – climate, always being confronted by new impressions, new faces, new experiences, and not having *really* relaxed all my time in Kenya so far! Don S actually predicted this would happen – when I mentioned I was ill, he said, "Yes, that probably means being flat out for 48 hours!" How did he guess?

Anyway, it gave me a real chance to 'unwind', rest, relax and feel refreshed again – though I have a considerable marking pile-up as a result! I read the first part of the Narnia books – The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. It was superb and very good light reading material, very much in the same vein as The Hobbit or Lord of the Rings. Last Sunday we witnessed a fantastically beautiful spectacle: storm clouds, billowing turbulently towards us over the hills, caught by the last glow of the setting sun. Lots of love, always. Adrian.

PS The whole of the Taita District (including Voi) has run out of sugar!

End of term

As recorded in my diary:

Wednesday 28 November 1973 – A day of solid hard work – marking Form I RE and the Form III English essays, some of which were very imaginative. I was encouraged by the fact that only nine students (out of the whole form) got under 45%, on a hard paper. I

worked from 08:00 to 12:30, and almost solidly from 14:00 to 21:00 – nearly 12 hours work – but I finished all the marking completely, putting the marks down in the Form III reports, thus rendering them complete. Dinner at 10 pm, then I collapsed, exhausted!

Thursday 29 November 1973 – I spent most of the morning flat out, recovering from yesterday's efforts. It had been, however, essential for me to have finished the marking by this morning. I was greeted by a salvo of complaints when handing back the papers: "Please sir! I don't understand your marking! The addition is wrong" – I was so fed up by the end of it that I felt like saying, "Well, if you don't like the way I mark, then I shan't bother to mark your work in future!" In the afternoon – the great end-of-term Mgalu vs Maynard Football [Soccer] League International Match was hazarded by light rain. Kick off was at 16:15. Mgalu won 4 – 3 after some very untidy play early on.

At 19:00 or thereabouts I was 'fool' enough to venture out to Iriwa to buy some eggs. My only guiding light was the feeble illumination of a rapidly failing torch and the intermittent flashes of lightning, now increasing rapidly in both intensity and frequency. Rain quickly followed – and I just managed to reach Dixons [shop] before a cloud-burst, in which I would have been soaked to the skin in a matter of seconds, even with an umbrella. I tried to contact George [who lived nearby] when the worst was over, but he was not at home. So I took refuge in another *duka* [shop], where I bought some eggs and was given some roast banana to eat. The rain showed no signs of easing; my torch had failed, and the Iriwa road was becoming more slippery and dangerous every minute. *Que faire?* Just as I was wondering, Lo and Behold! The Voi bus came along, lights blazing! We (that is to say, myself and the person who was helping me, from Dixons) were some way above the road, and by the time we reached road level the bus had passed without seeing us. So we dashed after it shouting "Ngoja! Ngoja!" [Wait!] at the tops of our voices. Fortunately, the driver heard us and stopped the bus. Thus I was driven back to the Maynard stop, free of charge, whence I made my way cautiously back to the house in safety.

Friday 30 November 1973 – Last day of term. I tried desperately to persuade students to shift bundles of firewood, but the inherent laziness of the waTaita prevailed. This was coupled with the excuse that "It is our tribal custom that the women do all the work"; taking this with a pinch of salt, I replied, "The Kenyan motto 'Harambee' means *everyone* pulls together!" We closed the school at 12:00 noon after a final Assembly and distribution of Uhuru Day badges. 'Boogie' in our house – mercifully with soft drinks – for the football team that had won the match. I got away from the house at 2 o'clock, by which time hard booze was beginning to infiltrate. I took a good long invigorating walk up along the ridge to the highest point [Prayer Mount]. The heat was at times terrific, and when I sat down, at the summit, I felt myself glowing from tip to toe like an electric heater. I didn't stay too long, as storm clouds were beginning to roll in from the Sagalla Hills to the east. I was much refreshed by the experience, however, and spent the evening at the W's, relaxing, listening to music, and reading about pulsars and quasars.

The 'Real Africa' – Part 1

(from 'The Real Africa', written a few years later)

So, what of the real Africa? The Lord had put me in a situation – isolated, remote from the compromise and complexities of the Western world:

- (a) I was *detached*, free to be my true self as a Christian. I was free to express my faith, sincerely and openly, encouraged by the warmth and joy of the Christian community in Taita – fellow missionaries, and African brothers and sisters in Christ. I had to live up to expectations, it is true, but these were the expectations of fellow Christians, who could sympathize with my weakness and help me when I stumbled. I was under authority, true, but it was a Christian hierarchy based upon the authority of God – a 'theocracy' – and to serve him is perfect freedom. Here, safe in the remoteness and vastness of Africa, no longer could anyone ask awkward questions about my thoughts and beliefs, or my experiences: I was free to live them out and be true to myself, without having to put on appearances. For I was *immersed* in Africa. News

did come from outside – ‘wars, rumours of war’, family upheavals, distant unrest. But news often came too late, when I could do nothing to help: separated by distance and time, those events were somehow unreal, remote – they seemed to belong to some other world, forgotten like a fading dream. For Africa was all around me, bright and colourful, in its fullness and reality – in its vivid contrast of good and evil, pain and joy.

- (b) I was *committed* to the Lord – to his death and resurrection, to his suffering, to his life – and the people he had given me to serve. The verse which perhaps impressed me most vividly when I went out to Kenya was Mark 8 v 34: “Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost, but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake and for the gospel, he will find his true self” (NEB, approx.) And perhaps the most significant experience of the year was the time when, in the midst of frustration, disappointment, sickness confusion and suffering, I could see, suddenly, clearly – like a single shaft of sunlight in a dark forest – the loving hand of God at work, wanting to reach out and save those who were lost and helpless. This was altogether the most important thing, the gospel, “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Romans 1 v 16) – and it was for the sake of the Lord Jesus and for the gospel that I had to give myself up entirely for him to use, to die to self, to ‘get lost’ in Africa for the Lord. So I was able to experience (perhaps only momentarily) the thrill of being not just immersed in Africa, but ‘lost in Africa’ as well. And perhaps it was just this – a glorious sense of *lost-ness* – that gave rise to the whole concept of the ‘Real Africa’. For the moment I stopped holding on to my own self, and my own happiness, as soon as I was prepared to let go and lose myself for the Lord, I found complete fulfilment, deep joy – even in the suffering, especially in the suffering – satisfaction and wholeness: I had found my true self.

This experience of total self-forgetfulness and self-loss was only momentary, at most a fleeting glimpse – but it was a glimpse of a great truth, a foretaste perhaps of deeper and greater things to come. And this truth, together with the art of praising God – which is in fact very closely linked – was perhaps the greatest single discovery I made. I thought at the time that this is the lesson of the Real Africa, the lesson that I needed to put into practice more and more, both in Britain and in the years ahead in countries far away – the art of deliberately letting go, forgetting self, looking to God, praising him in all circumstances, rejoicing in him...

CHAPTER 4: CHRISTMAS IN THE TAITA HILLS

December 1973

Handel's 'Messiah' in Nairobi Cathedral

Saturday 1 December 1973 – Up at 04:45, stars still brilliant. I looked towards the south to unknown constellations, but alas there was no Southern Cross yet. The Plough was still visible in the north, with its feet stuck up in the air, the pointers leading vertically downwards to the horizon. Breakfast, and a dawn-pink walk, carrying both suitcases as Aggrey is a slow walker. We caught the 7 o'clock OTC bus from Wundanyi, with views above the clouds from the Dembwa road. We took in a woman at Mwatate who was very ill with childbirth, and rushed her to Voi District Hospital, but sadly she died before we got there. It was a sad and disturbing scene, with much wailing.

From then on it was an uneventful journey north-west, with the bush looking almost unnaturally green and lush. Parts of the landscape around Mtito Andei looked almost English in composition – a far cry from the parched grass and black leafless bush of a few weeks before. Soon the Ngong Hills rose above the horizon on our left, a plane came into land from the south, and the buildings of Embakasi Airport, and finally the Nairobi city skyline itself, came into view.

Hellen very kindly drove me to the C's, who were just returning from a Messiah rehearsal. Mike, a fellow YSA, called round to arrange plans for his forthcoming stay in the Taita Hills. He sounded very depressed about his school and the YSA experience in general. The Messiah performance started at 8.30 pm. The Anglican Cathedral was packed with *wazungu*, with scarcely an African to be seen! I saw the R's, and Jonathan and Richard, fellow YSAs. The music was terrific – it was the first time, I think, that I had actually listened to Messiah from beginning to end! We returned, very tired, at midnight.

The next day, Sunday, I went to the Cathedral service, Mattins at 10.30 am. The preacher was the Provost, recently appointed as the new Bishop of Maseno. It turned out to be a slightly unfortunate sermon, in which he recited two jokes, both of which went wrong (something about Bishop 'Upper Nile' and Bishop 'Up a Gum Tree') – and then made three attempts at getting the right verse for his text! He is renowned as a good preacher, however, and apparently he is not afraid of speaking out against the Government, which means that he is unpopular in some Government circles.

I had a relaxed afternoon, and then went to the 'Messiah' performance again in the evening. We musical fanatics! "Ev'ry va-alley, ev'ry valley, sha-all be exa-alted. Shall be-e-e exa-a-a-a... a-alted!" In the last chorus, just as the exposition of the 'Amen' fugue was ending, there was a resounding Bang! The orchestra stopped momentarily, and then continued as if nothing had happened. I looked around confused, and then suddenly my speculations were greeted by a shower of hot glass: an electric light bulb had exploded vertically above my head!

Pumwani and Nairobi Cinema

On Monday once again I had arranged a *rendez-vous* with Aggrey at the Hilton at 10 am, but he failed to keep it. After a busy morning shopping, I took the bus to Pumwani, but Aggrey was not in. "*Ametembea*" – he has gone for a walk. So I looked in on Jonathan at CITC and found Peter and Howard, YSAs, who are off to Zambia tomorrow. They both seem to be really enjoying the YSA 'experience'. In the early evening the three of us went to see 'The Day of the Jackal' at the Nairobi Cinema. I thought it was an excellent film, bringing back happy memories of Paris. There was a desperately exciting climax at the end, and when we came out of the cinema it was dark.

I was supposed to have met Harry C there but, as I later discovered, their car had broken down. So I had a rather apprehensive walk to the Post Office, hoping that a bus would take me to the right place fairly quickly. Nairobi is not such a pleasant city at night. But I got on the wrong bus. I alighted at a bus stop I was assured was only 200 yards away from the Argwings Kodhek shopping centre and service station (near where the C's live). I started running down the road – as there was no lighting. Some people I passed started shouting, and some, I felt, were giving me the chase. All the unpleasant scenes from 'The Cross and the Switch-blade' came to mind. Eventually, after running hard for a good half mile, and just as I was slowing down for lack of breath, an English woman drove past me in a van, picked me up and took me back to the service station – whence I was able to make my way back to the C's house, with a feeling of exhaustion and relief!

The next day I made the trip to Pumwani once again to look for Aggrey. Once again, he was not there: "*Ametembea.*" I gave up! But I had a successful day, getting all necessary shopping done, from camera films to a plastic table cloth. I took photographs of the Kenyatta Conference Centre and Houses of Parliament, had lunch at the 'Honeypot' café, and then took a bus up to the Kenya Science Teachers College, where I looked at some Physics demonstration equipment, which I am hoping to buy for the school. Relaxed evening, early to bed.

Hitch-hiking to Voi

On Wednesday I tried hitch-hiking to Voi. The day started with a perilous bus journey from Argwings Kodhek to the Hilton Hotel. I felt myself being squeezed out of all recognition, and almost pushed out of the bus. Getting at my purse (in the side pocket of my rucksack) to pay my fare was a Herculean task! I managed to alight at 5 minutes to 8, and ran to Accra Road and the Mombasa coast bus, which was due to leave at 8 o' clock sharp. I arrived just as it was about to leave, shouting "*Ngoja! Ngoja!*" [Wait for me, please], waving my arms wildly in the air and brandishing a cardboard notice which read *VOI TAFADHALI*. Everyone aboard the bus erupted in laughter. The conductor, seeing that I was a hitch-hiker, said he would take me as far as Athi River for free. I said, "Will you take me to the Machakos turn, free?" "Well, OK." So I arrived at the Machakos turn-off at 9, having enjoyed a steady view of Mount Kenya (Kirinyaga) 70 miles away, its distinctive, dramatic volcanic shape rising clear above the morning mist.

After an hour and a half's wait, during which a seemingly endless procession of 'empty' cars (with no passengers) roared past me, the 31st car – a Toyota Land Cruiser with English farmers from Nanyuki on their way to Mombasa – picked me up. The sudden transition from the harsh, arid roadside to a comfortable seat, air conditioning and stereo music was worth the waiting! We reached Voi at 1.30 pm, having covered the distance from Machakos in just three hours. I intended to wait for the first bus from Voi that took the Msau route, as I had a very heavy suitcase. However, as the next one did not leave till 5, I figured that $\frac{3}{4}$ hour's stiff walk in the Taita Hills was better than 3 hours wait in Voi, so I took the OTC to Wundanyi at 2 pm. The hills were looking lovely, and I enjoyed a good walk down the cross country path, greeting friends who seemed pleased to see me back.

Yes, it was *good* to get back into the countryside again! I had found that in Nairobi – with its tall buildings, busy crowds and reckless traffic – I had felt genuinely scared. However, when I realised that for the first time in my life I had been away from modern civilisation for 13 weeks – seeing nothing bigger than a one-storey house and hearing nothing louder than the occasional lethargic bus – and had then suddenly been plunged into the millstream of modern city life, the sensation was not so surprising. Anyway, it was good to be back in a familiar place, and amongst people that I knew. Andrew and Margaret W were at home. Catharine was just about to leave for Nairobi on the night train. So I spent the night there, baby-sitting Margaret, while Andrew drove Catharine to Voi station.

Venus was incredibly bright, and the first sightings of the arrival of the comet Kohoutek had just been reported in the East African Standard.

Visit from Peter and Howard

As recorded in my diary:

Thursday 6 December 1973 – Leisurely morning unpacking and making lemon squash. I was glad to see that the school building was progressing rapidly. Then in the middle of the afternoon, I heard some people coming down the path towards the house. Opening the back door, who should I see arriving but the Padre (the Revd John N), followed by Peter and Howard! Apparently Tanzania – part of their original itinerary *en route* for Zambia – had turned out to be a ‘bad trip’. They had got as far as Arusha, but no further. Travel, they said, was almost impossible, the people unfriendly, the regulations strict, the prices exorbitant. So, after a night at Moshi, they headed for the Taita Hills – which have now acquired the reputation as a rescue ground for ex-Tanzanian tourist refugees! They were most welcome. Howard had a head cold, so he was pretty well out of action. But Peter and I looked around the place. He was very impressed with everything. We bought some avocados from Geoffrey.

Friday 7 December 1973 – Peter and I walked up to Wundanyi, Howard remaining at home. Market Day. Met Don and Lyn S. We bought cabbage, bananas, green maize etc. between showers of rain. We spent ages getting the meat (= hunk of cow), though waiting and watching was fascinating. Wet afternoon. We walked to Iriwa when the rain had eased off, to look at the Mdongo-dongo River in full flood. On our return it rained again, just as we were crossing the bridge, and by the time we reached the house, less than 5 minutes later, we were soaked through and through and through! Full dinner of stew, rice and avocados – and hilarious conversation about Suffolk and Lincolnshire farming.

Excerpt from a letter from the Bishop, referring to a choice between going to the CMS Conference and the Harambee Schools Conference:

Dear Adrian,

Thank you very much for your letter. I think you attend which you think will help your work here.

Yours faithfully, Peter Mombasa

Bishop of Mombasa:

Manager, Diocesan Harambee Schools

Voi railway station

As recorded in my diary:

Saturday 8 December 1973 – Busy day reading and writing. Tea with Samuel M. Felt ill in the evening.

Sunday 9 December 1973 – Quiet day, as I was not feeling too good. I had intended going to Taveta, but decided to stay put instead. Sketched Kasigau from the house.

Monday 10 December 1973 – Felt much better in the morning, so I kitted up for a ‘safari’. Beautiful start to the journey to Voi, down the back way, on Kireti’s bus. A clear, crisp morning, with everything looking fresh and green. Perilous journey following the contours of the hills, on a road now ridged and furrowed because of the recent rain. We descended to the village of Msau, and thence off the hills and on to the plains. I began to realise, during the course of the journey, that perhaps it would be unwise to go to Taveta, since I had arranged to meet Thomas the previous day. And on arrival at Voi the Asian proprietor at Patel’s Café warned me that Taveta had no hostel or hotel, and that most of the people lived in the wide-reaching hinterland, so that I thought I would be unlikely to find his house before dark. I therefore decided to postpone my visit to Taveta, and to spend some time at Voi instead. I went to look at the steam trains at Voi railway station. It was like swinging back 50 years, into the 1920s, with telephones, bells and offices. The

great engines themselves, some new and smart, others old and rusted; the engine shed, dark, covered with black oil, housing several locomotives in various stages of disrepair; the water tanks with pipes hanging down like elephant trunks; huge metal wheels, the hissing of steam, hot water spraying puddles on the oil-soaked sleepers. A small steam engine was shunting trucks from one line to another. Fierce sunlight, increasing steadily as the day wore on; in the background the Sagalla Hills. A huge sign read:

VOI. JUNCTION FOR TANZANIA LINES. 1836 FT.

I talked (in Swahili) with some people who were waiting for the Nairobi train – considering it arrived at 10:00 pm, they had a long wait! I discovered that the Swahili for steam engine was *gari la moshi*. I took the Taita bus back at 12:30 pm, glad to ascend into the hills once again, away from the oppressive heat of the plains. I reached Mbale at 3 pm, and then walked to Wundanyi to buy groceries. Everyone was surprised to see me back from Taveta so quickly.

Climbing Yale

The following morning started with a frantic rush at 5 am to see if I could see the Comet Kohoutek. In this I was disappointed, as it was nowhere to be seen. The dawn itself, however, was worth watching – a pink haze in the east towards Kasigau, with curious, animated shapes of dark purple cloud rising up out of it. I set out later at about 8 o'clock, intending to go for a long walk, possibly climbing mountains. I took a short cut route to the Werugha road. Though it became progressively warmer as the sun rose higher, a fair breeze began to blow as I gained height steadily, eventually reaching Kituri and Werugha.

I took a long, thoughtful look at the various peaks surrounding the 'northern plateau' – as I sipped Coca Cola – trying to assess which one would be best to climb. Eventually I settled for a high hill towering up on my left, whose foot seemed only about a mile away. I later discovered that this was the lower peak of Yale, the second highest mountain in the Taita Hills. I set out once again, the time being just after 10 am. A farmer guided me up the first part of the ascent, until the path left the undergrowth and trees, and began to climb the bare and rocky hillside. I followed the top of a spur inclined at about 30 or 40 degrees. This meant scaling huge expanses of glistening rock – with my new climbing boots I had no fear of slipping and falling. Nearing the top of the peak I had my first view of Kilimanjaro, whose snow-capped peak was once again in cloud. At the top of the first rise, the main peak of Yale loomed ahead, tall and sheer. The way up was more difficult than I had anticipated, because the path kept plunging into deep jungle, in which I feared there might be snakes.

Yale is a three-peaked mountain, with the top two peaks connected by a veritable knife-edge (only 20 feet wide). In some ways it was an easy climb, the only difficulty being that I kept losing the path. African paths have a curious habit of petering out, or of disappearing, and then reappearing like the Cheshire cat. Then I realised that it's not a case of 'people going where the paths are made', but 'paths are made where people go'. And who'd want to go all the way to the top of a mountain? Only crazy English tourists!

At last I emerged on to rock and scrub, and reached the summit at a quarter past eleven, about three hours after I had left the house. The view was cause for initial disappointment, for though it was a clear day, the slopes of Kilimanjaro rose in the distance to meet with thick cloud. The summit of Yale however commanded a view of the entire range of the Taita Hills, giving me a clear impression of the general outlay of the district. I was struck by how densely populated the hills were, with scarcely an acre of land without a house and *shamba*. Wesu rock, normally towering above us at Wundanyi, was now way below me, singularly undramatic. To the west I looked across to Vuria, the highest peak in the Taita Hills, with its radio mast on top – a 'blockish' or 'chunky' looking mountain, not a very elegant shape. I did a quick watercolour sketch of

it from the top of Yale, with the North Pare Mountains of Tanzania in the background. Watercolours are very difficult in hot climates – the water dries up so quickly!

I came back down the way I had come, just as the thunder began to roll in, and met Peter M on the road, on his way back from Rong'e. I got back home exhausted at about 3 pm, and looked at myself in the mirror – I had certainly caught the sun and was now very red in the face!

Uhuru Day

The next day, Wednesday 12 December 1973, was Uhuru Day, one of the most important days in the life of the country; for on December 12th 1963, exactly ten years ago, Kenya was made an independent nation.

I arrived for the celebrations two hours early, but spent the time profitably, walking to Kungu and back, enjoying the fresh morning sunshine. The Wundanyi 'football field' provided the perfect setting for the ceremonies to take place. By 10 o' clock more than eight thousand people had arrived. Most had come in a procession, clapping, waving branches of leaves in the air, chanting songs in praise of President Kenyatta or in loyalty to Kenya. All were dressed in their most colourful clothes, and they lined the four sides of the arena, some taking refuge from the sun by sitting under the shelter of a grandstand on one side of the field. On the other side a dais had been constructed. This was for the District Commissioner (DC), the Minister, the Archdeacon and various District Officers (DO's). Every building in sight was decorated with bands of black, red and green cloth, sisal poles of the same three colours lined the streets and marked the arena boundaries. Flags were flying; the sun was shining.

Presently a command was given over the loud-speaker system, and everyone stood up to sing the National Anthem: "*Ee mungu nguvu yetu, ilete baraka kwetu...*" [O God of all creation, Bless this our land and nation...] – a beautiful hymn composed by an Englishman! The DC then read the Presidential speech, which was very long and (I gather) very good. Unfortunately my Swahili was not yet up to standard! This was followed by singing, with various church and school choirs making vigorous contributions. The mostly Christian songs were intermixed with some rather half-hearted tribal dancing and drumming, giving me the impression that these pagan practices are becoming increasingly a thing of the past. This was followed by various competitions (including sugar-cane chewing), but I left around half past one, as the sun was hot and I was still feeling the effects of the previous day. I had dinner with Don and Lyn S and family – the stewed rabbit was delicious. Don advised me to go to the Harambee Teachers' Conference on Saturday. As he is going, returning there from Wusi for the day, I planned to accompany him. We spent a very happy evening chatting, looking at slides and listening to tracks from the 'Godspell' Christian musical.

CMS Conference at Wusi

So, a couple of days later, at 3 o' clock I accompanied Don and family to Wusi for the CMS Conference. The *siafu* (safari ants) were terrible, and as soon as John R (from Nairobi) stepped out of the car he lifted up the front of his shirt and reported that he was undergoing a 'navel attack' (Don's joke)! The evening was spent introducing ourselves and sharing experiences and concerns. Ken and Betty O and family were there, still unable to get into Uganda because of visa restrictions; Pat H from CITC Mombasa; Miss Kate C, who was very sympathetic about the drinking problem at Mgalu; and John R who sounded really frustrated. His problem, he said, was trying to work out what it really meant to be the representative of a Missionary Society. At night I was kept awake by mosquitoes!

Saturday was the day of the Harambee Teachers Conference at Maynard Hall, to which Lyn drove Don and myself. In some ways it was a tough day, as everything was in

Swahili, and my language proficiency was not up to the required standard – but it was necessary that I was there, and in the end very worthwhile.

As recorded in my diary:

Archdeacon Jeremiah K spoke out very strongly against alcohol, warning that in the future any teacher caught drunk would be asked to leave. Don seems to have been given an interesting job, travelling around the Diocesan schools, checking on administrative issues, while Archdeacon K would be responsible for the spiritual side. Peter M has now been officially appointed as the new Headmaster of Mgalu High School. George has given up teaching; we shall be a five-form school next term, double-streaming Form I, and we now have eight members of staff, including three new female teachers.

We returned to Wusi in time for tea, and the evening was spent profitably, listening to and discussing an interesting tape on Christmas Meditations, and joining in a Bible study, led by Melvyn M, all about Teilhard de Chardin and 'cosmo-genesis'.

The W's arrived early the next day, Sunday, having just returned from a holiday in Mombasa. Old Mr and Mrs W (Andrew's parents), and the three children, Susanna, John and Margaret, were all there. In the afternoon there was Bible discussion, and questions on more general topics, ending with a celebration of Holy Communion together. I travelled from Wusi with the W's, and met Mike F at Wundanyi – he had hitch-hiked from Nairobi that day. We walked down to Mbale together, taking the short cut path, and arriving home for a dinner of scrambled eggs and toast.

Mike's visit

Mike stayed with me for three days. On Day 1 we went shopping up at Wundanyi, returning via the S's, where we had an amusing conversation with them. We then met Peter M, who was in the process of moving into Harrison M's old house. It was rather a depressing evening, talking about Mike's problems. He was very disillusioned with Africa, wondering whether he should have come here in the first place.

On Day 2 we made an expedition to climb Wesu rock. We called in at the Wundanyi Market, on the way, pausing there for *chai*. We then proceeded to follow a path which began just in front of Minister Shako's house, and wound its way through some spectacular jungle, and round the back of the rock face, from which it was a short and gentle climb to the top. The time for the Wesu climb was calculated at: 1½ hours up, 4 seconds down! The summit of Wesu commanded a fairly extensive view over Wundanyi, Kungu and the hospital, but not as spectacular as the view from Yale. Down and round the back, ending up at Kituri High School, taking the short cut route home via Mwanguvi. Dinner *en famille* with the W's, with singing and discussion afterwards, though Mike did not seem to be all that 'turned on' by it.

Day 3 started with a leisurely morning, during which I set myself the task of writing some rather difficult letters to family members. We walked up to the ridge in the afternoon, and I was surprised that Mike was much more impressed with the view from there, than with the view the previous day from the top of Wesu. Some parts of the landscape looked very beautiful as the sun began to sink. The gentle, wooded slopes curved gracefully towards the valley, and assumed an almost unearthly appearance as the sun shone from behind them. We were invited to dinner with the S's, and enjoyed an evening full of funny Liverpool stories, dramatized by Don.

Walk with Geoffrey to FTC

The next morning Mike was off back to Nairobi, hitch-hiking from Voi, setting out on the 07:45 Kireti bus. I then joined Geoffrey (pronounced Ge-ohf-rey), a Form II student, and we set out on foot for the Farmers Training College (FTC), about 4 or 5 miles the other side of Wundanyi. I began the day feeling pretty depressed: it was hot, I was tired, I'd had a bad night, and there was a lot on my mind. But with a *chai na chapatti* at

Wundanyi, and three miles behind us, I cheered up considerably. And it became progressively cooler and more beautiful as the path wove its way through the hills, past Kungu, over streams and up a wooded hillside, looking very English (like Stourhead, Wiltshire), at the top of which stood the buildings of the FTC.

We met Harry and Liz, who said “*Karibuni*” and invited us to lunch, during which we had a fascinating conversation about the European crisis and Kenyan politics. Liz then showed us round ‘the works’, which abounded in lavishly equipped communal rooms, luxurious accommodation, high quality farm buildings, superb cattle and sophisticated machinery – including two mini-buses, a tractor, a Land Rover and a diesel generating plant with sufficient power to provide the whole of Wundanyi with electricity! A farmer’s dream, you would think, but as Liz explained with conviction, the set-up was so totally beyond the experience of the average rural farmers of the Taita Hills, that it was almost impossible for them to apply what they had learned during courses they attended there to their own home situations. However, the scenery was beautiful, with spectacular views of Yale, Vuria, Susu and over the plains. Liz then drove us back to Wundanyi, as she had to go there in any case, and eventually back to Mbale, with all of us calling in for tea at the W’s.

Wedding procession

Saturday 22 December 1973 was the day of the Wedding at Mbale Church. By 12 noon, singing, clapping and shouting could be heard all over the Mbale valley, so I went up to investigate, finding myself carried along by the bridal procession. I was joined by Susanna (9) and John (6) W, and found that I was to ‘look after’ them for the next four to five hours! The procession took nearly two hours to reach Mwanguvi and the bridegroom’s house. The bride, Patricia, retained the solemnest of expressions throughout, even though in front of her young girls were dancing, singing, moving forwards by degrees, kicking up clouds of dust, and generally presenting quite a road hazard for the cars and occasional bus that wanted to pass: one vehicle got so scared that it actually turned back on its tracks!

Crowds milled around the bridal pair, as prayers were said, donations collected, and the cake cut – to the accompaniment of Mbale Church choir singing. Luckily Susanna and John were given VIP treatment, and my task at that time was to keep track of two small heads of brown hair in a sea of black! Further VIP treatment – which I accepted with gratitude rather than embarrassment – included a meal of rice and meat in the bridegroom’s house. After saying goodbye to the bride, we made tracks for home – literally ‘tracks’, as we all pretended to be express trains!

Christmas in Kenya

Christmas 1973, in the Taita Hills, Kenya, was a very special time. On Sunday I entertained the entire W clan – Granny and Grandpa, Aunty Ruth (Andrew’s sister, a CMS missionary stationed in Dodoma, Tanzania), Andrew, Catharine, and the three children, Susanna, John and Margaret, to Sunday lunch. Busy preparations all morning (except for church) with Jackson to produce a chicken casserole (with two *kukus* – one with eggs!), mashed cream potatoes, cabbage and white sauce, followed by a delicious fruit salad of pink paw-paw, pineapple, mangoes, bananas and lemon juice; orange juice with our meal, and coffee to follow. We enjoyed a relaxed afternoon, then ‘high tea’ and carol singing with the family. Here there was a real Christmas spirit, with solos sung by the children.

The following day was Christmas Eve. I spent the morning at Wundanyi, persuading the Bank Manager to lend me 100/- (which he very kindly agreed to do) as ‘safety money’ for the Mount Kenya expedition. I had experienced some slight financial difficulties caused by delays in receiving my December salary, and the effects of having supported two people on one salary during the previous month. Lunch and stay with the W’s, with a

camp bed rigged up for me in the study. The afternoon was spent gathering ferns, leaves, flowers and greenery for Christmas decorations.

I remember it was a beautiful evening, the golden sun streaming through a light mist, which accentuated the relative distances of the further mountains and nearer ridges. A crooked tree with widespread, bare branches, posed like a statue on top of Maynard Hill, a dramatic foreground to the impressive mountain scenery behind. The children were sent to bed early, after they had carefully selected their stockings.

For the next two hours, we – the ‘Christmas angels’ – were busy blowing balloons, wrapping presents, constructing angel chimes, hanging red streamers and ferns, filling stockings, lighting candles – and listening to the world news: petrol rationing in England, bombs in Northern Ireland, freezing fog in London. By the time we had settled a gentle dispute over the correct mathematical harmony of the coloured paper streamers hanging as catenaries, we were through and ready for bed. The moonless night was still and warm, Orion burning high in the heavens, the stars casting a pale light over the *batî* [tin] roof. Inside, the warm glow of candle-light, green ferns, balloons, streamers, a decorated sisal pole casting shadows in the corner of the room, and a night-light in front of the Nativity ‘crib’ – all this was enough to tell me it was CHRISTMAS!

Christmas Day – Early rise with ‘Happy Christmas’ ringing in the air. Holy Communion taken by Mr W (senior) in the main room – his sermon revolved around the three words “Joy, simplicity, and forgiveness”. Don S and Aunt Kate came, but not the S children, as it was feared that John W had mumps. It was a ‘cold’ day, with low clouds and steady winds. Drive to Shigaro church, beyond Wundanyi and overlooking Msau, where Andrew was preaching. The service lasted two hours, with the church was full of beautiful singing and withered flowers. Mists swirled outside, and at one moment I thought I was going to catch pneumonia – there was a howling draught of cold wind coming through the open doorway behind me! The Hon Shako, Kenya’s Minister for Tourism and Wild Life, played the organ, and Andrew W preached about the ‘the Prince of Peace’, *Mfaulme kwa Amani*.

Late lunch when we returned. Present-giving in the afternoon; I felt slightly awkward receiving wonderful presents from all three of the children (and everyone else), while I had only given one present for everyone – but presents are not everything, and the children seemed to have had their full share of badminton rackets and xylophones and printing outfits and colouring books. Later we all assembled on the front lawn for group photographs. After Christmas tea and cake, Susanna, Margaret and I went for a ‘secret’ walk. They took me to some spectacular parts of the Mdongo-dongo River, where the water fell and swirled, rushing through narrow rifts in the rock, and carving curious spiral shapes on the sides of a rocky pool. For a long time the sound of rushing water filled the air, drowning out all other sounds. We came back, refreshed, for Christmas Dinner – roast chicken, fruit salad, nuts, chocolate and Tanzanian delicacies – to the warm light of candles and the gentle ringing of angel chimes.

On Boxing Day we woke to mists and rain, which temporarily daunted our plans for a day’s mountaineering. However, by 10 o’clock the weather showed signs of improving, with the mist beginning to clear from the hilltops. Catharine, Ruth, Susanna, John and I were driven to Wundanyi, and we set out to climb Wesu as the Advanced Party, the rest intending to bring up the rear (and the picnic). It was an hour’s walk through the woods, with pockets of mist hiding in the valleys; across streams and up a long, grassy slope to the supposed *rendez-vous*. We waited there for well over an hour, feeling very cold, playing I-Spy and giving piggy-backs to pass the time. We realised that something had gone wrong, but after finding the car at the bottom of the hill, locked and empty, and the other party on top of the rock, well into the picnic, we realised that it was simply a case of misunderstanding the *rendez-vous*. *Their* plan had been to meet us at the top!

We all enjoyed a delicious picnic lunch, to a view of Wundanyi (through the clouds), Susu, and to the extreme right, the Pare Mountains blue in the distance – also to the sounds of bangs caused by fireworks let off by some very inconsiderate African children, who were clearly enjoying observing the strange habits of the *wazungu* [white people]. For some curious reason, they thought, these crazy *wazungu* have to go all the way to the top of a mountain, carrying baskets of food and drink!

After lunch, Andrew, Susanna and I went on to climb Yale, following a wooded ridge running between the two mountains. The path climbed through deciduous forest, past rock faces catching the golden rays of the afternoon sun streaming through the fresh green foliage. Up on to the saddle where Andrew was convinced he saw the car ('pink panther') turning round Espy's corner, 5 miles away. At the summit clouds and mists swirled around and below us. It was rather like the view from an aeroplane, when after rising above the airport, it meets the first layer of cloud at about 5,000 feet. When the mist cleared, the panorama of hills, ridges, roads, *shambas* and settlements was once again breath-taking. From the extreme end of the mountain (the left hand peak), we could look almost vertically down for 1,000 feet. We calculated that it would take an average person a little under seven seconds to reach the bottom, allowing for air resistance – somehow I was reluctant to verify this experimentally! Kilimanjaro was again in cloud, but on our descent we did manage to catch a glimpse of Mawenzi, the rocky, pointed peak just in front of Kibo, as the farthest cloud mass cleared for an instant. Once again, with the Tsavo plains stretching far out, merging into the blue haze of distant mountain ranges, we were given the wonderful sense of the Taita Hills being an island – self-contained, and historically without much danger of intrusion by neighbouring tribes.

Down, down, down, winding through the forest, gathering bunches of strange, heavy-scented flowers, Susanna fairly leaping down the path in an effort to keep pace. Evening brought us back to Wesu hospital. Wesu Rock, catching the full beams of the slanting sun, towered above us, brilliant cream-white against a deep sea-blue. Far above the palm trees that clung to the sides of the cliff face, an augur buzzard, white-winged, wheeled and turned. And then the Rock itself turned to gold, the shadows lengthened and sprang out of the forest depths, and across the valley the wooded ridges became waves of rich dark green, fading to softer blue-green in the extreme distance.

We reached the car on the Wundanyi road about 1½ hours later, on nightfall, with me having to carry Susanna 'piggy-back' for the last few hundred yards. Then I returned home and packed for Mount Kenya, but spent the night again in the W's study, after an unsuccessful search for the Crab nebula near Aldebaran, and after a sensational view of the Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of our own Milky Way, and only visible from the Southern Hemisphere.

To Nairobi and Limuru

Early breakfast, many thanks and goodbyes, and I caught the Kireti bus at the usual time. I felt somehow saddened, leaving the Taita Hills after such a wonderful time, and as the hills had been looking so beautiful. Hitch-hiking from Voi with an English / American couple, Bill and Maizie, in a Peugeot, it was a steady haul up to Nairobi, discussing Kenya's history and current affairs, looking hard (unsuccessfully) for a sight of Kilimanjaro. We stopped at a very *safi* (posh) place at Mtito Andei for coffee and *samosas*, then climbed up through the Kamba hills, and on to the Athi plains, to Nairobi – with the Ngong hills and the Aberdares visible ahead. Uhuru Day 1973 celebrations were still very much in evidence. Julia was in the city doing some shopping, and it was arranged she would pick me up from the front of the Hilton at 4.30 pm to take me to St Julian's Guest House. I was thankful to be out of the city and up into the green, wooded, European looking hills near Limuru – all amazingly different from the more familiar terrain east of Nairobi. I slept long and soundly in the Games Room – the very room where I had spent the famous 'first night in a dark continent', that seemed so long ago.

The next day I spent a quiet morning writing letters. After lunch I was driven to the main Limuru road, intending to hitch-hike as far as the Rift Valley escarpment. A Coca-Cola van took me to the main Nairobi to Nakuru road, and an American on his way to Naivasha took me at nearly 80 mph onwards, through the fir forests and gentle hills of Kikuyu country, until quite suddenly a notice warned us: 'You are now Entering the Escarpment'; there was a sharp corner, and then the land dropped away dramatically to 30 miles of arid plain, stretching away towards the Mau escarpment on the other side. I got out at a lay-by and surveyed the scene, as the Nakuru-bound traffic thundered past, or groaned painfully up the steep, twisting slope coming the other way. The valley was spread out – deserted, inhospitable and featureless save for a radio telescope satellite tracking station, like a huge white saucer, in the middle. To the north rose the volcanic shape of Mount Longonot, and beyond it the higher foothills of the Aberdares range. I climbed above the road and walked along a track that followed the escarpment down through the trees. It was hot, dry, dusty, and almost bare of wildlife – a far cry from the rich greens of the Taita Hills. I walked back to the top of the escarpment, after an unsuccessful attempt to hitch-hike. Eventually I got a private bus to take me right to the St Julian's turn. I enjoyed a relaxed evening, with a beautiful sunset spreading through the Ngong Hills.

Ascent of Mount Kenya

Next morning one of the guests from St Julian's kindly gave me a lift into Nairobi, to the door of the CMS Office, where I met Jackie and Howard. We discussed various plans and arrangements, with the result that Jackie and Howard were to shop in Nairobi and then be taken to Mutithi by friends. I hung around for Philip, who arrived at 10.30, and together we walked around Nairobi, did a little shopping, and then got a *matatu* [Peugeot taxi] to take us to 'Philip's turn' beyond Sagana. There was dual carriageway to Thika, the countryside becoming steadily greener and hillier – until, from the crest of a hill, the Mount Kenya plains stretched before us, and the mountain itself rose beyond, the rocky peaks obscured by cloud. A truck took us to Philip's house, which was wood-built and open plan, where we had lunch and repacked. The spoken language was Kikuyu: "*Nikwega, vinawega, tigonawega etc.*" We got a lift back to the turn, and a bus back to Sagana. As we alighted, a bus was waiting for us to take us to Kagio, where a *matatu* was just about to leave for Kandongu! Down long straight evening stretches of hot dust track, cutting further and further into the rice plains. We reached Mutithi Girls High School around 5 pm, and were greeted by Jackie, Rosie, Anne (from Limuru), Stephen and Howard. For a few moments that evening, the cloud parted to reveal the snow-covered, craggy peaks of Mount Kenya.

Based on my diary notes:

Sunday 30 December 1973

18:00, full sun blazing from behind. A golden oriole has just alighted on to a tree immediately in front of me. Across stretches of moorland and forest rise the slopes of Mount Kenya, grey gullies and golden ridges standing out in sharp relief in the late evening light. The upper reaches are once again clothed in cloud, while to the south dramatic shapes of cloud seem to be gathering for a storm. The evening before the Ascent...

It had been a bright morning, with an early start; the entire mountain free of cloud. We took a *matatu* to Kagio, a bus to Sagana, then a bus to Nyeri. On our left the Aberdares came into full view, and by the time we reached Karatina we could see the entire range from south to north. The terrain became progressively greener, hillier and generally more pleasant with increasing height. Nyeri, normally a busy town, looked rather deserted as it was Sunday. We waited in a bus for well over an hour, until at last it left for Naro Moru – mountains, uncultivated moorland, reminiscent of Scotland. Then we had a long walk from the Naro Moru bus stop to the River Lodge, where the caretaker very kindly reshuffled residents in camping huts so that we could be accommodated. The hiring of a

Land Rover and guide was then arranged, and there were some anxious financial calculations to find out how much the expedition would cost in total – the latest estimate was around 150/- each! On an open wood fire we cooked the first of our climbing rations, the peaks of Mount Kenya fully visible in the evening light. We retired early to bed, full of relief and anticipation.

Monday 31 December 1973 – Early breakfast of hot ‘Alpen’ muesli; clear morning. At 8 am we departed Maro Moru in the Land Rover. We stopped at the entrance to the Mount Kenya Game Park, where we paid our park fees and were issued with various warnings and instructions. We then drove through pine forests, which covered the lower slopes, snow-capped peaks rising clear ahead. We began the climb proper at 09:45 – six of us (Philip, Stephen, Howard, Jackie, Anne and myself), and our Guide. We ascended through bamboo forests and trees with branches hanging with ‘old man’s beard’. We encountered some buffalo, but passed them by at a distance, without incident. Once clear of the forest, we commenced our ascent of the ‘vertical bog’ – 1,500 feet of coarse grass and soft mud, set at an inclination of around 30 degrees. Eventually this began to level out and it became less wet underfoot. The grassland contained other vegetation, notably isolated groundsel plants like huge pale green cabbages. Clouds and mist now prevailed, giving us only a vague idea of the peaks, ahead of us and to the left.

We had lunch at the top of the ridge, and then descended into the Teleki Valley. The temperature fell steadily, while we climbed along the bottom of the valley following the course of the icy Naro Moru River, which was fed by two glaciers. We reached Teleki Hut at an altitude of 13,500 feet at 3 pm – a corrugated iron structure with a raised wooden platform covered by foam rubber, providing sleeping room for six. By this time I had a slight headache due to the high altitude. I washed, and read CS Lewis’ *The Voyage of the Dawntrader* beside the river, whose ice-cold waters flowed precipitously over rocks and down gullies. All around us were giant groundsels, giant lobelias and other strange ‘animal-like’ plants, and the Teleki Valley was surrounded by high, rocky slopes, rising up to steep fortress-like cliffs that formed the skyline. Only in the late evening did the cloud clear sufficiently to reveal the mass of rocky peaks of Mount Kenya above the valley ridge. We turned in at sundown, sleeping side by side for warmth. The temperature outside was well below freezing. Little sleep...

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations to follow Chapter 1

Arrival at Nairobi Airport, early morning, Saturday 8 September 1973



Above: My very first day in Africa, St Julian's Guest House, Limuru

Above right: Jonathan playing the guitar, Ian sitting in the back garden at St Julian's

Right: The YSA group outside St Julian's Guest House. I am at the back, at the base of the rainwater tank (8 September 1973)





*Left: Hilton Hotel,
Nairobi*

*Right: Roman
Catholic
Cathedral, Nairobi*



Left: Arrival at Wundanyi (11 September 1973)

*Below right: Tea on the front verndah of the
house, with geraniums in the front garden*

*Below: Mgalu High School, set in the floor of the
valley. Main building, with staff room and library
(far left), Form I (middle) and Form III (right). The
foundations for the new school building can be
seen in the foreground*





Left: Mombasa North Creek, from the CITC compound



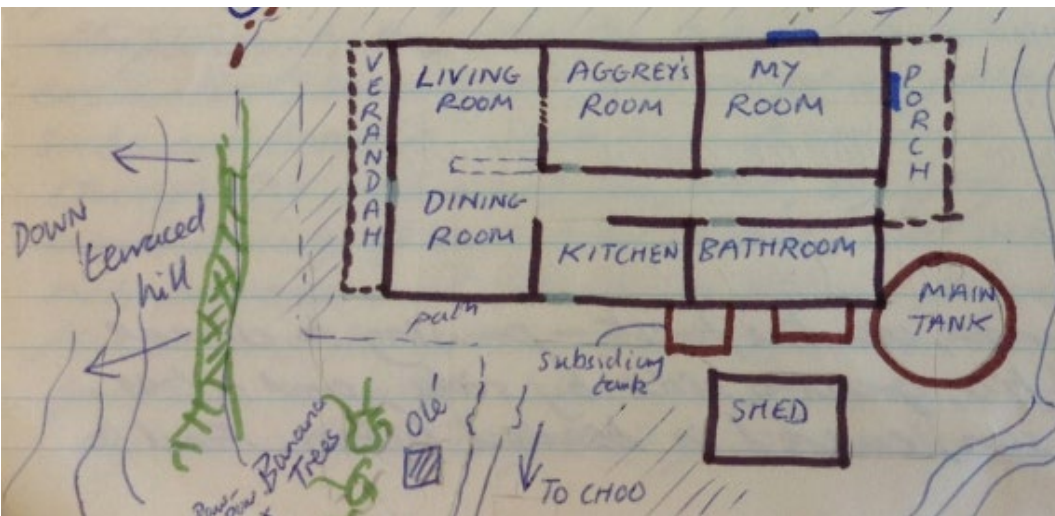
Right: Mombasa Anglican Cathedral



Left: View along the front verandah



Right: View towards Rong'e



Plan of the house – sketched in late September 1973



View over Mbale-Dabida District from the first ridge (22 September 1973)



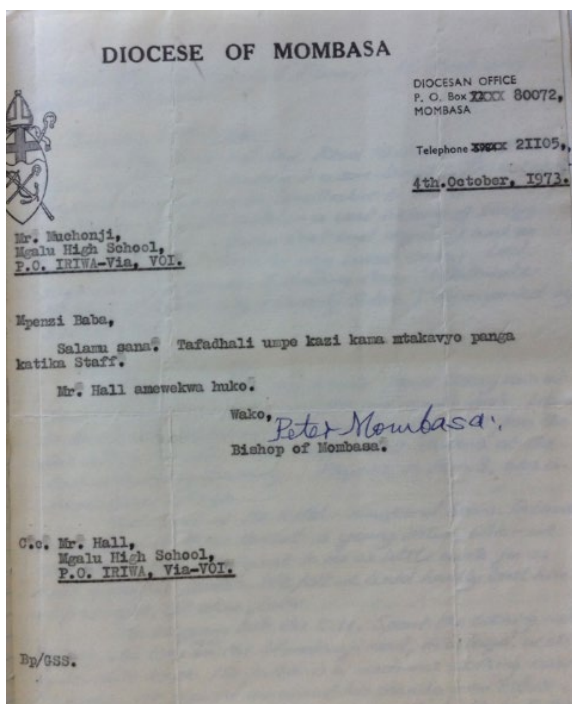
Left: Bridge over the Mdongo-dongo river, during drought

Below left: View from the summit rocks of Ngangao Forest; Andrew, Catharine and Margaret W

Below right: Self at Ngangao Forest, with the township of Werugha and the sharp peak of Yale in the distance, and Susu on the far left (29 September 1973)



Illustrations to follow Chapter 2



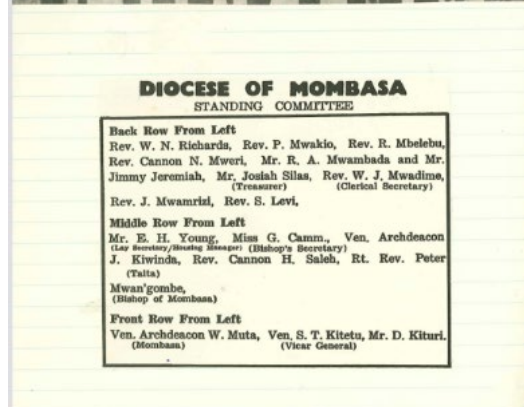
Left: The Bishop's Letter of Appointment, dated 4 October 1973

Right: Diocese of Mombasa, Miss Grace C (secretary) is on the far right of the middle row



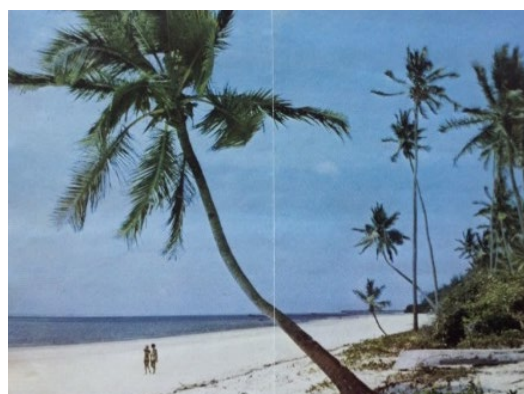
Archdeacon Jeremiah K (Archdeacon of the Taita Hills) is on the far left of the front row

Bishop of Mombasa, the Right Reverend Peter Mwan'gombe, is in the middle of the front row



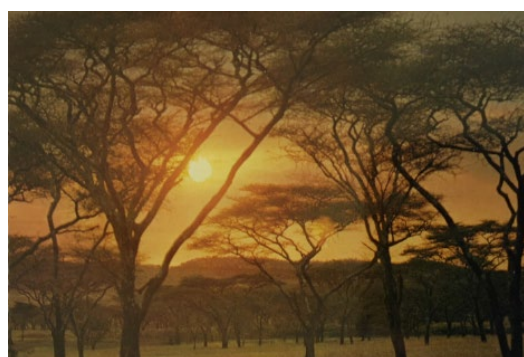
Left: "We then drove across the floating pontoon bridge to Nyali beach..."

Right: Nyali Beach, Mombasa



Left: The famous tusks on Kilindini Street

Right: "Hit the trail for home around half five – a beautiful time for travel, as the sun shone through the palms and flat-topped thorn trees of the coastal plains..."





“on our left the clear blue shape of Kilimanjaro rose above the clouds and the nearby hills – breathtaking as the distant clouds stepped aside to reveal, for a few fleeting moments, the snow-capped peak...” (19 October 1973)

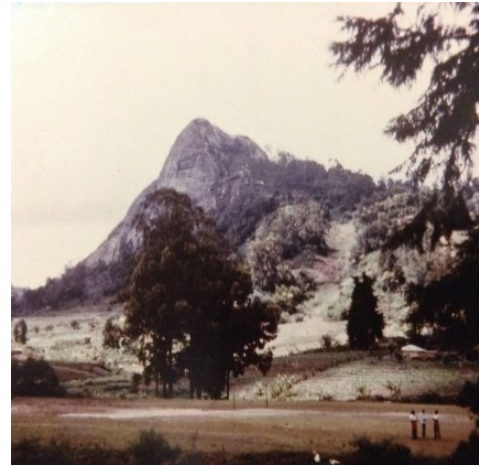
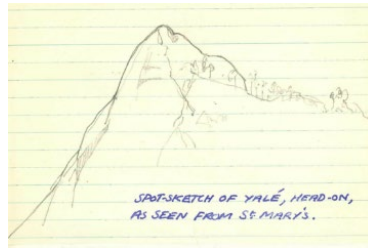


Kenyatta Conference Centre, Nairobi



Houses of Parliament, Nairobi

View of Yale from St Mary's Lushangoni (14 October 1973)



Left: Terienyi House (the W's house)



Right: Mbale Anglican Church

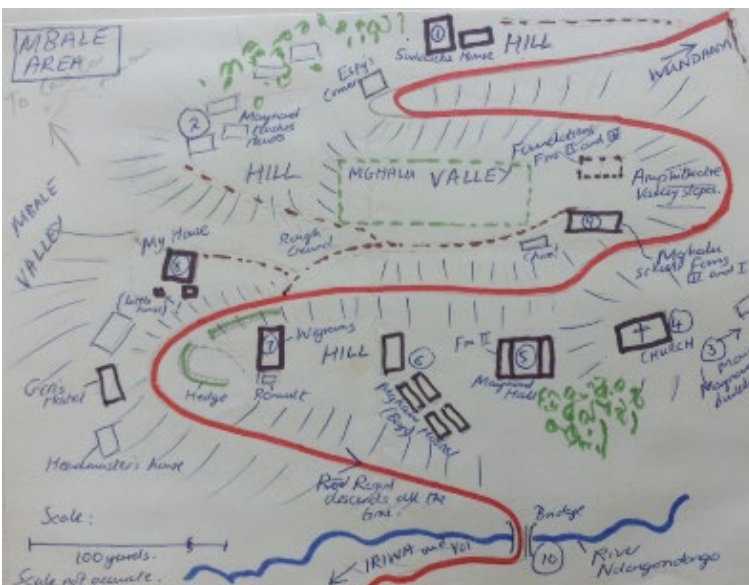
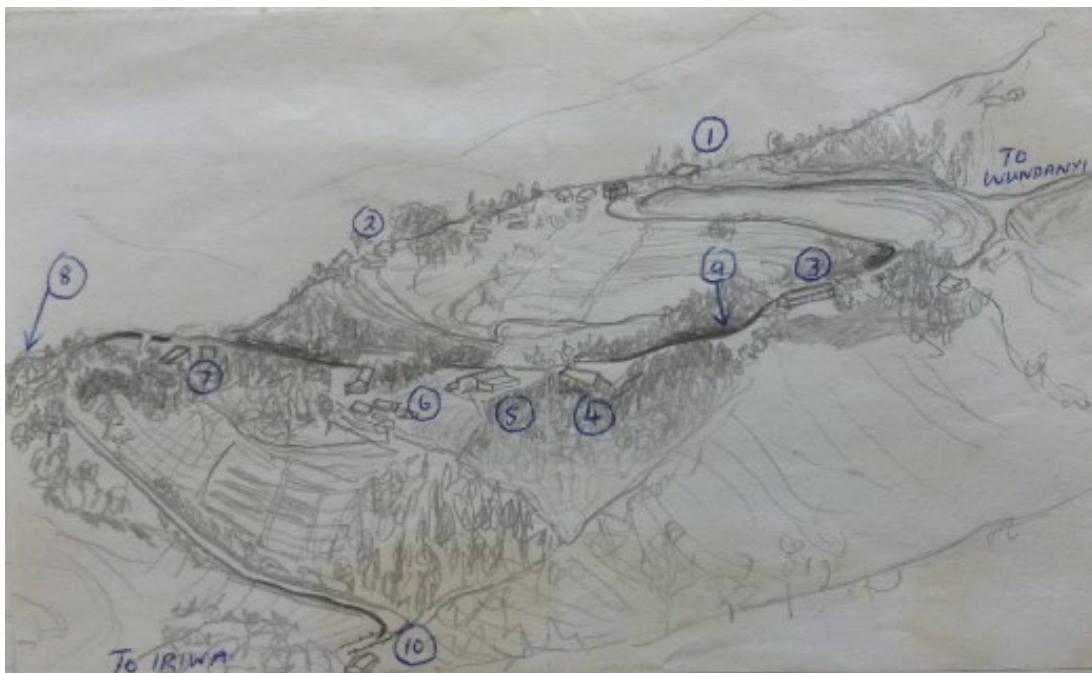


The road to Lushangoni, with the impressive shape of Yale in the background (27 October 1973)

Illustrations to follow Chapter 3



View from the front of the house – on a clear day... and on a misty morning...



Sketch and map of Mgalu Valley and Maynard Ridge (November 1973)



"The colours after the rain were simply magnificent: rainbows, the soft pink glow of the setting sun on the plains, Sagalla and Kasigau a rich blue in the near distance..."
(17 November 1973)



"...violet Jacarandas and coral-coloured [soft pink] 'Mlungu' trees..." View towards Wusi – historic church built in 1905 on left, Murray High School on right, hills around Wundanyi in the distance...



Storm clouds billowing turbulently towards us over the hills, caught by the last glow of the setting sun



Favourite gum tree, Mgalu valley (November 1973)

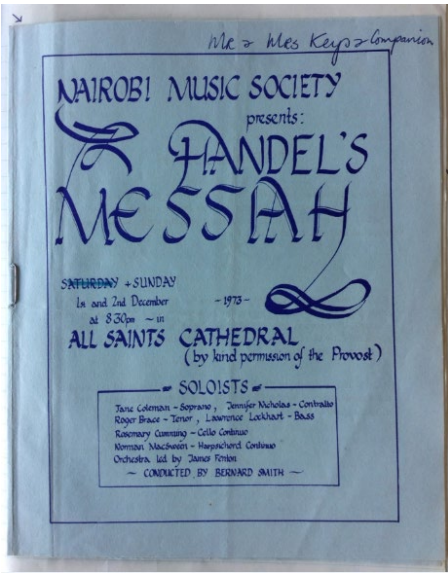


View across Mgalu valley towards Maynard's hall, with the ridge above Iriwa in the background (November 1973)

Illustrations to follow Chapter 4



Panorama of Nairobi skyline from Uhuru Park...

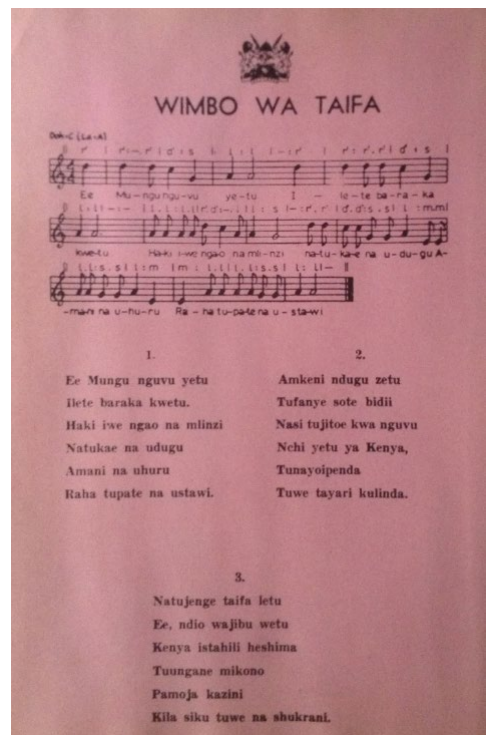


Copy of Messiah Programme

Map of central Nairobi, showing key places visited

Below: Aggrey at Mito Andei, on the way to Nairobi

Right: Kenya's National Anthem





Nairobi skyline from Uhuru Park...



Old Nairobi



Top of Kenyatta Conference Centre



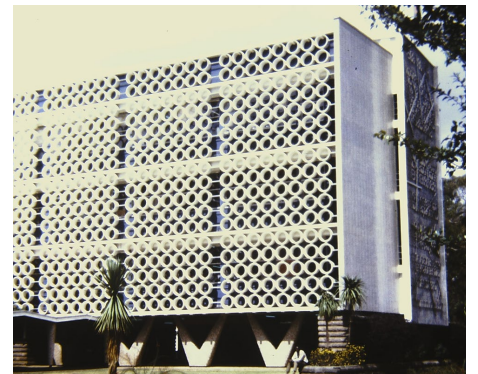
Nairobi street scene



Modern architecture



Nairobi University...



Right: Ngangao Forest, with the township of Werugha and the sharp peak of Yale in the distance, and Susu on the far left



Below: Kenya Commercial Bank, Wundanyi



Above: View towards Figinyi, Rong'e and Sagala



Left: Voi Railway Station (December 1973)

Right: Gari la moshi, steam engine at Voi





Left: View towards Kasigau from the house at Mbale, Watercolour sketch (9 December 1973)



Right: View towards Vuria (the highest mountain in the Taita Hills) from Yale, Watercolour sketch (11 December 1973)



Views from the top of Wesu and Yale south over Wundanyi and Wesu Hospital, with Susu in the distance



Uhuru Day Celebrations, Wundanyi (12 December 1973)





The CMS group at Wusi – note Andrew and Catharine looking anxiously at Margaret, who was climbing a tree; the O family group is in the distance, with Ken talking to Don S (16 December 1973)



Left: The W children blowing bubbles on Christmas Day – John, Susanna, Margaret



Right: The W family on Christmas Day, with Kate C

The W family on Christmas Day

Back row from left to right: Catharine, Mr W (Andrew's Father), Andrew, me

Front row from left to right: Margaret, Susanna, Mrs W (Andrew's mother), John, Ruth (Andrew's sister)

(25 December 1973)





Entrance to the Mount Kenya National Park (31 December 1973)



View of Mount Kenya peaks from Teleki Valley

Giant groundsel and giant lobelia, Teleki Valley



Mount Kenya peaks from Teleki Valley: From left to right: Batian, Nelian, Point John rock spire, Point Lenana (31 December 1973)



St Julian's Guest House, Limuru (27 December 1973)



Left to right: Philip, Anne, Steve, our guide, Jackie, Howard