

# Journey to Kabul and Lahore:

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March 1979



Adrian Hall

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# March 1979

## Calendar for March 1979



Waters Vales  
Russell Falls, Mountfield National Park, Tasmania

*"I will open rivers  
on the bare heights,  
and fountains  
in the midst of the wilderness;  
I will make the wilderness  
a pool of water,  
and the dry land  
springs of water."  
(Isaiah 41:18)*

*"All the paths of the LORD  
are steadfast love and faithfulness  
for those who keep His covenant  
and His Testimonies."  
(Psalm 25:10)*

*"Happy man thirst  
let him come to me and drink,  
He who desires me, let  
him come, for I will give him  
the Spirit and he shall flow  
fountains of living water."  
— Now let me speak about  
the Spirit —"  
(John 7:37-39)*

**March 1979**

Mon	5	12	19	26	
Tue	6	13	20	27	
Wed	7	14	21	28	
Thu	1	8	15	22	29
Fri	2	9	16	23	30
Sat	3	10	17	24	31
Sun	4	11	18	25	

Calendar: Waters Vales  
Russell Falls, Mountfield  
National Park, Tasmania

*I will open rivers on the  
bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst  
of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a  
pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of  
water.*

Isaiah 41 v 18

*All the paths of the LORD  
are steadfast love and  
faithfulness,*

*For those who keep His  
covenant and his  
testimonies.*

Psalm 25 v 10

*If any man thirst let him  
come to me and drink.*

*He who believes in me, as  
the scripture has said,*

*'Out of his heart shall flow  
rivers of living water.'*

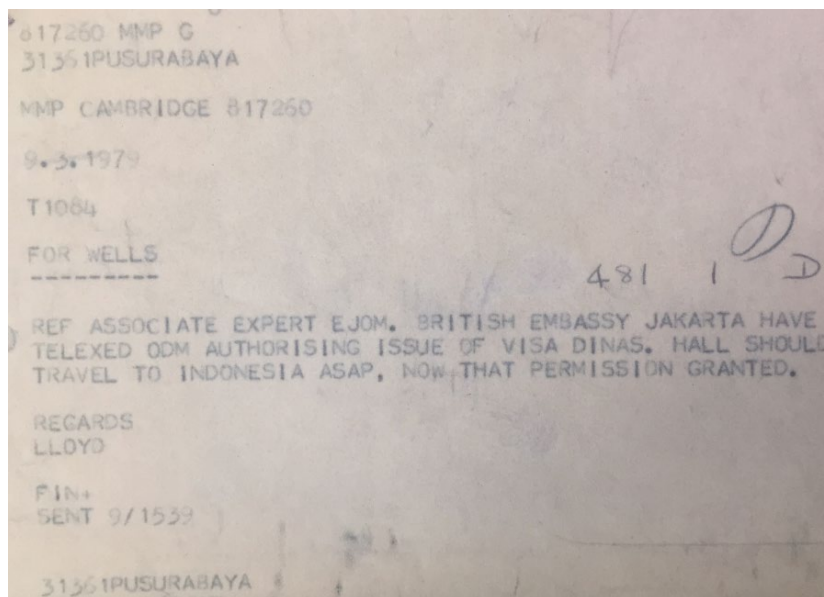
*Now this He said about the  
Spirit...*

John 7 v 37 to 39

## The Famous Telex (9 March 1979)

On 9 March 1979 this famous Telex arrived in the Sir M MacDonald & Partners (MMP) Cambridge Office:

FOR WELLS: REF ASSOCIATE EXPERT EJOM. BRITISH EMBASSY JAKARTA HAVE TELEXED ODM AUTHORISING ISSUE OF VISA DINAS. HALL SHOULD TRAVEL TO INDONESIA ASAP NOW THAT PERMISSION GRANTED. REGARDS LLOYD

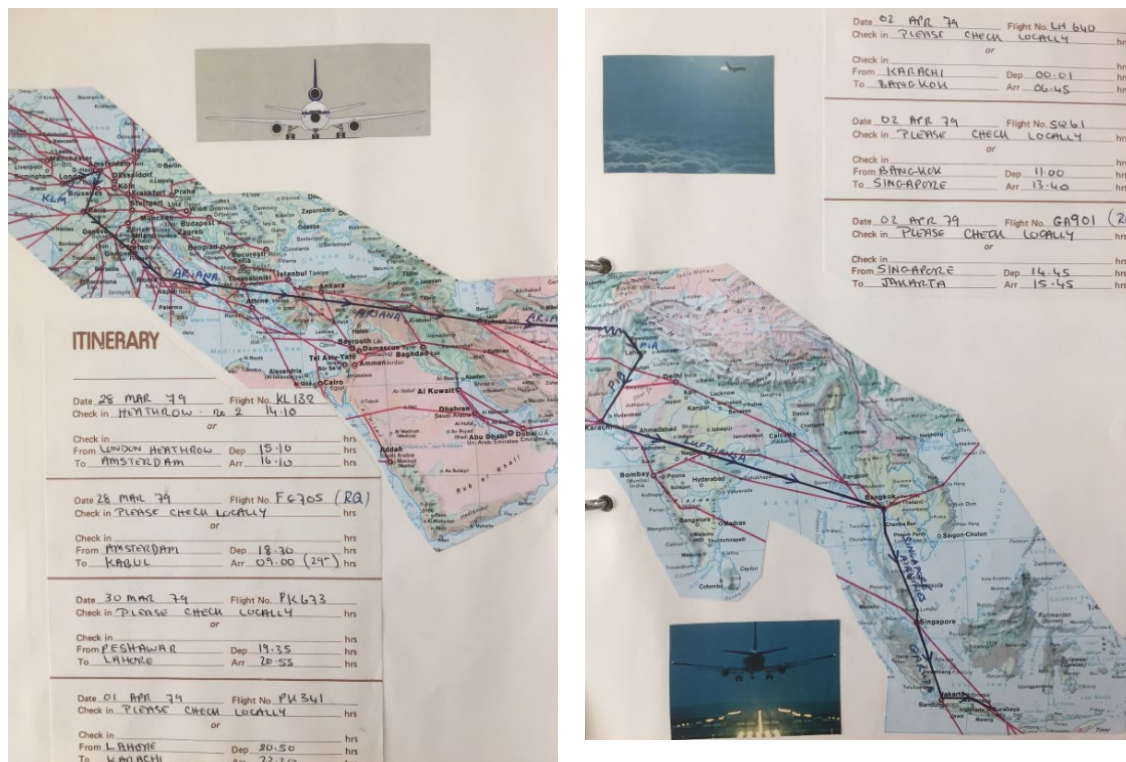


The famous Telex...

## Epic Journey from London to Kabul to Lahore (Diary Notes)

Wednesday 28 March 1979 – Departure Lounge, Heathrow Airport, waiting for KLM flight to Amsterdam, 14:50. Sad goodbyes...

Praise the Lord for KLM's hospitality – allowing me 10 kg excess baggage free of charge, and letting me take the Grundig portable radio and cassette player on to the plane as hand luggage. Cloudy, stormy day. I do hope the flight goes well and I get the Ariana connecting flight to Kabul OK. "I will never fail you nor forsake you."



Route map and itinerary...

Amsterdam Airport, 18:00: Praise the Lord for a safe arrival in Amsterdam, Holland. Some interesting views of irrigation and drainage systems on a very flat landscape – Dutch fields laid out in regular squares, intersected by field drains – not a haphazard arrangement like in Britain. The Ariana flight to Kabul, Afghanistan appears to be running, and (so far) only half-an-hour late. I paid 50p for a glass of fizzy orange – a bit steep! I had some interesting conversations with fellow passengers for Kabul – many are from India. I talked about India and Pakistan (*yi achcha hai!*) – I really feel my journey East is beginning!

Over Belgium (probably), 20:00: Take-off from Amsterdam, courtesy of Ariana. I'm on my way to Afghanistan and Indonesia at last! It really *did* take some getting away – so many hurdles to overcome: approval, visa – and then getting my passport and visa lost in a London mail strike at the last moment! But praise the Lord for a relaxed weekend! On Sunday at St Matthew's they prayed for us, the elders laid hands on us at the altar rail during the Communion service. One of the elders had some 'words from the Lord' – that as He looked after the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, so He would look after every need of ours. Praise the Lord too for extra time to prepare for this difficult but exciting journey...

Waiting in the Departure Lounge at Amsterdam, chatting to other passengers (from India), I happened to see a baggage carrier coming towards the Ariana 727 – and I clearly saw my own suitcase, rucksack and company case. So I said out loud, "Thank

the Lord, my cases are being taken to the right aircraft!" My Indian friend turned round and said, "So you are a Christian as well! Praise the Lord!" A fellow Christian, born again and trusting the Lord – how wonderful! He was on his way to Delhi and Chandigarh (Punjab) to take up poultry farming. We shared about working as Christians in secular jobs, and we were also able to witness to another Indian who is travelling to Amritsar...

On the flight from Amsterdam to Paris, I wrote the following note:

*An overseas posting at last! It's been a long wait. Office life was beginning to drive me round the bend, and I wondered if I would ever see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's been good – to have stayed in Cambridge... But oh for the big wide beautiful outside world – the vast lands of Asia and the East with so many needs and problems. This is where I want to be – out in the world, using my engineering skills to help the farmers of poorer countries. Java – island superlative, abundantly beautiful with its volcanoes and terraced fields of padi – with its vast, teeming population: Muslims, Hindus, Christians. Praise the Lord, as He has promised: "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no man shall close" (Revelation 3 v 8). The door has been opened at last. Ah! We're just coming down into Paris now...*

After take-off from Paris, 22:00: I talked to my Indian friend, while we stretched our legs in the Terminal at Orly Airport. I found out that he came to know the Lord the same year as I did (1969); also, he is engaged! He's getting married in July – to an Indian Christian who lives in Canada. So we shared about engagement, long distance communication, separations.

What an amazing aircraft! The plane is so empty that we have three seats each. The arms just 'come off' if you pull hard enough, so we can all lie down and get some sleep. The evening meal was spread over at least two tables. I hear we're going to land in Tehran – of all places [*this was less than two months after the Iran coup led by Ayatollah Khomeini*].

My goodness, what an airline!



Lufthansa aircraft at Amsterdam Airport



View of Mount Damavand, and the Alborz mountain range north of Tehran

PASSENGER TICKET AND BAGGAGE CHECK		ISSUED BY <b>KLM Royal Dutch Airlines</b>		ORIGIN <b>LONDON</b> DESTINATION <b>DEHRADUN</b>		CONJUNCTION TICKETS		FROM TO <b>074</b> <b>421923237</b>	
NAME OF PASSENGER <b>MR A HALL</b>		ISSUED IN EXCHANGE FOR <b>074671923238/9</b>		CARRIER <b>KL</b> FORM AND SERIAL NO. <b>132</b>		FLIGHT COUPON No. <b>3</b>		FARE CALCULATION <b>KL LON PK 75</b>	
COUPONS NOT VALID BEFORE		COUPONS NOT VALID AFTER		TICKET DESIGNATOR		TOUR CODE		AGENT'S NUMERIC CODE	
1 <b>28</b> 2 <b>MAR</b>		3 <b>4</b> <b>30</b>		5 <b>5</b>				<b>25 MAR 79</b>	
FROM <b>LONDON</b>		FARE BASIS <b>Y</b>		ALLOW <b>AC</b> CARRIER <b>KL</b> FLIGHT/CLASS <b>132</b>		DATE <b>28 MAR 15 10</b> TIME <b>CH</b>		STATUS <b>OK</b>	
TO <b>AMSTERDAM</b>		FARE BASIS <b>Y</b>		ALLOW <b>AC</b> CARRIER <b>KL</b> FLIGHT/CLASS <b>132</b>		DATE <b>28 MAR 18 30</b> TIME <b>CH</b>		STATUS <b>OK</b>	
FROM <b>KABUL</b>		FARE BASIS <b>Y</b>		ALLOW <b>AC</b> CARRIER <b>PK</b> FLIGHT/CLASS <b>0</b>		DATE <b>R E N</b>		STATUS <b>OK</b>	
TO <b>PESHAWAR</b>		FARE BASIS <b>Y</b>		ALLOW <b>AC</b> CARRIER <b>PK</b> FLIGHT/CLASS <b>0</b>		DATE <b>R E N</b>		STATUS <b>OK</b>	
FROM <b>LAHORE</b>		FARE BASIS <b>Y</b>		ALLOW <b>AC</b> CARRIER <b>PK</b> FLIGHT/CLASS <b>0</b>		DATE <b>R E N</b>		STATUS <b>OK</b>	
FARE <b>UML 459.50</b>		EQUIV AMT PD		ENDORSEMENTS/RESTRICTIONS		SUB TOTAL		FARE	
TAX		TOTAL <b>UML 459.50</b>				SUB TOTAL		FARE	
						FORM OF PAYMENT			

KLM Airline ticket: London to Amsterdam to Kabul to Peshawar to Lahore

Thursday 29 March 1979, Tehran Airport, Iran, 05:00 (UK time), 08:00 local time: I awoke to spectacular views of snow-capped mountains, barren ranges, deserts pink and brown, with a backdrop of snowy peaks [Mount Damavand, the highest peak in Iran, in the Alborz mountain range north of Tehran – at 18,410 feet or 5,610 m, one of the most spectacular volcanic mountain peaks in Western Asia]. We circled down into Tehran – a huge sprawling city with oil refineries and water towers. Out on to the gangway to get a breath of fresh air – a cool, clear morning with a bright sun already high, white mountains close at hand to the North – the presence of the military everywhere.

[This story has become somewhat 'apocryphal' over the years, but I seem to recall that as I stood at the top of the gangway, I had a mind to go down the steps and take a walk around the aircraft in the fresh morning sunshine. But when I noticed the threatening looks of the soldiers guarding the foot of the gangway – were they actually pointing their guns at me? – I said to myself, "OK, just looking..." and smartly returned to the aircraft and back to my seat!]

I had the sudden realization that the new day had arrived and that I was *not* in England anymore – the trees on the horizon were not an English wood, but an Iranian plantation, and beyond it lay the Desert. The Adventure had really begun!

Then followed a fascinating flight over the great Eastern deserts of Iran, and then range upon range of snow-capped peaks in Afghanistan, until everything was lost in cloud and we began our descent into Kabul...



Map of Kabul, Afghanistan, showing locations of hotels, offices and Andrew's and Alex's houses

*[I did not record this in my diary at the time, but the reason for my stopping over in Kabul, Afghanistan was that MMP had an office there, staffed by Andrew from MMP and Alex, an architect, and the Cambridge office had just produced a detailed proposal for consulting services on the Khanabad Irrigation Scheme near Kabul. My job was to deliver a (heavy) suitcase containing about a dozen copies of the proposal (complete with photographs of the project team).*

*Andrew met me off the plane, and as we drove into the city of Kabul I noticed groups of people along the street, shopping or wandering about, typical of a Middle Eastern or Asian setting. I attended the meeting with the client, then Andrew took me to his home where we had lunch cooked by a very nice, bright and enthusiastic young fellow – chapattis, as I recall. In the afternoon, Andrew drove me round the city, pointing out various 'sights' (see below), and I was able to do some souvenir 'tourist' shopping in the bazaar on my own, purchasing some knitted thick patterned woollen socks, and some turquoise glass vases, for which Afghanistan is famous.]*



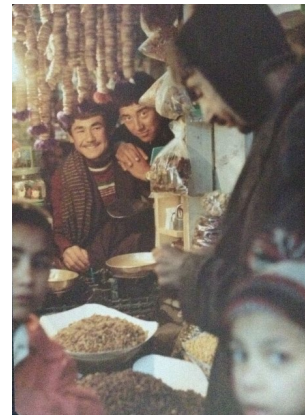
Street scene, Kabul, Afghanistan...



View from window of Andrew's house – spring blossom



Street bazaar, Kabul, Afghanistan...



Friday 30 March 1979, Peshawar Airport, Pakistan, 18:00: Waiting for a flight to Lahore. Afghanistan! What a sad, sad country. I would not have missed the incredible 24 hours I spent there for anything – yet I don't think I've ever been so glad to get out of a country before. The sense of relief as I crossed the border into Pakistan was tangible...

On the Thursday evening I got taken along to an expatriate (mainly Canadian) party – where I was able to leave the Christian books for John, and I talked to a Canadian called Fleming. So much of what he said seemed to have been verified by the observations I had made earlier in the day. Communism and an oppressive regime; Russian military presence everywhere [*this was a few months before the full-scale Russian invasion*]; a tank on a platform in the main square (the one that fired the first shot of the Coup); rehearsal for anniversary political demonstrations on the sports field (everyone had red umbrellas); children crying in the cold and rain; so much misery and hunger and poverty; the Kabul hotel where the American ambassador was shot; the radio station where endless political propaganda was being broadcast (but everyone here now listened to BBC Worldwide on short-wave radio); the ominous looking 'Ministry of the Interior' where people were taken and interrogated or shot...

Curfew was at 11 pm, which put an end to the party. And if your car breaks down on the way home – let's hope the police find you before the Army does!

You could tell the tension and strain expatriates were living under (a party was a way of letting off steam) – although there was no actual threat to their own safety. Censorship



of letters; tapping of telephones; bugging of hotel rooms; Afghans hating the Communists and fearing each other. Everyone was talking about Herat in the West. Apparently a group of Afghans (not especially fanatics) started destroying Communist slogans and pictures of [President] Taraki; others joined them; the Army opened fire. Then an entire garrison of Afghan soldiers turned on their Russian officers, killed them, and fled to the hills to join the rebels (on about 18 March 1979). Then the Russians came in with planes and bombed Herat, killing several hundred Afghans. Here, accounts differed: they were Russian bombers alright, but who were the pilots? They could also be Afghans trying to destroy the Communists. But how was the outside world reacting? Did the West really know, or care? Reports were given on BBC Worldwide, but we certainly heard nothing on BBC in the UK. Rumour had it that America swept it all under the carpet because of the SALT talks...

*[This was the actually the historic Herat uprising of March 1979, in which about 25,000 Afghans were killed.]*

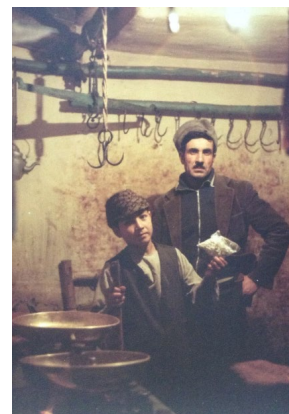
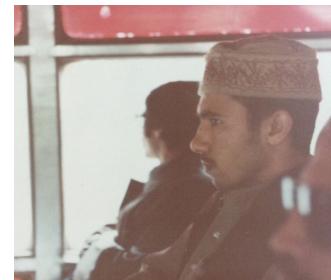
Expatriate Christians must find it difficult, too. Such uncertainty, and no contact with the Afghans – who would not associate with foreigners, for fear of being reported to the police. Kabul was a strange and frightening city – with a strained and ominous atmosphere.

It was an unforgettable journey by bus from Kabul to Peshawar, through the wild, spectacular Kabul Gorge, Jalalabad, and then down the legendary Khyber Pass. The countryside was inhabited by tribesmen living in fortified villages, of houses built into the rocky hillsides. Storm clouds cleared occasionally to reveal vistas of white mountain peaks, or a view of green and fertile valleys winding down into the plains of the Indian Subcontinent. Here great battles were fought, and lives laid down, defending the North-West Frontier against the fierce Afghan tribesmen...

Peshawar, and the real Pakistan. Rickshaw (with five cases!) to the Airport; chai and cake, and watching the sun go down on a day of Indian spring...



*Map of Kabul City*



*Traveller on bus and meat seller*

## Scenes from the Kabul Gorge and Khyber Pass, Afghanistan

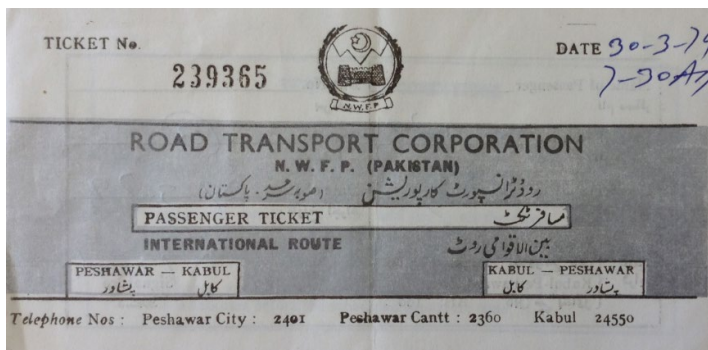


Scenes from the Kabul Gorge, Afghanistan

"Khyber Rifles Bhasai Fort" – from the British Raj...



View from the bus...



Bus ticket from Kabul to Peshawar



Peshawar: "Wel-come to Pakistan!"

## Excerpts from a letter home (31 March 1979)

Letter written from Lahore, Pakistan, dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 1979:

I had a good flight to Kabul, via Amsterdam, Paris, Rome and Tehran. I met a Christian from India on the flight. He introduced himself and knew I was a Christian because I said "Praise the Lord" when I saw my own baggage being loaded on to the Ariana aircraft at Amsterdam Airport. Arrived at Tehran at sunrise on Thursday. We weren't allowed off the plane, but could step out on to the platform of steps, to get a breath of fresh air [*avoiding armed military guards below*]. Beautiful bright sunshine of the Middle East – and superb view of high, snow-capped mountains to the north of the city.

Afghanistan was a terrible place. I wouldn't have missed my 24 hours there for anything – it was so fascinating, but my goodness, I was glad to get out of that country. I've never been in a 'Police State' before – Russian military presence everywhere – all very sinister. Weather didn't help – it poured with rain and was as cold as Britain! Somehow all I was told by expatriates at a party I went to on Thursday evening seemed verified by the observations I had made throughout the day, e.g. the 'Ministry of Interior', where people are taken away and interrogated or shot. Curfew at 11.00 pm – so the party broke up at 10.30 – and if your car breaks down on the way home, let's hope the police find you before the Army shoots you up! Censorship of all information is very strict – letters, tapping of telephones, bugging of rooms, spying – not much news gets either in or out of the country. For instance, did you know that on March 19<sup>th</sup> (approx.) the Russians came in and bombed Herat (in West Afghanistan) killing several thousand people? Well I never heard that on the BBC! If that sort of thing happened almost anywhere else in the world it would be a major disaster and action would be taken.

Anyway, on Friday I caught early morning bus out of Kabul and down through the spectacular Kabul Gorge and down the legendary Khyber Pass – wild, rugged country inhabited by tribesmen. So down to Peshawar where I got the evening flight into Lahore. I'm keeping a sort of haphazard diary (written mainly at airports) to try to capture the very vivid impressions I have on this fascinating journey East. I'm also taking *lots* of photos (probably far too many – but it *is* difficult to take photographs from a moving bus or in a crowded bazaar!)

I had an interesting day in Lahore, visiting 'old haunts', seeing one or two people I knew (though seeing most of them tomorrow at the church). Everything seemed so familiar – it all came back to me, as it were – as if I had only been away a year instead of nearly three! I walked around the Old City – the noise and crowds in the bazaars – smells of spices, weird oriental music; prayer calls echoing across the city from the minarets – buffaloes, horse-drawn *tongas*, cycles, scooters, rickshaws, overcrowded buses and garishly painted lorries – life surging around us with infinite variety of colour and sound. Feelings of 'it's really good to be back in the East again', and 'how boring the West is in comparison' (compare an Eastern bazaar with Sainsbury's supermarket!)

Now it's my first evening in the tropics – I couldn't help feeling a surge of excitement as the old patterns began to take shape in my mind once again – the sound of crickets chirping at nightfall; the brilliant stars and moon rising almost vertically; the heat and the humidity; ceiling fans in the bedroom at night, and having to use a torch whenever you step outside (because of snakes). And yet, in a strange way, I just couldn't believe I was back (as I rode into the Old City, in a horse-drawn '*tonga*') – just being there again is so different from reading accounts or seeing photographs...

Sunday 1 April 1979: Take-off from Lahore. Praise the Lord for a wonderful stay in Lahore. David, with Rachel, met me off the aircraft [*Steve was away on site, and had not yet returned*]. I spent the evening sharing with David and Janet, able to share some personal news. We also talked about XYZ Engineers and the hard times with [*a certain project*], and the court case because the contract was illegally terminated. But David and Janet kept saying, "But Praise the Lord! We always have something to praise God for!" They had sold off almost everything in the house – tape-recorders, radio sets etc. to get

the men paid and to look after the needs of the family, e.g. getting Andrew to the UK for schooling.

The following morning (Saturday 31 March 1979) I took a trip into the city. I saw folk at St Hilda's – including a touching reunion with Deaconess Soni, who remembered me [*she had sung that wonderful 'Happy long life to you' song on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday*]. I also met Tim, a BMMF volunteer. I went up and down the Mall Road and to the Old City – the Eastern bazaar – familiar sounds and smells; spices and the wail of prayer calls echoing across the City from the minarets; scooter rickshaws, bicycles, motorbikes, buffaloes, crowded buses and garishly painted lorries; women in *burqas*, the crowds of the narrow Old City.

I thought, "It's good to be back in Pakistan and the East", and "How boring a Western town is in comparison". I revisited old haunts: the Wazir Khan Masjid [Mosque]; the Badshahi Masjid, *tonga* rides through the city, '*Ori achcha hai*' [*is good horse*]; my 'friend' and self-appointed guide in the Badshahi Mosque said, "I am knowing English only very hardly!" The evening was spent sharing with Rachel and Susan.

Sunday morning: Crisis at St John's, as the Padre had 'collapsed' and was unable to take the service. I was invited to the induction of Padre M at St Luke's, but I was not able to attend, as I was feeling a bit unwell myself. Susan had had convulsions during the night, but was recovering. We met Steve off the 'Pindi plane' – it was so great to see him! We had a wonderful time of sharing about XYZ Engineers, St John's in Lahore and St Matthew's in Cambridge...

Steve prayed for me to get better, and for the journey ahead. He also had some 'words from the Lord': a command not to worry, and to be of good cheer, as my schedule is in His hands. At Lahore Airport, Steve said that our paths might not cross again for some time, but he felt we had a tremendous amount in common (vision etc.), and that if the Lord ever led us to go into business together, that would be amazing...

### **Excerpts from a later letter home (7 April 1979)**

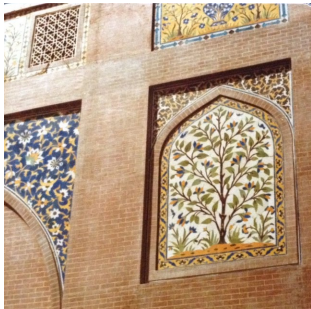
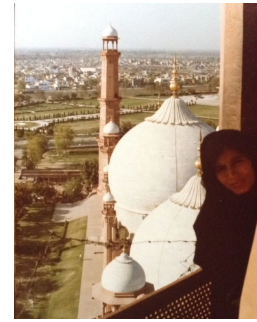
Letter written from Tretes, East Java, Indonesia, dated Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> April 1979:

I had a fascinating journey East. By KLM to Amsterdam, where I caught the Ariana (Afghan Airways) flight to Kabul. We stopped at Paris and Rome (late at night), and early the next morning we awoke to find snow-capped mountains of Eastern Turkey beneath us, and we came down in Tehran! We weren't allowed off the plane – and of course we saw nothing of the city – but we were allowed on to the gangway to get a much-needed breath of fresh air. It was a lovely clear 'Middle Eastern' morning, with the sun already warm (at 07:00) and the Alborz Mountains very clear indeed. In fact we had a marvelous view of the highest mountain in Iran [*Mount Damavand*] as we took off.

I got to Afghanistan later that morning and after being met by an MMP colleague, had to deliver documents immediately because this was the last day they had to be in. I then had the rest of the day 'to myself' in Kabul – and I must say I wouldn't have missed the visit for anything, it was so fascinating, but my goodness I was glad to get out of the country – and Pakistan seemed so free and civilized in comparison (though partly due to familiarity). I got taken along to an expatriate party the night I was in Kabul. Somehow I felt that all they said about the country rang true, in the light of the few observations I had made during the day. Russian military presence everywhere – Afghan soldiers all in Soviet uniforms; tanks, armoured vehicles etc. Andrew (MMP chap) gave me a quick tour of the city. Saw (1) the tank which fired the first shot of the coup, mounted on a pedestal in the main square; (2) the room in the Kabul Hotel where the American ambassador was shot; (3) a political demonstration on a sports field in progress (why was everyone wearing red umbrellas?); (4) the sinister Ministry of the Interior with a huge portrait of Taraki – where suspects are taken and interrogated or shot, and children gather round the gates looking for their parents. The weather didn't help my impressions much – it was cold and pouring with rain, in fact no different to UK on the day I left! At the party I could

tell the strain under which expatriates seem to be living. Though there's no actual threat to their own safety, there's censorship of letters, tapping of telephones, bugging of hotel rooms. Everyone was talking about Herat, in the west. Apparently the story at the time was that provoked by rioting and a mutiny, the Russians came in with planes and bombed the city, killing several thousand people. It seems the West hasn't sat up and taken much notice. So the Russians (once again) are literally getting away with murder! Curfew was at 11 pm, so the party ended promptly at 10:45 pm. If your car breaks down on the way home, then let's hope the police find you before the army does. There was something very sinister about Kabul, and I was glad to be on the bus to the border. Afghanistan was very beautiful once out of the city – high snow-capped mountains and dramatic river Kabul gorge which we followed down to Jalalabad. Only occasional Russian army dumps which I tried to photograph from the rapidly moving bus – but no such luck! So, down the legendary Khyber Pass to Peshawar, Pakistan...

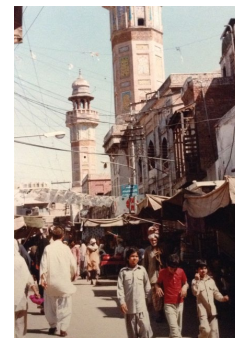
## Scenes from Lahore, Pakistan



*Badshahi Mosque, Lahore, Pakistan (above)*

*Wazir Khan Mosque, Lahore (left)*

*The Old City, Lahore, Pakistan (right and below)*

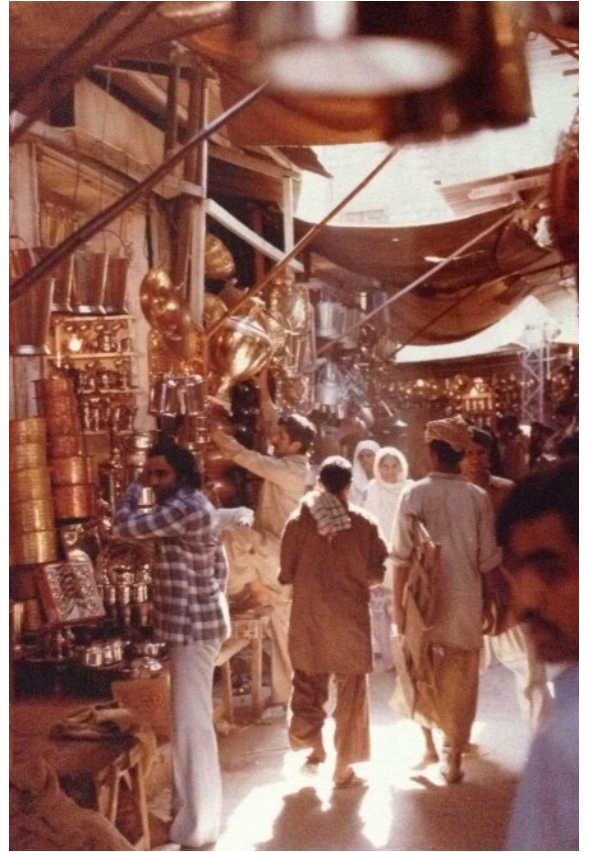


*The Brass Bazaar, Lahore, Pakistan (below)*





*The Bazaar, Lahore, Pakistan*



*The Brass Bazaar, Lahore, Pakistan*





*Scenes from Mall Road, Lahore, Pakistan (Kim's Gun, above)*



*Scenes from the Old City, Lahore, Pakistan (above)*