

Letters from Africa

**Mbale-Dabida, Kenya:
September 1973 to August 1974**

Adrian Hall

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1973

September 1973

Postcard to my parents, 10 September 1973

Postcard to my parents, written from Nairobi, 10 September 1973 and addressed to Hotel Stadthotellet, Härnösand, Sweden:

Sorry this is late – first chance to buy postcards – in Woolworths, Nairobi. Good flight – got through with 7 kg overweight, free – by a miracle! (a long story which I'll tell you later) saving £21! Heathrow – Channel Islands – France – Italian coast – Sicily – North African coast. Woke up over NFD and came in via Naivasha. Temperature out of plane 57 degrees (F) (compared to 84 degrees F in Hoddesdon). Really will have to get acclimatized to this COLD! Spent first two days recovering at St Julian's, a guest house 15 miles west of Nairobi – very high [*up in the hills*] and disappointingly English (silver tea pots, Beethoven etc). Leave for TAITA tomorrow on 9½ hour bus journey. Country fabulous – climate, flowers, birds superb. Thanks for cards on arrival. Will write full letter soon. Hope you have a lovely time in Scandinavia.

Letter to my parents, 12 September 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida on 12 September 1973 and addressed to Legbourne, posted in Mombasa 14 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. Thank you very much for your letter, which I received on arrival at Mbale (only 4 days – very good!) Now, news in brief. Friday 7th: Walked up to Haileybury, cross country from Hoddesdon, and saw Mr and Mrs R-J [*Rhodes-James – I will always remember R-J, dressed in a tropical safari suit, in one of the classrooms in sweltering heat; I inquired, jokingly, "Is this Africa?"*]. I also saw Boom [the Master] – in lieu of farewell 'interview' at the end of last term. He went on, rather mysteriously, about some correspondence with you, Dad, concerning the Appeal and what public schools should stand for. Obviously he'd been taking it very seriously! Anyway, we said goodbye, I said a big Thank you, and he wished me well. I also saw the Blakeway-Smiths. Had lunch with Chris D and Nick G at Galley Hall – temperature in the 80s. We set off for a Heathrow in a funny car driven by Andrew G. I thought we'd never make it! At Heathrow a miracle happened. I heard that overweight was being charged at £1 to £1.50 per lb (i.e. astronomical!) In panic I transferred 8 kilos into a carrier bag (which eventually disintegrated, as hand luggage) – thus leaving a suitcase of 20 kg and a rucksack of 7 kg. I put both articles on the scales, holding my breath for the shock. Just then an airport official – amazingly – came along, snatched the rucksack from off the scales, depositing it with the 'passed' luggage. The lady checking the weights then looked round at the scale to see (only) 20 kg – the weight of the suitcase [and the maximum allowance, 44 lb] – and passed me on!

Took off 75 minutes late. We circled over Windsor, 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, 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 the North African coast. 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, landing at Embakasi Airport, to the east. Fantastic views of parched semi-desert stretching away to mountains in the east...

Moment of truth – the wheels touched the tarmac and we entered Africa. Stepped outside. The temperature? 57 degrees (Fahrenheit)! A come down from the 80s of London – I really will have to get used to this cold weather! Nairobi Airport 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 the Reverend John R (CMS representative), who drove us through Nairobi – with its landscaped roundabouts, Jacaranda trees, white buildings and red earthworks (first impressions), to St Julian's, near Limuru, 20 miles west of Nairobi and at an altitude of nearly 7,000 feet. Beautiful CMS house, very unlike Africa; it was almost as if we were back in England – with silver tea pots, coolness, green grass and 'civilisation'. 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 almost vertically overhead. It was 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). 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). Accommodated in a wooden annexe with Mike F, Peter H and Stephen L. The first night in a dark continent...

Dawn at 06:00, dusk at 18:30 each and every day, which is really very convenient, i.e. at 16:30 you know you have just two hours of light left. Again, no messing about with long evenings and short afternoons. On Sunday we attended a Swahili service, and then returned and played tennis – vicarage standard, a court of red dust. John R took communion at St Julian's in the evening, preaching a very practical, relevant and encouraging sermon about what we (YSAs) are out here for – to serve.

On Monday we left St Julian's and were driven to the Hilton (focal point) and given time to shop. Saw everyone off, either to Kisumu or Marang'a (Fort Hall) – I was to leave the next day as my journey was very long. Spent the rest of the day wandering around the city – looking at the beautiful streets [*lined with Jacaranda trees*], the curious new Conference Centre, Africa's tallest building, due to open the next day – a cylindrical tower with a saucer on top. Looked round the RC Cathedral – simply beautiful and very modern, much nicer than the Anglican one. Accosted in Uhuru Park with a hard-luck story, very skilfully played. Luckily I had been duly prepared – gave him 2/- for a very good effort. Stayed with the R's – Malcolm (aged 8) has a pet snake, mildly poisonous, which hasn't bitten (yet) – which I was given to handle!

Fascinating bus journey from Nairobi at 07:00 to Wundanyi at 16:30. Through hilly scrub land via Machakos and Sultan Hamud and through the Tsavo Plains national Park – saw elephants and baboons very near the roadside because of the current DROUGHT. Voi is rather fun, just like a Wild West ranch with its row of *dukas*, street market and dust. The ascent into the Taita Hills brought a dramatic change. A climb of steep hairpin bends gave us superb views over the coastal plains – 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 Japan, but without stepped terrace farms and rice paddy fields. Very, very beautiful hills with lovely flowers, birds and wild life. Fantastic colouring, especially at dawn and dusk. Met at Wundanyi by Don and Lyn S (Geordie and Liverpool, respectively). I am staying with them until I get settled in. I cannot teach until I have seen the Bishop (my actual employer) at Mombasa on Friday. Saw round the school, met staff, attended Don's lessons today. I am now listening to BBC Worldwide on short-wave radio. Aren't the bombs terrible? [*IRA, London and Northern Ireland*]

Letter to my parents, 19 September 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 19 September 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter from Härnösand [Sweden], which arrived this morning, and for the air mail letter from Legbourne which greeted my arrival. No assurance yet,

however, that my letters have reached you! I sent a postcard from Nairobi to Härnösand and a letter to Legbourne. I trust you have at any rate received the latter.

Well, again life so full and little space to write! The news in brief. On Friday we (the S's and myself) went to Mombasa: for my part, primarily to get forms signed by the Bishop (my effectual employer, as this [*Coastal Diocese*] is a centrally administered diocese (a great mistake!), and to get kitted up for the house. As a YSA, I'm in fact blazing a trail, so that basic cooking equipment and a good light are necessary prerequisites for a YSA post. For the first part, the Bishop was not there (communication by post is very slow, owing to unreliable bus service in the Taita District – he was to return from Nairobi the next day). Saw therefore Richard, his right-hand man, who is dealing with the forms. They have not yet arrived here, so officially I am not yet teaching (I am, sort of). Anyway, Saturday spent buying a Chinese pressure lamp and cooking things, in a very oppressive, heavy heat (cloudy day).

The next day the weather was much fresher and the sky clearer. Drove round Mombasa Island (through the tusks on Kilindini Street), past the docks and to the sea front at dusk. Gentle waves breaking on the coral reef, palm trees – 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! Mombasa in fact is a terrific place! A mixture of (slightly) European, Indian and Arab cultures – no high-rise flats or Hilton hotels as in Nairobi. Wonderful narrow street called Bia-Shara running the entire width of the island (north-south), very narrow and lined each side with Arab/Indian *dukas* (small shops) selling antiques, coloured shirts, carvings, miscellanea. You fly back through the centuries, until you turn round to find you're looking at a Lyons ice cream van! We had the guest house of CITC (Christian Industrial Training Centre), which overlooked the North Creek – over (or through) which was the famous Nyali pontoon bridge. All this looked very romantic by moonlight. Swam in the Missions to Seamen pool – alas, no time for bathing in the sea, but the coast is on my list as a must for part of one of the school holidays. Mombasa is really the nearest town to us (only 3 hours drive) – half the time it would take to get to Nairobi.

Returned on Sunday night, kitted up and ready for work. I must explain the situation that exists at Mgalu High School – which is really in a bit of a mess at the moment. Though 'Harambee' (financially self supported), it is controlled by the Diocesan Committee in Mombasa (led by the Bishop), who are responsible for finances and allocation of staff, and appointment of the Headmaster. Well, according to Don S (and from what I've seen so far, I'm inclined to agree), the Headmaster, Mr Harrison M really hasn't the first idea. He's hardly ever seen at the school, and apparently is incapable of making decisions. Just smiles and does nothing! Well I'm not sure if this is completely fair, but this attitude seems to be reflected in the very shallow sense of discipline and authority currently inherent in the school. Mgalu, in fact, got off to a terrific start 3 years ago, under an English missionary, Miss C, whom I have just met – a remarkable woman in more ways than one: out of straight 'bush' and chaos she forged a really good school. Called elsewhere, her successors came and went until this present Headmaster, with the result that the school has gone steadily downhill. Diocesan administration for you: there are now no less than 8 members of staff for a three-form school! Not only does this present serious teaching problems and lack of coordination, but, more serious, the students' fees are being absorbed by staff salaries – so that the school cannot afford to buy books essential for their studies. In fact Don had to come to Mombasa to negotiate (literally 'bang his fist down on the table') with Richard. Also with us was Cephas, a really good neighbouring Headmaster, who had a staff shortage! Unfortunately Richard is landed with responsibility with such affairs, but denied the authority to change things. This, Don says, is what Kenyans are still to learn – responsibility must go hand in hand with authority.

Thirdly, Forms 3 and 4 are still at foundation stage, with bricks lying around just waiting to be assembled – but that's a different story. Anyway this temporarily put me in a bit of a tizz. The inevitable question came to my mind – and to my lips – why did CMS post me here, as another member of staff? I am fairly well at ease now. I was posted here (at Mbale) because of the proximity of the W's and the S's. The African staff get moved around rapidly – that is

the norm, and 2 or 3 are due for transfer anyway, and would have comparatively little difficulty in adjusting to a new school... Anyway, result: doing little teaching at present (till chaos sorted out) – which has given me much needed time to move into fantastic house, with stove, fridge, space, banana trees and incredible view, which I shall sketch, with Aggrey O, very nice Nairobi University graduate. People here are terrific: Mrs (Catharine) W (who returned Monday), Peter M (one of the original teachers), Flora M. So much more to tell: people; fauna; geography; teaching – another time!

Letter to my parents, 26 September 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 26 September 1973:

Thank you very much for your postcards which are now arriving at regular intervals. I have received one or two from Virginia, too – she seems to having a wonderful time in France. I think I've settled into the house by now OK, 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 light. Was she a friend of Aggrey's? She was his wife! She also had a 2 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 hadn't been warned of her coming, let alone Aggrey himself. But apparently this is the African way – you drop in unexpectedly on relatives. Anyway, Mrs O is here for the week, 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 in its mouth – stuck. Just outside the back door! We hurled stones at it until we got its head. I then got a photo taken of me holding it up by its tail. Green, 2½ feet long with yellow underside. Mrs W fears that it might have been a harmless grass snake, but I am reluctant to admit it or to believe that it was. I rest 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 only too 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 of Stac Pollaidh height which I can see from my bedroom window, about 30 miles away; south almost into Tanzania; westwards to Wesu rock and Wundanyi. Immediately below: the Mbale location and Iriwa spread out like a map. Took some photographs, and when I go up again I shall 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 school. Those who fail can only receive secondary education at Harambee schools, where the students pay. Forms III and IV, as I say, are still at foundation level; our \$64,000 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 I was posted to Mgalu long before the over-staffing crisis. However the Headmaster 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 – A GREAT MISTAKE. Don S and Harrison M have been battling it out in Mombasa, with Richard and the Bishop. The former assures me that the present Headmaster is being removed (hopefully by the end of term), to be replaced by a strong, Christian Headmaster, and that two thirds of the staff are due for transfer – 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!) – and 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 CU 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 this present staff upheaval! Not enough space!

October 1973

Letter to my parents, 3 October 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 3 October 1973:

Thank you very much for your letters. I am glad Norway was fun. It certainly looked beautiful on the postcards. Last Friday evening (28th) I received a letter from you, Mum, dated 25th. Three days is incredible – the W's admitted though that this was an unusual occurrence and that normally letters to and from the UK average 5 or 6 days. Well, for this last week, all I can say is Turbulent Times. I am sure though that by the time this letter reaches you, I will be settled in somewhere. As I said in my last letter, the situation at Mgalu at the moment is far from satisfactory (as it has been ever since the Mombasa Diocese took over its administration – hopefully we are reverting to reliable autonomy next year). I am *still* not teaching fully, because my official forms of appointment have not yet arrived. I am under orders from Harrison M, the Headmaster, to go to Mombasa and see Bishop Mwan'gombe personally and to get things straight once and for all. And because my September salary has not yet come through, I am becoming aware that the Bishop could be indecisive about my appointment, and that it is best for me to see him personally. The W's are going to Mombasa tomorrow anyway, and thus I am accompanying them. Though Mr W (responsible for me as a YSA) and myself are convinced that this is where I should be, I have to face the fact that I may be transferred to another part of the Province. Confusion reigns, for the time being, but as there is nothing more that I can do about it, I might as well enjoy an excuse to go to Mombasa and get a wider impression of the country.

Yesterday we suffered an unpleasant blow in that the news came through that Peter M had been transferred to another school in the Taita district. A blow for the CU which, especially over the past two weeks, had flourished under his leadership. A blow too for the academic side. He was a brilliant teacher of English and History: his departure leaves us with one Arts teacher and four Scientists (including myself) – again, long-range Mombasa administration for you! If my appointment does become officially valid – which I'm pretty sure it will do – I shall be teaching 17 periods of English, 3 of RK [*Religious Knowledge*] and some Maths and Physics – hopefully about 30 periods in all. (By the way, the Bishop promises that Harrison is on his way out. What we need is a disciplinarian who can make decisions – like ETH Pease-Watkin! [*Headmaster of Packwood Haugh*])

That I think is the extent of the more unsatisfactory news. Though not fully employed with teaching, I have been fairly busy marking books. I have a list here of the various permutations of certain words that arose during a dictation, which I know will interest Virginia. For “plunged” we had “clumshed, plunched, planged, plamished and plunsh” – and 20 more as amusing! Also stimulating is helping people with prep (7:30 – 9:00 pm), mainly mathematics problems. There you get personal contact with the students and you really find out their abilities and weaknesses on an individual basis. On Saturday I went with the W's for a picnic and afternoon, to a part of the Taita Hills rejoicing in the name of Ngangao (Ng-gang-gao). A hill which rises as the third highest point of the hills, overlooking the Taita plateau towards the main peaks – Wesu, Yale and the highest Vuriah (7,000 feet), it is covered with some of the old African residual forest. We had lunch in thick, gloriously cool jungle – a place where palms and (Scandinavian) firs grew side by side. There was a magical silence, broken only by

the strange sounds of tropical birds... We climbed through this incredible forest – Tolkien’s Mirkwood without a shadow of doubt! Every tree and fern had distinct visual beauty and we stopped several times to inhale the rich fragrance of strange flowers. Towards the top deciduous vegetation gave way to pines, and pines to gorse and rock which formed the summit. Views to Voi and Kasigau in the east, and across the Tsavo plains to the lower slopes of Kilimanjaro in the west – unfortunately the summit lost in thick grey cloud that dominated the whole sky. Terrific views across the plain – to Lake Jipe on the Tanzanian border, and indeed into the country of Tanzania itself. Through binoculars we could see a white building, Eldoro Secondary School, calculated to be 50 miles away! Views over the Taita Hills were dramatic too. Yale, a rather gentle shape from Mbale, is in fact a knife-edge, and from end on it looks like a more acute form of Stac Pollaidh.

A few miscellaneous points: Mrs W has an off-white Renault 6 (sort of pinky-white) – cleaning it is a very homely affair [*as it reminded me of Mum’s white Renault; actually in Kenya the way we cleaned it was to let it stand in the middle of the Mdongo-dongo river near the Iriwa bridge!*] You can count the white families in Taita on the fingers of one hand! I have met all except two American couples. I have seen a Peregrine Falcon, an Augur Buzzard, various eagles and an African Oriole (Mrs W is an expert on birds). We are hoping desperately for rain; as you know, the world’s weather is in a mess. Will write again next Wednesday.

Postcard to my parents, 4 October 1973

Postcard to my parents, showing the Nyali Floating Bridge, Mombasa:

Just to say that today (Thursday) Mr W and I saw Bishop [Peter] Mwan’gombe (Swahili: “son of a cow”!) and the situation has changed dramatically: (a) I am now officially appointed to Mgalu, beginning work straightaway tomorrow morning; my salary for September and October (1,000 /-) has been paid in cash – in future by cheque. (b) Two more members of Mgalu staff have been transferred with effect from tomorrow, leaving Aggrey, Crispin, Harrison, Don S (part time) and myself. This will mean a lot of work! (c) This is the Bishop’s unpromised intention – for which we sincerely hope – next term Harrison (who is incapable) will be removed and PETER M will return to Mgalu as Headmaster! If this comes off, nothing could be better. Anyway, things seem now to be settled... Swam today in the INDIAN OCEAN!

Letter to my parents, 10 October 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 10 October 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter. It took, I’m afraid, 8 days to get here – so you just can’t tell. On Tuesday I sent off a parcel of Christmas presents, after a very successful shopping session in BIASHARA (the old Arab street of Mombasa). You will find it wrapped in a sheet, sown at the joins. Mrs W very kindly did this for me! I’m afraid I could not wrap up yours, Mum, in pretty paper, as your present CONTAINS all the others! All being well the parcel should reach you by Christmas (average two months), but don’t be worried if it doesn’t arrive by February! Please could you send any magazine mail with my Christmas presents, out here. And a request: films (20 colour slides, 126 cartridge) out here are frightfully expensive (42/- = nearly £3). Longing to hear about the launching. Was it, “I name THIS ship” or “I name this SHIP?” I hope you didn’t say ‘Harold’!

Well! After a month of (not unpleasant) turmoil, I feel that at last I’ve gotten into gear. On Monday Miss Flora M was transferred to Kituri – unfortunately leaving an all male staff for a co-educational school. At this point the staffing complement ceased to be serious. You just had to sit back and laugh. We now have 5 Scientists and zero Artists – again, Mombasa administration for you! I think that the Bishop (who was here this morning) has failed to realize that you can’t make members of staff teach subjects about which they know NOTHING! Still, yesterday we had a staff meeting, which lasted 4 hours. It was a terrific success. For the first time we really felt we were working together as a team, with a specific

job on hand, and that it was our duty to perform it as well as possible. The driving force of the meeting was Aggrey (sad that he's probably leaving at the end of term), and really the only passenger was – I'm afraid to say – Harrison, the Headmaster. He really *is* a wet blanket. Still, we have the Bishop's promise that at the end of term he will be removed, and I only hope and pray that (according to the Bishop's present intention) Peter M will return as Headmaster (he is *very* competent, and also highly respected and popular among the students).

The time-table presented no problems – all of us were cooperating with the minimum of friction – sparks of humour smoothed the wheels enormously. I am teaching 32 periods a week: Forms II and III English; Forms I, II and III RE (Scripture); and Form III Physics. With the present absence of any Arts teachers, it's lucky I did English for A level, and I enjoy teaching it very much – feeling, increasingly, that I have the form's confidence and command their respect. Next term, if Aggrey goes, I should be doing the Maths and Physics faculties: so I am treating this term as a rest from Science, and next year as a time of getting back into a scientific frame of mind, ready for Cambridge in October. Work at the moment is pressing hard – marking books and planning lessons. This leaves me little spare time, but it's much better than hanging around with time on my hands! Form II faces KJSE exams (equivalent to Common Entrance), two years prior to O level, in a month, so hard work is necessary.

My responsibilities include being Library master (hope to get some good new books for the English library), Music master (the Oxfam flute is really proving its worth – playing it is a lovely way to relax!), assistant Housemaster to CHUI (leopard) House, and sponsor to the Christian Union – taking over from Peter M. No, if I thought that all African Harambee schools were run chaotically, I would not be nearly so concerned about the 'downs' of Mgalu. But that isn't the case. When Mgalu started four years ago, under Miss [Kate] C, it was one of the finest schools in the District – maintaining for 2 to 3 years the highest KJSE exam results in the whole of the Mombasa Province. Sad therefore that it should have plunged so dramatically downhill during this last year. Uplifting, on the other hand, that at last – with a dramatic improvement in the standard of school discipline and reappointment of prefects – the whole morale and atmosphere of the school has been visibly transformed over the last 36 hours.

The day at Mombasa was GREAT. We swam in the Indian Ocean off Nyali Beach. The water was lovely, with the palm trees and setting sun making a very picturesque back-cloth. Last Saturday I was invited to the home of one of the day students for an evening. It was a fascinating experience. We had sweet potatoes (tasting just like roast chestnuts), eggs and *chai*. Everyone was please to see me, and apparently impressed with my laconic Swahili – all laughter and good fun – a heart-warming experience, which I will repeat with other students during the year.

Letter to my parents, 17 October 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 17 October 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter. Certainly the launching sounded a tremendous occasion: I only wish I could have been there! However, I'll look forward to seeing the photographs. Perhaps the best plan would be to send them + my prints from Louth + Christmas presents all in a big parcel to go by sea. Christmas requests are basically for FILMS – colour slides, 126 Cartridge Kodak. Also a lens-viewer for slides, so that I can look at them when they return from the processing factory. I haven't actually sent off any of my films to Kodak because, when I left Britain, there was a strike on. Could you tell me in your next letter, via Selles, whether they have gone back to work yet?

Well! A really good, satisfying, full week's work. Indeed life has been so full that I feel as if I have hardly had time to draw breath! Teaching 32 periods a week means that all preparation and marking has to be done out of school hours. Work is especially fast in Form II, who face KJSE in 3 weeks! I gave them a full-scale exam time test – which I made up myself – this morning on Vocab, Structure and Note-taking (part of the English course). It seems to have worked fairly well, though the students admitted it was a little on the hard side! Fomr I Maths

coaching is quite an experience – you need more than PLENTY of patience and sympathy. For example, “When Christine was born, her mother was 25. So when Christine was 3 years old, how old was her mother?” “– er – 28.” “Right. When Christine was x years old, then, how old was her mother?” “– er – um – 25 times x.” “No.” “25/x.” “No.” “25 – x...” HELP!

Refereeing football too is quite an experience. By English standards one would have to give a penalty for fouling every few seconds! I don’t think they realize that there really is a difference between Association Football and Wrestling / Judo / Karate / you-name-it! “Dissociation Football”, Aggrey calls it. The teaching is exhilarating, though very tiring, and the students seem to be responding well – which is a great encouragement. At any rate I seem to get plenty of intelligent come-back during times of questioning and discussion. The school however continues to stumble forward. The Provincial Inspector – an Englishman – came round yesterday for a routine inspection. Apparently he was horrified. Harrison had done no preparation for his arrival, and poor Aggrey was left with the task of tactfully explaining away the Headmaster’s failings. I rather doubt whether the school will be graded this year – which I’m afraid is a dishonour. However next term Aggrey and I have plans to budget the school’s finances in such a way that we can get some science equipment, in order to display simple, yet essential, scientific experiments (one of the essential requirements for a good grade).

A word or two about morals and culture which would interest you. First, the African attitude to DRINK is absolutely black-and-white. You are either a strict teetotaler or a drunkard! Drink in fact – together with smoking – are deadly sins, in which no self-respecting member of society will indulge. Understandably so, when you realise that rural African families are very poor, and one packet of cigarettes is the equivalent of several kilograms of maize flour. The second thing is that I was always under the impression that Christians should sing and worship using their own tribal African music – and that they should not be forced to use western hymn tunes or service structures. Actually it’s not nearly as simple as that. The African Christians *want* to adopt western hymn and song tunes, because their own indigenous music is so impregnated with pagan and immoral connotations. For example, try singing “Glorious things of Thee are spoken” to the tune of ‘Clementine’! Nevertheless a lot of newly composed chorus tunes have a really good swing to them – and the rhythms are fantastic. But as for my beating the drums in a tribal dance, this is now dying and discouraged: the Kenyans are thankful for this fact – for the tribal spiritualism (particularly witch-doctors), they say, brought much fear and damage.

Half term from Friday or Saturday this week. Kenyatta Day on Saturday, and a new church being opened in Aggrey’s parish in Nairobi – to which he has been invited, and he’s invited me! So we’re both going up to Nairobi, taking the OTC bus on Friday. I’m staying with the C’s, my allocated ‘Town Cousins’ – representatives for the Scripture Union in Kenya. Will also see Henry [*referring to Henry B, friend of Hedley Warr, who went to stay with him in England – I never did see him, however*]. The W’s leave tomorrow for Naivasha, to see the children for their half term. On Thursday it RAINED – poured down all day. The arrival of rain brought much exuberance and joy. Unfortunately the clouds seem to have dried up again. But this is a sure sign that the Short Rains are on their way! Will send a postcard from Nairobi. Have written to various friends at Haileybury...

November 1973

Letter to my parents, 1 November 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 1 November 1973:

Thank you very much for your letters – but my goodness! You feel the effect of ‘time lag’. Your references to my letter dated October 10th – ages ago – I can’t even remember (without reference to my diary) what happened on the 10th! However, this is partly because so much is happening, so quickly. I’ve now been in Africa nearly 8 weeks. Seems like 8 days! I can see that, just as I’m beginning to feel ‘stuck in’ the year will be gone! Hope you got my postcard from Nairobi. Half-term made a welcome break. I stayed with some very nice Australian /

English missionaries called the C's, who work for Scripture Union. They have a family of four children – to whom I read many bed-time stories. Saw many others in the city. John C passed me, quite by accident, in his car, as I was waiting for a bus. We then arranged to meet at the New Stanley Hotel at 1 pm, and he took me out to lunch at a Chinese restaurant. He says he's really enjoying life out in Kenya, though the work at the hospital is hard – full surgery hours and teaching university medical students. He sends his regards to everyone. Also saw Mr R, who has given me news about other YSAs. I met two other YSAs – Richard H and Jonathan A – at the opening service of St John's Pumwani. I also spent an evening with Aggrey's parents, Mr and Mrs O. Mrs O said, as we parted, "When you write to your parents, send them my greetings, and tell them that you have 'another mother' in Nairobi!" Went round Nairobi University but did not, unfortunately, manage to see Henry. I have written to him, and he to me. The Nairobi Music Society is singing Messiah in the first week of December in the Cathedral. I attended one of the early rehearsals – a wonderful if slightly nostalgic experience, singing: "He trusted in God..." and "Great was the company of the preachers..."

I hitch-hiked back to the Taita Hills on Wednesday – two buses to the Mombasa Road then a lift on an EAA company bus to the airport turn. Another lift to the Machakos turn, then a bit of a wait (now 50 km clear of Nairobi). Presently I flagged down a Nairobi Hilton van, which was bound for the Taita Hills Game Lodges! They would take me to Voi – the driver said – for 15/-. I said, "*Hapana. Hakuna pesa*" (no money). A pause. "OK then, jump in the back!" An uncomfortable but steady ride to Voi, in the back of a van in amongst wooden boards and boxes of tiles! I arrived in Voi at 14:20, a clear half an hour ahead of Aggrey, who had left Nairobi at 07:00, traveling on the OTC! We both took the OTC bus to Wundanyi and then walked – cross country – for 3 miles with heavy suitcases. Some feat!

Settled down to work again after a Muslim holiday (good on them) on Monday, which enabled me to catch up with marking and lesson planning. I have plans – approved by Harrison – to teach English Literature to next term's Form III, with the Government Inspector, using Romeo and Juliet and various African authors for texts. The Mgalu valley makes a perfect natural amphitheatre, so the possibilities for stage production and open-air poetry sessions are endless!

Enclosed is a plan of our (quite superb) house. We now have a very conscientious cook / daily help, who works in the mornings. He doesn't speak English well, so this is very good for my ki-Swahili! At the moment it is raining hard – grey clouds and high winds all day. However, when it is clear the sun is gloriously warm – I do not envy an English November! On Monday I took an evening walk on to the ridge above Iriwa. The view was quite breathtaking seen in evening light. The local area spread before me like a map – and way to the east the coastal ridge, though not alas the sea. STARS by night are fantastic. Being on the astral equator, we get to see all the stars in the course of a year. Orion is beginning to rise in the east. In three months it will be vertically overhead, really dominating the heavens. To the south, stars I have never seen in my life before. In three months too the Southern Cross will be visible...

Letter to my parents, 7 November 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 7 November 1973:

Thank you very much for your most interesting letter. The launching sounds (and looks) wonderful... Enclosed here is a sketch of the Mgalu valley (a rather 'scientific' one, I'm afraid), taken from the top of the ridge above Iriwa (about 1,500 feet above, I think). It doesn't show either my house or the school – both buildings are tucked away behind steep slopes. But I enclose also a map which shows roughly how the various houses and buildings are geographically related. The sizes of the buildings are, of course, completely out of scale. It is around half a mile (for example) from the S's house to the W's house by road. The two enclosures together should be able to give you a fairly clear picture of the area.

The first of my slides have come through, from Paris France – taking 2½ weeks for the round trip. Though some of the frames suffer from bad lighting I am quite astounded by the sharpness and clarity. Two especially good pictures form a panoramic view of the scene which I have sketched. All distant houses are distinct, and the mountains (50 miles away) on the horizon are as clear as ever they were on the day I took the photograph! I'll look at them on Don's (battery-operated) slide projector tonight. I will probably send some of them on to you at a later date. So far only one film has come through. I'm looking forward to seeing the slides of Lincolnshire sunsets and combine-harvesters when the other film arrives. Red is particularly well portrayed. A red flower or a red hat gives real life to a photograph. Of course, too, the light here in Africa is so bright and clear. Red earth, green trees, bright blue sky...

Not very much in the way of news. Hard working days once more, though at the moment the pressure of work has decreased owing to the fact that Form II are in the middle of KJSE exams. But here is a brief time-table of a normal full day at Mgalu [*list follows*]. Saturday is a day for shopping (if necessary) at Wundanyi, preparation, exam-setting, household work. Sunday I try to keep completely free from work: writing letters, seeing people, walking in the hills, generally getting out (church in the morning). At the moment most of our work consists of setting terminal exams for Forms I and III. Events loom ahead: Saturday is Harambee Day, when as a school we try and raise as much money as possible for the new building. A similar event between here and Voi raised 8,100/- towards the cost of a new church! If we can raise 5,000/- I shall be very pleased. On Sunday we have the first of our school services – which will take place every other week, in order to give students a chance of worshipping (in English) at a Youth Service, without drawing them away from the main parish church community. Also on Sunday members of the school are walking up to Kituri High School (beyond Wundanyi) to see Peter M and Flora.

I'm afraid I have had a series of sleepless nights recently – so am not feeling too good at the moment. Partly the heat, noisy dogs etc. and various problems, not least of which is my relationship with Aggrey, which is somewhat strained at the moment. We had a discussion on Sunday evening about drink, at which I advocated that we (the staff) as a team ought to set a good example to the students by not drinking during term time and being seen by students. (Remember how serious drink is in rural Africa.) Well, I knew this suggestion would be unpopular, but I did this for the sake of the students, who are (partially) my responsibility. A dilemma, really, but I preferred to be decisive rather than to remain 'safely' in the background, not breathing a word, so to speak. We shook hands on an agreement that we should neither of us drink during term time. I rather doubt whether Aggrey kept that agreement for 24 hours. Certainly, last night, with no subsequent apology, he rolled in, far gone, at 01:30 am, awakening me from whatever sleep I had. So I rather feel I've gone and messed things up to no effect. Still, we live and learn! Anyway, the atmosphere at the moment is once again tense, but I hope this will not last for long. An early night tonight. Hope it rains. We're now virtually out of rainwater, and will soon need to boil water carried from the river. The short rainy season is almost over, and so far it seems to have failed – to the detriment of the farmers...

Letter to my parents, 14 November 1973 (Excerpts)

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 14 November 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter. I am using this paper (school duplicating paper 'borrowed' from the secretary), as it will enable me to write more freely, without feeling pushed for space...

[Family problems] however, I am glad to say, have been greatly eased by the exciting pace at which events have been taking place here in Taita – most of which is good news. First, the great joy: "*Mvua imekuja!*" "The rain has come!" The short rains, six weeks late, started last Thursday, and have now got into 'swing' – i.e. it rains every day starting at about 6 pm and continuing up to 11 at night. The timings are not too reliable at the moment, and the weather

now is very 'English' in its unpredictability, except that when it rains, DOES IT RAIN! On Friday night our rainwater tank filled to the top. We now have 1,000 gallons of pure, fresh rainwater, running freely in all taps of the house! If used with discretion, 1,000 gallons should last at least three months. It's certainly better that drinking river water out of *debe* tins! After only a few days of intermittent rain, the countryside is already transformed – from an inhospitable brown to a living green.

On Wednesday, the KJSE examinations began. The papers were fair, I think. For most of the past week we have been setting school term examinations for Forms I and III (no easy task!), which begin next Monday. Also my first slides have arrived (from Paris France). Pictures of harvesting with the Strawsons bring back happy memories. I looked at them all on Don's battery-operated slide projector last week.

And a very eventful weekend. On Saturday we had the school Harambee Day to raise money for the new form rooms, still at foundation stage (Forms II and IV). A spectacle which, to my mind, outstrips our jumble sales and church fetes. We had rigged up a corrugated iron 'shelter' for the visitors – who included the Minister (Shako) of Wundanyi, various District Officers (Government officials), the Chief of Mbale, the Chairman of the School Committee, Archdeacon Jeremiah K and others – not, unfortunately, the Bishop. The hoi poloi (οι πολλοι) sat on the slopes of the valley facing the VIP stand. Fiery speeches and zealous singing by various church and school choirs, including our own. One of the officials quoted a wonderful African proverb (we had had our first rain the night before): "Visitors are like the rain. They come and they go, but always they leave a blessing." After a list of completed contributions was read out by the Chairman (to the accompaniment of thunderous and rhythmical applause), the crowds were invited to surge forward in the true spirit of Harambee. The response was terrific – Mbale people, most of them women or impoverished farmers, came with their 5 or 10 shilling notes, or even one or two shilling coins, and for a solid hour or more the money flowed in. The level quickly soared into the thousands. Contributions in the form of chicken eggs, fruit, wood etc. were then auctioned. I bought five gi-normous paw-paws for 4/-, two of which I have had to give away! At about half past five we started counting up the money collected. Our final reckoning came to 8,037/- (nearly 500 pounds) – a quite incredible achievement, which was announced on the national news the next morning!

The next day we were to have our first student service at the school – in English, led by students and with a talk given by a guest speaker. This service is to operate once per fortnight, so as not to draw students away from the main Mbale church. Well, Peter M was scheduled to speak (or 'preach'), coming over from Kituri. But we met up here for the Harambee Day, and he said he wasn't able to make it. So, in the absence of any other likely people such as the Padre (vicar) or Mr W – and at such short notice it would be unfair to invite an outsider to speak – I was faced with the challenge of preaching, at this first ever student service, my first ever sermon! I spent the whole of Saturday evening in preparation, finding that thoughts and ideas were flowing freely and fluently. The next morning, Sunday – an eventful day. The service was scheduled for 09:00. I had made a request that the time for the hostel (boarding students') breakfast should make this possible. The meal was therefore ready by 10 past 9. (I have discovered that in Africa most things run between ½ and 1½ hours late!) Eventually, after ¾ hour of chasing the students up, the service began at 09:50, attended by nearly 50 students (out of a hostel of 60). Of the staff, however, only the Headmaster Harrison turned up – which was disappointing, as I had especially asked the others (Aggrey, George, Crispin) to come and give moral support. Anyway, the service went with a real swing, hymns and choruses sung full of zeal. To be honest, though apprehensive about preaching for the first time, I found the actual 'sermon' (for want of a better word) a thrilling experience – feeling that, in some way, the message was getting across. I spoke about the words of Christ, "Repent and believe..." and kept close to the Bible, rather than expounding theories of my own. I felt I did nothing like full justice to such an important subject; but though time was limited, the talk lasted for 20 to 25 minutes! Long by English standards, but I have never heard a sermon in Africa that has lasted for less!

Pause. Have just returned from teaching Form III English – a lively lesson doing précis – a difficult art to teach, to my mind, but I am quite pleased with the response and the results achieved. This afternoon I teach double RE (Bible Knowledge) preparing for the EACE (= O Level) exam next year. We are studying the Sermon on the Mount.

Almost immediately after the service, the CU set off for Kituri (Werugha) for a meeting with Peter M and the CU of Kituri. The school is near Ngangao forest (above Wundanyi), about 5 miles away. We completed the journey (in the heat of the day) in 1½ hours, taking a fascinating footpath which ascended through the hills – now luxuriantly green. The meeting was full of high spirits, the Mgalu students being especially pleased to see Peter again. And as we set off for home at the end of the day, we met the Bishop coming up the road in his Land Rover (his Taita home is close to Werugha). He beckoned to Peter and myself, and assured me, in confidence, that he was going to send Peter back to Mbale next term as Headmaster of Mgalu! Peter had already been told about this. Terrific! Mgalu could be a really good place next term. We were then all give a free lift to Wundanyi in an empty bus, and walked together back to Mbale, singing all the way – such had been the spirit of the day.

However, no sooner had I returned, than I found that quite a different progression of events had taken place here. First, from what I could piece together from Aggrey – amidst a torrent of anger and insults – there had been a regular *furor* between Aggrey and George, and the Padre and Mr W. I heard the full story from Mr W when I went up to the house for supper. The ‘boogie’ (= dance with immoral connotations) at Iriwa had been called off (the licence withdrawn) – by the church (I think). The dance had then taken place, allegedly under the sponsorship (but not supervision) of Aggrey and George, IN OUR HOUSE! In MY house! (Fortunately I had locked up my own room.) Mr W and the Padre, supported by the elders (*wazee*) of the community, went down to investigate, and found the entire house full of people, students from Wundanyi dancing, boogie-fashion, to a record-player. (Dancing, I’m afraid, in the eyes of the established community, is as great a ‘sin’ as drink.) It was stopped immediately, the participants dismissed, and the two ‘sponsors’ were summoned to explain themselves. The result: much hot air, a series of unpleasant personality clashes, and a scandal throughout the entire Mbale location, in whose responsibility, I, presumably, as an occupant of the house, have to take a share! As I wrote in my diary, “A day, perhaps, of blacks and whites – in the true African spirit.”

The result of Monday’s ‘inquest’ – as Aggrey writes: “A cordial discussion which ended in an atmosphere of understanding upon which apologies were exchanged.” I just don’t know what to make of Aggrey –he seems to be split down the middle. For the last three days he has been the most charming person (as he was in Nairobi), full of goodwill, tactful and cooperative, and with the highest regard for the school and its work. Well, would that such an attitude continue. But in a week’s time the ‘weather’ could have changed dramatically: he will be back to drink and the results will be in evidence. Such uncertainty, for my part, causes tension and some anxiety.

Good news: as I mentioned before, we now have a daily ‘helper’ in the house, a very nice person called Jackson. He comes in the mornings, washes up breakfast things, washes clothes vigorously, leaves the bath dazzling in its brightness, and cooks a superb lunch – maize pudding (*sima*), vegetable and meat stew – or fried egg, tomato and chips if he’s in an English mood! He is delighted, I think, to have a steady job, for which he is paid 3/- a day (60/- a month) – a good salary by African standards. He’s also teaching me some Swahili! Finance here is no problem, really. What is there to buy, apart from food, kerosene, gas (a cylinder lasts 8½ weeks)? One spends really during the holidays, travelling, or in Nairobi or Mombasa. The YSA salary has now been increased to 600/- a month (by order from the UK), and food is about ½ Britain’s prices, e.g. 1 kg of good meat – suitable for excellent stews and curries – is 3/50 = about 20p! Slight anxiety that Aggrey (perpetually in debt) is reluctant to square up – this is somewhat *Aggreyvating*! The other important news is about Lyn (Mrs S). She’s going to have a baby! It’s due in April and she will have it in Mombasa.

Just this minute received your letter, Dad – 9.11.73, very quick! Yes, I got Nick’s letter before yours, Mum. He wrote to me on Tuesday, just after the telephone call. I replied to him within 24 hours... One thing distresses me. You said you have not been receiving my letters. I write, as a rule, once a week, every Wednesday, and letters have been sent off on the following dates, as recorded in my file: October 17th (letter from here), October 22nd (postcard from Nairobi), October 31st (letter from here), and November 7th (letter from here), in reply to Mum’s dated October 28th. I hope they arrive. Posts rely here mostly on the efficiency of the Voi postal administrators; the reliability of the Voi-Iriwa bus service; the honesty of the Iriwa post-mistress; and the loyalty of the runner between Iriwa and Mgalu! Please could you check whether all letters have arrived, and if not, which ones are missing? Last week I enclosed some detailed sketches and maps – I do hope they are not lost.

Finally, holiday plans. To be philosophical: sight-seeing I can do anywhere at any time. If ever I return to East Africa, which I hope I shall, I can effectively see the sights in a couple of weeks. I have now a chance in a life-time really to get to know the people of Africa – by staying in students’ homes. Also, I could spend Christmas Day with the other YSAs somewhere in Western Province. However, the W’s are having a real ‘gathering of the clans’, with a sister arriving from Tanzania, parents flying out from Britain, and all the children home. They have invited me to join in as one of the family! I think I will do this, thus spending Christmas at, to all intents and purposes, ‘home’, with the people I know. Term ends on December 7th. For the first week I’ll see the Tsavo game park with Aggrey, stay with a student (Willingstone) near Voi and possibly with Thomas down at Taveta, on the Tanzanian border. CMS conference near Mwatate on 14 to 16th. Then I have a friend (YSA at Nyeri), Mike F (from Yorkshire) coming to stay – I’ll show him round Mombasa and the Taita Hills. Christmas with the W’s (the S’s will also be at home), Mount Kenya on January 3rd –so a bit of a break: Nairobi, Nyeri, Mount Kenya. Term resumes on January 15th. Weather cold – I have consciously to remind myself that I’m in Africa!

Letter to my parents, 16 November 1973 (Excerpts)

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Friday 16 November 1973:

Thank you very much indeed for your letters. Thank you too for yours, V. Actually I read them sitting on my favourite tree stump, half way up the hill below the Maynard teachers’ houses (i.e. below the S’s house) on that side of the valley (see map), shaded by some trees and commanding a superb view of the great Simba vs Chui League Football International 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!

Delighted with the Snoopy cartoon. “Ha ha ha” laughed the bunnies! Something very soothing about Snoopy. I enclose a delightful pair of cartoons copies from the book “You’re something special, Snoopy”, which I bought from Mrs Jacques’ bookshop just before I left. Sorry, some of the expressions are not quite right. It’s very difficult to get them exact: one dot or stroke out of place, and the entire sense is altered! I hope you laugh at almost the sheer ‘innocence’ as much as I did – very hard to rationalise humour. These ones have given me a tremendous amount of mirth. 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, reading Peanuts! Oh yes, and whistling either Rachmaninoff, Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Bach chorales, hymns, choruses or Christmas carols on the wooden Oxfam snake-charmer, which – believe me – is worth its weight in gold. 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 hope you received my letter dated November 14th. I think the truth is that posts do take time; and somehow I am under the impression that your letters reach me quicker than my letters reach you – perhaps that’s something to do with incoming postal clerks at Voi being more efficient than outgoing clerks – anyway the main thing is that letters do arrive (eventually), and one has to be patient!

Slight medical thing – you’d be rather alarmed to see my face at the moment. I have a bright red streak across my forehead, and a red patch below my left eye – both of which have been rather painful. I was persuaded that the former was simply a scratch obtained from a bramble or branch – only that I can’t remember scratching myself. What sounds far more likely is Mrs W’s suggestion, that it is a case of an infection called ‘Nairobi Eye’ – caused by a rather vicious *dudu* (Swahili word for bug) or beetle which secretes acetic acid, resulting in corrosion of the skin. This has evidently gotten smeared in a line across my forehead, so that I have been looking really quite spectacular. All the students have been anxiously enquiring after my health, asking what was wrong with me. I asked *them*. They laughed when I asked whether it was anything to do with a snake! Anyway it’s not serious, and Mrs W has given me the necessary antibiotic (she runs a dispensary), which I will apply tonight.

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. So what’s this I hear about Inverpolly, first two weeks of September? I do hope this is possible; if it is, WHOOPEE! I have that beautiful photograph of Dad fishing in Lake Scionscaigh, with Suilven in the background, on the site of my wardrobe beside my desk – along with all my other favourite photographs – and I must say, I have a yen to be standing in front of that mountain again! What is it?

*I long to see the morning rise
And spread like silver through the skies;
And through the myrtle let me tread,
To find the mountains clear of cloud...*

... from a poem I wrote last time we were in Scotland. Unfortunately I can’t remember how it goes on. It’s up somewhere in my room in amongst my sketches, I think – bottom drawer of desk? Yes, I plan to come home early August, possibly before my birthday. There’s a lot that I want to do before I go to Cambridge in October. Friends from school and University I must go and see on my return...

One thing I notice about the *lingua franca* is that many of the Swahili words work beautifully as English family expressions – some of them are superb. The R’s especially will appreciate their ‘family saying’ value – they are the experts! I mentioned the *dudu* (‘doo-doo’), which has connotations with doodle-bug – an 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’). I expect it will come naturally to us in the family 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* (Englishers). The word for cow, as in the Bishop of Mombasa’s name, is – as I said before – *ng’ombe* (‘ng-orm-bay’), which is phonetic if you imagine a cow going “*ng-ooooOOOOORRRrrmbay!*” 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 appropriate conjugatory prefix. Thus, “*watoto wadogo walifanya kalele*”; “the small children were making a *kalele*.” Finally, the unbeatable word, meaning literally ‘sharp’ – used for knives, sour fruit and sour people. Virginia, do you remember my great word ‘madi’ at Legbourne Village School? Well, this Swahili word outstrips it. 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 C was, she could 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. The 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 other word. The Swahili equivalent of *voila!* 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...*

Letter to my parents, 21 November 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 21 November 1973:

I'm afraid – sad though I am to say it – 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. 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 night's 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, got in early a.m., waking me up (as usual) – this morning at 06:40, while I was dressing, still far, far gone, he burst into my room uttering a torrent of incoherent abuse and accusations, telling me in so many (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 my 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 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 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! 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 'Ohmp'!

Otherwise, not much to relate. I went out with the W's on Saturday in an attempt to climb Susu, which is a fairly gentle mountain above Mwatate. We were rained off, but the colours were simply magnificent – bright rainbows, a washed sky, purple Jacaranda, Mlungu trees with coral-pink flowers, the Tsavo plains a gentle pink in the setting sun, the Sagalla hills blue in the distance – looking somehow very Icelandic – and in the far distance, 70 miles away, the Lower Pare mountains of Tanzania.

There is the possibility of breaking up on November 30th – which means that on December 2nd I'll be able to go to Nairobi and hear Messiah sung by the Nairobi Music Society Choir in the Cathedral! The CMS Conference is on 14 to 16th December. I hope to stay with Thomas Mwawasi (Form III student) at Taveta, right on the Tanzanian border...

Letter to my parents, 27 November 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Tuesday 27 November 1973:

Thank you very much for your recent letter, sent on November 19th, arriving here 23rd! You've no idea what it meant, to hear you talking about a future event – singing Messiah with the Louth Choral Society on Sunday November 25th – without my having to look back at it in retrospect! Indeed I thought of you, around 9 or 10 o' clock on Sunday night (6 to 7 pm GMT) singing "For unto us a child is born..." I have booked a place on the OTC bus to Nairobi on Saturday December 1st – the day after term ends. Messiah is on at the Cathedral on Saturday and Sunday night. Whoopee! Do thank V for her lovely Christmas present which arrived here on Monday, taking only 2 weeks! I never knew ships could sail so fast. (Actually the secret is that it was sent by second class Air Mail by mistake.)

I've just come in from a very lively Physics lesson explaining the basic principles of current electricity. I started by being very *kali* because their exam results in the subject were quite abysmal, so it was a case of 'back to square 1' – much amusement though when I pretended to be an electron going through a resistor – a very painful process! It rained heavily last night, so I took a dawn walk (sun rising above wisps of mist) to the bridge over the Mdongo-ndongo to see the river in full flood – about the size of the Garvie, very rocky and precipitous, with a torrent fairly thundering past, the water bright red-brown with churned up earth and sand – a dramatic experience.

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 mints 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!" Yes, it was quite a dramatic experience. Soon after I sent off my last letter (Wednesday 21st November), Mrs W came down, acting as a nurse (being qualified as such). She is wonderful! I was given aspirin and quinine – heavy doses – in case of 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 bog-eyed – 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 little work, and 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, Nestle 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 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. The Narnia books are 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. A storm cloud, billowing turbulently towards us over the hills, caught by the last glow of the setting sun...

December 1973

Letter to my parents, 2 December 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Nairobi, Sunday 2 December 1973:

Thank you for your super letter, and thank Tony for hers too – I’ll try to write Christmas letters nearer the time if I can. Well, here I am in Nairobi – at the C’s – in Civilisation once again! This letter will take three days to reach you, so you may get it before my last one dated 27th November. If you do, the main news is that I’m better (after a curious illness lasting about three days). The C’s have a convincing diagnosis. They say it could well have been a case of blocked sinuses resulting from 4,000 feet altitudes and rapid changes, e.g. from 5,500 feet (Wundanyi) to the level of the Tsavo plains – perhaps a kind of height sickness.

Well, well, well, what’s this I hear about ‘coldest November’ and Carlisle having 30 degrees of frost? Frosts, snows, pile-ups on the M1 and general hysteria? Funnily enough I had a dream a few days ago that, for some reason, I had been allowed one day back in Britain from Africa. I found myself walking beside a lake in November. The trees were bare of leaves, the ground was iron-hard, the skies leaden, and all the time I was saying to myself, “I wish I was back in Africa, I wish I was back in Africa.” It was a wonderful feeling waking up afterwards to clear skies, fresh dew and warm sunshine! In sympathising with you all (weather-wise), I am reminded of a fanatical Russian woman living in Romania. The story goes that she was seen walking through the streets of Bucharest, on a bright sunny day, with her umbrella up. When she was questioned she replied, “Oh, haven’t you heard? They say it’s raining in Moscow!” So I feel like walking around with a duffle coat, scarf and gloves, and justifying my appearance with “Well, there’s 30 degrees of frost in England!” And I hear there’s a fuel crisis or something? I’m sorry. One thing I’ve found about Africa is that travel is easy, cheap and unrestricted. Barring the walk to Wundanyi at 06:00 am yesterday morning to get to the OTC bus, the journey to Nairobi, 10 hours and 300 miles, was as little trouble as a bus ride from Haileybury to Hoddesdon. You just step on to a bus (in the former case) and go to sleep, or get lost in a book (e.g. Swahili grammar) for 10 hours – no traffic jams, no bottle-necks, diversions, confusing sign posts etc. Also on the subject of the fuel crisis, I was very struck by a penetrating remark made by the East African Standard in an article about Ethiopia: “While Europe is still worrying over her fuel crisis, thousands in Ethiopia are starving because of drought.” Then followed some of the most horrifying pictures I have ever seen. We’re lucky here. Taita has had a healthy amount of rain, *mvua mengi sana* – the hills are green, flowers popping up everywhere, grass growing tall, people busy planting in their *shambas*. I have also seen Times cuttings of Princess Anne’s wedding. Beautiful it looked. Did you watch it on TV?

The journey through the Tsavo plains yesterday was an eye-opener, with the bush stretching away, almost unnaturally green and lush – the landscape almost English in composition – a far cry from the parched grass and leafless stunted bushes of a few weeks ago. We had a bit of a tragedy yesterday on the OTC. We picked up a woman at Mwatate, who was very ill with childbirth, and though we made for Voi hospital as quickly as possible, she died on the way – a sad and disturbing scene. Eventually at around 4 pm the Ngong hills rose up on our left, a

plane came into land from the south, and the airport buildings, and finally the familiar city skyline itself, came into view.

I am sitting listening to Holtz' Planets, having had salad and ice cream for lunch in summer sunshine. Messiah last night was lovely – I sat at the back, where (from my experience of Lincoln Cathedral) the acoustics were best. The orchestra was good (trumpets slightly astray), the soloists superb. The Cathedral was packed – nearly all Europeans, scarcely an African to be seen! A very strange sense this gave me – suddenly to be plunged back into Civilisation again after 6 weeks in the bush!

The events of the last week or so. Last Sunday we went over to Murray High School (of which Miss C is the Headmistress) for an end-of-term carol service of nine lessons and carols, followed by a Nativity Play performed by the girls. This had the effect of getting me back into the Christmas spirit... Perhaps the most enthralled by the play was Margaret W, who has decided that in her next Nativity Play, at Mbale around Christmas, Aunty Kate [Miss C] is going to be an angel! Last Thursday night afforded a remarkable spectacle. The new moon was just setting in the west, a little above the horizon. The crescent was horizontal, lying on its back so to speak, cradling the dark part which was a clear grey, contrasting with the black sky. I've never seen the dark half of the moon so unnaturally bright before. Our theory is that just as we have full moon here on Earth at night from time to time, so the benighted moon was enjoying 'full Earth'. Good star-gazing visibility has been aided recently by the rain which has had the effect of cleaning the air. Yesterday morning, looking at the sky at 04:45 am I saw in the south totally new stars – not alas the Southern Cross, which at present is being very elusive. To the north the Plough, upside down – the Great Bear with its feet sticking up in the air, the two pointers leading vertically downwards to the horizon. The equator is *the* place for stars. That night (Tuesday), when the stars were flashing like burning fires, my mind went back to the more tedious parts of Haileybury – wet Sunday afternoons – and as I looked at the banana leaves swaying against the star-bright sky, I realized: "This is a thing of the past, 5,000 miles away. This is Africa. Terrific." Purple passage – but, then, Africa is full of purple passages!

Examination marking was quite a strain. Last Wednesday I did about 12 hours work! I had to get all the papers finished by Wednesday evening, and of course having been 'out of action' I had a lot on my hands. But I was very impressed with Form III English. On a moderately difficult paper, only 9 out of 33 students got under 45%, and that a year before EACE (O-levels). I am lucky to have been teaching English, because the students have a very good backing to the subject (thanks to Peter M), whereas their ability on scientific subjects is very poor. One tremendous essay – almost a masterpiece of sensational fiction – "The Journey that Went Wrong" – was about a bus journey from Wundanyi to Mombasa; the driver got drunk at Voi (a very realistic state of affairs!); the dramatic build up, with the bus being driven faster and faster, and the driver becoming progressively more dangerous, until the climax – WHAM! – head-on collision with a lorry. A bit of a gory ending – nevertheless it gives me much encouragement to see such work.

The other thing which has given me food for thought is that I had a chat with Mike F yesterday – he's a YSA at Othaya, Nyeri, and he's staying with me in a few days' time. He sounded so depressed about his school, the teaching, in fact the whole YSA experience. The school is shot through with Kikuyu oppressiveness, Form III students 'torture' Form I's (just like Tom Brown's school days), there are no Christians in the school, no English missionaries nearby, and he doesn't really get on well with his fellow YSA. This really showed me up, for I have been tempted to be critical of the things which are going wrong and to get frustrated – but when I hear of the situation at Othaya, and similar experiences at Lumbwa, I can really only be *thankful* that the [Mgalu] school is what it is, that the students are friendly, and the *waTaita*, though a bit docile, are really a super tribe (if 'super' is the right word!), and that there are people like the W's and S's nearby – as well as the many African Christians around, that I now feel really at home with. Poor Mike – he seems to be having a hard time of it, and I hope he doesn't get too depressed.

We now have plans for Easter – 2 or 3 weeks ‘doing’ the coast: Dar es Salaam, Tonga, Zanzibar, Mombasa, and then a boat (*dhow* if we’re lucky) up to Malindi and Lamu. Sounds terrific! Back to Mbale on Wednesday and then to Taveta on Sunday. Will write again before long...

Letter to my parents, 7 December 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Friday 7 December 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter. Well, here I am back in Taita again! First of all though, sorry the last (double) letter was a bit disorganised. I was writing it at the C’s. The children (four of them between 4 and 9 years old) were around me, and though delightful, they did make continuity of thought a little difficult! I have abandoned aerogrammes (in my letters to you) – I think 1/50 a week on stamps is a luxury I can afford...

I read an English newspaper in Nairobi the other day. Oil shortage, power cuts, rail strikes – the country doesn’t sound up to much. Mrs W thanks you very much for your letter which arrived while I was away. Reading a newspaper at their house, we found an article (East African Standard) entitled ‘Kohoutek finally comes into view’. Yes, the famous comet is visible now, at dawn, on the eastern horizon. From January 10th to 20th as it begins to recede, it will be most visible – we shall see its profile, stretching for one sixth of a great circle across the sky, between 20 and 40 degrees above the horizon, in the west after sunset. So look out for it! I haven’t actually seen it myself yet, as recently our mornings have all been cloudy.

Well, Nairobi – and I must say, it is *good* to get back into the country. Walking around the city, with its high buildings, busy crowds and reckless traffic, I noticed an amazing thing. I was actually *scared* of the place! I suddenly 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 no more traffic than the occasional (lethargic) bus. And here I was suddenly plunged into the millstream of mechanised city life – quite an unusual sensation. Also unnerving was the evening (Monday) after a film, when I got the wrong bus back to the C’s house. I alighted in Argwings Kodhek Road at a stop I was assured was only 200 yards away from the shopping centre (where the C’s live). So I started running, because the street was unlighted. Some people I passed started shouting and some, I felt, were beginning to give me the chase. All the unpleasant scenes from *The Cross* and the *Switch-blade* came to mind. Eventually after a good half mile of hard running, just as I was slowing down for lack of breath, an English woman drove past in a van, picked me up, and drove me to the shops, about another half mile further on! (Listen to the rain, *pouring down!* Whoopee!) On Sunday, I went to Messiah again – we musical fanatics! Every bit as good as last time, and I now feel I know it quite well. “Ev’ry va-alley sha-all be exa-alted!” However 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!

Monday, *rendez-vous* with Aggrey, which he failed to keep. I expect by now that you’re as sick of Aggrey as I am, so I won’t write much. Enough to say that he failed to keep two *rendez-vous*’ in Nairobi, so that we could sort out finances. He now owes me 140/-, he owes the W’s 100/-, the S’s 26/- and Peter M 10/- (a lot of money for him). It wasn’t that I’d lent him straight cash, which I’ll never do again in the future, but that I’d been paying all the cash bills for the last month, which we are supposed to halve. Well, all I can say is that if he returns, he will have some fireworks in store for him from four quarters, and if he doesn’t, we can console ourselves with the fact that he won’t trouble us any more! Next term, things will come to a head, one way or another. Peter M will stand no nonsense as the new Headmaster. Either Aggrey will stop drinking, or he’ll be forced to leave. So... For the time being, however, I’m not too worried about money. Actually I am amazed at how little I manage to get through. But when you think that in Taita the prices are so low, and that apart from basic foodstuffs there just aren’t the things to buy, it’s not so surprising.

Nairobi however is quite a different story! I managed to get all the necessary shopping done – shoes, a good map of the hills, film, books, pen refills and a plastic table cloth. On Monday I saw Jonathan A (another YSA) at CITC (Pumwani). Staying with him were Peter W (YSA teaching near Kisumu) and Howard M (another YSA near the Ugandan border), who were leaving for Zambia the next day to see the Victoria Falls, travelling through Tanzania. Good luck to them! That evening we went to the Nairobi Cinema (ultra-luxurious and *very* European) to see – wait for it – The Day of the Jackal. Quite the most brilliant film. If the book is anything like it, and the book generally is better than the film, I must read it. Desperately exciting, particularly at the end. Shots of Paris-France brought back happy memories, and also a yen to be there again! Tuesday shopping – took a bus to Kenya Science Teachers College to look at some Physics demonstration equipment, which I am hoping the school will buy. It certainly needs it. It's no joke trying to teach current electricity using white chalk lines on a blackboard! Beautiful buildings, modern like Nairobi University.

Wednesday 5 December – hitch-hiking to Voi. I got a free ride on the coast bus to the Machakos turn, enjoying a splendid view of Mount Kenya, 80 miles to the north, her distinctive and dramatic shape (with patches of snow clearly visible) rising clear above the morning mist. I waited at the Machakos turn, in the blazing sun, for 1½ hours! Cars roared past, bound for the coast. At last an English couple, farmers at Nanyuki, in a Toyota Land Cruiser (a bit like a Range Rover) on their way to Mombasa picked me up. The sudden transition, from the arid road side to a comfortable car and stereo music, was a pleasure worth waiting for! We reached Voi at 13:30, three hours after Machakos – the distance seemed really to have been telescoped – much better than seven hours on the OTC! Local bus from Voi to Wundanyi, and a good stiff walk through the hills, with a very heavy rucksack, back to Mbale. I spent that night at the W's, as Andrew had to drive Catharine to Voi station to meet the older children off the night train, and I was asked to babysit Margaret. Saw Venus – as bright as the 'star in the east'. Have you seen it recently? It's about as bright as you'll ever see it!

Yesterday was a leisurely day (the first for many) until, without warning, at about 3 o' clock, Peter W and Howard M arrived on my doorstep – disillusioned and deadbeat. Tanzania had been a 'bad trip' alright – just as we had thought. Travel was desperately difficult, regulations very strict (they only had a four day pass), prices exorbitant. They had got as far as Arusha, but no further. So they headed back for Moshi, staying the night there, and then reached the Taita Hills via Taveta and Mwatate. It's great to have them here – the first YSAs who have come this way. Howard's got a bad head cold, so he's been taking it easy today. But Peter and I spent a long and happy morning in Wonderland (Wundanyi) – shopping in the market, and buying meat (= a hunk of cow), which always takes ages, though it's a fascinating spectacle to watch! To Taveta by bus on Sunday. Then back here for a conference and Mike F's stay. Will write again after I return from Taveta... PS Just got caught out in the rain – 5 minutes sprint from Mdongo-dongo bridge to here – and we were soaked through and through and through!

Letter to my parents, 13 December 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Thursday 13 December 1973:

I'm afraid I haven't received any letters since I wrote to you last, but that's because we've been having a national holiday for the past three days, and the Post Office at Iriwa has been closed. As you see, I've gone mad on black, red and green [*stripes on the top of the writing paper*]. Well, yesterday was one of the greatest days in the life of Kenya – the 10th anniversary of UHURU – Independence. So yesterday was a big day. The Wundanyi 'football field' – a space of open short grass surrounded by tall trees – very English looking – was the scene of events and celebrations. Crowds of people converged from different parts of the Taita Hills, arriving in procession, clapping, waving branches of leaves in the air, and chanting songs in praise of Kenyatta and songs of loyalty to the country. By 11 am there were an estimated 8½ thousand, all dressed in brightly coloured clothes, standing round the edge of

the field, or sitting in a kind of grand-stand affair on one side. On the other side a small covered dais had been erected. This was for the DC (District Commissioner and representative of the Government), various DO's, the Minister (I think), Archdeacon and various other VIPs. All buildings – *dukas*, grand-stands, dais, the bank and houses were decorated with bands of black/red/green cloth hung round the tops. Flags flying everywhere, and the roads (in Wundanyi) and boundaries of the field were lined with sisal poles painted – black, red and green! The army paraded in the middle – all very smartly dressed, though some of their marching was a bit out of time.

When everyone had arrived, we all stood up to sing the National Anthem, rather a beautiful hymn in a minor key, composed by an Englishman. I have copies here, which I'll bring home. This was followed by the Presidential Speech read by the DC – very long and very sound (so I hear) – unfortunately my Swahili was not up to standard, so I will try to get hold of a copy in English. Next we were entertained by some vigorous singing by various school and church choirs. This was intermixed with some tribal dancing and drumming – a little half-hearted, I thought; as if it is becoming progressively more a thing of the past. I think this was to be followed by various games and competitions (a 'sugar-cane eating' competition included), but I left around 1:00 pm as it was very hot, I had started out at 07:00 (having been told the ceremony would begin at 08:00) and I was still feeling the effects of the day before (more anon).

Spent a very happy evening with the S's, who had been very impressed. Don said that this had been better than Kenyatta Day – organisation sound, preparations well carried out, atmosphere more alive. In a way the crowds in Uhuru Park, Nairobi on Kenyatta Day were less impressive than the crowds here yesterday. Don also strongly advised me to go to the Harambee Teachers' Conference for Mombasa Diocese on Saturday here at Maynard's. This in fact coincides with the CMS Conference for Mombasa Province at Murray High School, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Bishop had in fact said that I could choose between the two, but as Don is going to both – i.e. driving back here just for the Saturday, I think I'll do the same. So it's a busy weekend ahead. Anyway we had rabbit for supper – delicious, tastes a bit like chicken – we looked at slides and listened to 'Godspell'.

Tuesday, as I alluded previously, was an exhausting but exciting day. It started at 05:00 am with a mad rush to see the comet Kohoutek – which, they say, is visible just before sunrise. In this however I was disappointed, as I just couldn't see it anywhere. But the dawn itself was worth watching. The eastern horizon was a pink haze, with strange, almost animated shapes of dark purple cloud rising from it. I set out later, just after 8 am, intending to go for a long walk, taking sandwiches and water. It turned out to be a climb to the top of Yale, the second highest peak of the hills, about 7,000 feet and 6 or 7 miles away. I covered the distance to Werugha (township in the hills) in 2 hours, taking a short cut, cross country (very beautiful), but uphill all the way. From Werugha (last stop for Coca-Cola) it took another hour to get to the top, following a steep spur of smooth rock and scrub, clear of trees. Yale is a three-peaked mountain, with the top two peaks connected by a veritable knife-edge (20 feet wide). An easy climb, the only difficulty being that I kept losing the path. African paths have a curious habit of petering out, or disappearing and reappearing like a 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! The mountain must have been about the size of Stac Pollaidh, but safer because there was no danger of mist and the cliff faces were more obvious. The view from the top was cause for initial disappointment. A lovely clear day, and yet the slopes of Kilimanjaro rose in the distance, only to meet in thick cloud which refused to move. Apparently once again early morning is the only time one has a good chance of seeing the top! I had a bird's eye view of the Taita Hills, which gave me a good idea of the general outlay; it struck me how densely populated the hills are – scarcely a hillside or a valley without houses and *shambas*. To the west, I looked across to Vuria, the highest peak, with its radio mast on top. Not a very interesting looking mountain – a bit 'blockish'. I did a quick watercolour sketch of it from the top – with the North Pare mountains of Tanzania in the background. Watercolours are very difficult in hot climates – the water dries up so quickly!

Sunday – working backwards: I had planned to go to Taveta to stay with Thomas M, having arranged to meet him at the station. However, I was pretty ill on Saturday night and out of action on Sunday – just a tummy upset, sort of thing one just has to learn to live with out here. Though I was feeling better on Monday, I realised that we'd probably miss each other at Taveta (which has an extensive hinterland) and that I would not be able to find his house. So, I got as far as Voi by bus the 'back way', and spent the morning looking at the trains near the railway station. It was like swinging back 50 years. The platform was equipped with 1920s telephones and weighing machines, and steam engines shunted up and down the lines. I had a long look round the engine shed, which housed several locomotives in various stages of disrepair. Huge wheels, the hissing of escaping steam, hot water spraying on to the oil-soaked sleepers – and the nostalgic sound of a puffer train easing forward and getting under way. *Very* hot indeed there – I was glad to get back up into the hills.

The building is progressing rapidly. It now stands at 9 bricks high, three sides of the way round. We hope it will be complete by the beginning of February, so that we can recall Form III to become the first Mgalu Form IV, taking O-levels at the end of the year. I got a Christmas card from Canon and Mrs R. Please thank them very much. If this is my last letter to reach you before Christmas (which still seems a long way off), well, HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Letter to my parents, 19 December 1973

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 19 December 1973:

Thank you very much for your letter, and all the Christmas cards which now are displayed proudly in my room. Not much recent news, but that's because Kireti's bus, which takes the mail up from Voi, went to Mombasa for servicing yesterday. If this reaches you before Christmas, then I hope you have a very happy Christmas. If it reaches you after, then I hope that you *will have had* a happy (if cold) Christmas! I shall be spending the few days over Christmas with the W's – who are now all home – and I expect it'll be a case of Christmas dinner on the verandah, with the midday sun beating down!

Quite an eventful week. Friday I went with the S's to the CMS weekend at Murray High School, Wusi. Everyone was there, the R's, the O's (I met at Foxbury, and who are still trying to get into the Sudan), and various others from Mombasa, and of course to welcome us, Miss Kathleen C. The next morning was spent here at Mbale for the Harambee teachers' conference with the Bishop etc. A bit of a bore, as it was all in Swahili, and we were left standing around in the sun for about 3 hours while His Grace gave a lecture to the Headmasters. Still, necessary, and worthwhile. Don S has been given what sounds to me a really good job. He and the Venerable Archdeacon Jeremiah K are going to spend their time travelling around the Diocesan Harambee schools, spending some time at each, during which Don will check (and make improvements on) admin (definitely his line), and the Archdeacon will be responsible for the spiritual side. Incidentally, the latter spoke very strongly against drink during the conference, warning that any teacher found drunk would be sacked on the spot. The Mgalu positions sound 'sound'. Peter M is to be the new Headmaster (three cheers!) and the school is to consist of five forms next term, with double streaming in Form I, i.e. Forms IA, IB, II, III and IV. We do not have accommodation for five forms yet, even with the new buildings (still continuing to progress), but this is by order of the Bishop, and accommodation is "the School Committee's problem" (typical!) Our staff next term will be 8 strong, of which 3 will be ladies (vital for a mixed school). George (one of last term's drinkers) is giving up teaching. Aggrey is still on the staff for the present, but next term, who knows?

We returned to Wusi in the afternoon, able to attend the rest of the weekend uninterrupted. All very enjoyable, I met many interesting people, and we had time for Bible study and discussion on more general topics. The W's arrived on Sunday morning, having just returned from a holiday in Mombasa. Mr W's parents, having flown out from the UK, were there.

They were among the original missionaries to Kenya. The children were just back from school, Susanna (8), John (6) and Margaret (3).

We returned on Sunday evening after a really enjoyable and relaxing weekend. Mike F, YSA from Othaya near Nyeri, arrived at Wundanyi, having hitch-hiked from Nairobi. He comes from Hull. We spent a relaxing day on Monday; yesterday we walked up to the top of Wesu Rock (about 6,000 feet) – not as hard a climb as Yale but nevertheless exhilarating. We had a very good view of Wundanyi and neighbouring townships from the top, but the long-range visibility was not good. The most recent state of affairs is that Mount Kenya is *on*, starting from Mutithi on December 29th. So I intend to leave here on 27th and spend a couple of nights at St Julian's (where I spent my first night in Africa) about 20 miles outside Nairobi, and then hitch-hike up towards Mount Kenya (going through Thika and Sagana). I hope plans pan out, and hope all's well at home... PS News from friends at Haileybury and Iwerne. Great encouragement.

Letter to my parents, 28 December 1973

Letter to my parents, written from St Julian's Community, Limuru, Friday 28 December 1973:

Once again HAPPY CHRISTMAS. Thank you for the telegram which arrived on Christmas Eve – terrific to get it, as it really gave me a 'touch of home'. Thank you too very much for the £10.00 cheque which I received yesterday. Thank Virginia too for the book and thanks all round for letters, cards etc. No parcel yet I'm afraid, but I'm not unduly worried, as post does take time over Christmas (e.g. a letter from Nairobi takes 8 days) and besides, a Christmas which lasts until February...

Well! Here I am at St Julian's, 15 miles from Nairobi, on my way to Mount Kenya. I've just rung the CMS office and Pam B (CMS secretary) says that Mount Kenya is ON, and that I should make my way up to Mutithi (just south of the mountain) with two other YSAs tomorrow. The expedition will start next Monday, and end on January 2nd or 3rd, leaving plenty of time to get back to Mbale for Term 1974.1, which starts on January 7th. The weather here is beautiful, but last night I was freezing – almost had to wear a jersey! Admittedly St Julian's has the reputation of being the coldest place in Kenya (it isn't actually), but even so it was quite a shock after the Taita Hills.

This last week, with Christmas, has been simply *wonderful*. Of course I did miss being at home and with you all, but really in the circumstances it couldn't have been better. The W household was full, with all the children home: Susanna (8), John (6) and Margaret (3) – Andrew W's parents, where old Mr W was one of the early missionaries to the Kikuyu, and also Ruth, Andrew's sister from Dodoma, Tanzania. Of course it helped me knowing the family fairly well; but even so the atmosphere and spirit was such that I felt far less a 'guest' and far more a part of the family circle.

Saturday (December 22nd) there was a wedding at Mbale church. I had intended to go to the service in the morning, but was feeling a bit washed out, so I lay in (necessary I think from time to time). By noon however, the singing, clapping and shouting could be heard all over the valley, so I went up to investigate, finding myself being carried along by the wedding procession (from the church to the bridegroom's house, about 1½ miles away). I was joined by Susanna and John, and then found I was to 'look after' them for the next 4 or 5 hours, while we 'processed' along the road (hazard to all traffic!), reached the house, crowded round the bridal pair while prayers were said, and the cake was cut to the accompaniment of the Anglican church choir. My task at that time was to keep track of two small heads of brown hair amidst a sea of black hair! It struck me at the time how very different English children are from African. The latter, at the best of times, tend to stand around looking very solemn and docile – one would imagine hardly daring to breathe – and there were Susanna and John in the middle of the wedding celebrations (which are taken very seriously) frolicking around and playing every game they could think of – and also being given piggy backs! The bride

also looked as though she was at a funeral! I don't think she once raised her eyes from off the ground; but I think this is the traditional pose, to express the sadness of her leaving home.

Next day, Sunday, with the help of Jackson, I entertained the entire W clan down at the house for lunch. Boiled chicken (which I had bought, live, in the market), white sauce and veg, followed by a fruit salad of pineapple, mangoes, paw-paw and lemon juice (a successful combination). Coffee to follow. Christmas really began that evening, with high tea and carol singing – some lovely singing, in harmony, to the accompaniment of guitar and recorder – solos sung by the children.

Monday – Christmas Eve. Negotiations at Wundanyi bank to borrow 100/- for the Mount Kenya expedition. I don't like to do this in general, but my December salary (600/-) hasn't come through owing to postal delays, and I was still feeling the effects of having supported two people on one salary the previous month. I moved up to the W's that day, rigging a camp bed in the study. Very, very hot. All of us spent the late afternoon collecting ferns and greenery for decorations. The children were sent to bed early, having selected their stockings, so that the 'Christmas angels' and Father Christmas (us) could get to work decorating. A sisal pole was our Christmas tree, very simple and effective. Angel chimes, balloons, streamers, wrapping presents for stockings, constructing the crib. We listened to the BBC news at 9 pm (6 pm GMT) – the usual story (as you know): petrol rationing, more bombs in Northern Ireland, freezing fog in London. Outside the night was still and warm, Orion (right on the Astral Equator) burning high in the heavens...

Christmas day brought quite a change in the weather: low clouds and steady winds. We had a English communion service in the house taken by Mr W (senior), and then a drive (three of us) to Shigaro church, where Andrew was preaching. There I thought I was going to catch pneumonia! Mists swirled outside, and there was a howling draught of cold wind coming through an open doorway behind me! Present-giving in the afternoon. I'm afraid I'd just given one present for everyone, but I received gifts and home-made cards from all the family. Photographs in the afternoon sunshine, with Kasigau in the background. The streams of bubbles from the children's bubble mixture will be the main feature when the photos come out! Christmas dinner, after a walk by the waterfalls of Mdongo-ndongo, to the warm light of candles and the ring of angel-chimes...

Boxing day morning brought more mists and rain, which temporarily daunted our hopes for a day's mountaineering, but by mid-morning it had begun to clear. The advance party (five of us) walked up from Wundanyi to the top of Wesu rock, the rest intending to cover most of the distance by car, bringing up the rear (and the picnic). Needless to say they beat us to it, because we spent an hour waiting for them at the wrong *rendez-vous*. Delicious picnic lunch above the mists and cloud, with the now familiar view very clear. Afterwards Mr W, Susanna and I set out to climb to the top of Yale, following a ridge which connects the two mountains. We ascended past rock faces and through cool, deciduous forest, with the sun streaming through the fresh green foliage. The views and scenery that afternoon were somehow 'out of this world'. On the summit patches of cloud swirled below us – the Taita-hills landscape, woods, hills, *shambas*, roads, settlements spread out like a map, the mountains of Tanzania clear blue beyond the plains – with a moment's glimpse of Mawenzi, the lower peak of Kilimanjaro, as the distant cloud-banks lifted for a few seconds. When we reached Wesu hospital again (after a precipitous descent – Susanna fairly leaping down in an effort to keep pace), the evening sun was shining directly on the rock face, so that it towered dramatically above us, brilliant white against the blue sky. And above the palm trees which clung to the cliff face, an Augur Buzzard (white-winged) wheeled and turned, as if in another dimension (do you remember the fulmars on Tanera Beag?) That evening we had a superb view of a Megallanic cloud, a satellite galaxy of the Milky Way, only visible in the southern hemisphere. No comet yet.

I took the Kireti bus yesterday morning, and then hitch-hiked from Voi, with an English / American couple. I reached Nairobi at 4-ish and was met by one of the St Julian's staff who had come into Nairobi to do shopping. I've just taken a trip (this afternoon) to the Rift Valley

Escarpment (about 20 miles away on the Nakuru road) – hitch-hiking all the way, passing through Kikuyu country, all so amazingly different from the familiar terrain east of Nairobi. Green, wooded, European-looking hills with nothing very sensational or abrupt, until on arrival at the escarpment, you look out over miles of real desert to the other side – the Mau escarpment, 30 miles away. The only landmark on the plain is a radio-telescope satellite tracking station. To the north was the famous volcanic Mount Longonot.

I leave for Mount Kenya tomorrow. Will send slides when they return from Paris.

1974

January 1974

Letter to my parents, 5 January 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Saturday 5 January 1974:

Thank you very much for 3 letters (dated December 14th, 19th and 28th), the last two reaching me the same day (yesterday!). Great to know that the parcel arrived in time. When I return I'll tell you in detail the fascinating experience I had bargaining in Biashara Street, Mombasa! Thank you too for the Scotland calendar and black-and-white photos which have also arrived. Did you see the photographs? Some lovely ones of Austria, and I'm very pleased with architectural shots of Harlow and Hatfield swimming pool. Just got the third film of my slides back from France, mainly pictures of Nairobi, again with emphasis on modern architecture. When Film 4 arrives (any day now) I think I'll start sending them to you, sea-mail. Film 5 and Film 6 (Mount Kenya) I have not yet sent to France. Life is just too busy at the moment.

First, I think, rather than later, the sadder bits of news. When I arrived back at Mbale on Friday, after Mount Kenya, several shocks awaited me. First, no more progress whatsoever on the school building. They have the money, they have the cement, so I just don't know what's holding things up this time. How we're going to be five forms next term I just don't know. Secondly, Jackson took my request that he should *panga* [slash] the long grass immediately surrounding the house, rather too enthusiastically – succeeding in removing an entire border of bushes and geraniums in front of the verandah. A precaution, he says, against snakes. Fair enough, but the garden now does look like a real mess, and I only hope that the bushes and plants will grow again (he didn't actually uproot them), and that the next rains will restore the *shamba* to its original beauty.

And finally I received a very sad note from Thomas M, the student from Form III I was going to stay with, asking me why I never came to Taveta on December 9th. I had valid reasons for not going (actually I was ill on the day), and I intended to write to him to let him know I was unable to come, only I just could not find his address at the school. Eventually I gave up looking for it, thinking that he would assume I was ill, and think nothing more of it. Unfortunately though, in Africa, as I have now discovered, that just isn't the way things work. To Africans, a few days delay in someone's arrival means nothing, and so Thomas' family had been expecting and hoping for my arrival at Taveta any day. A very black mark indeed, I think, though we learn from our mistakes. Anyway Thomas still extends his invitation, and as it looks as though Mgalu will be reopening on January 14th rather than 7th (tomorrow), I will probably spend next week with him at Taveta, leaving tomorrow or Tuesday. I hope plans work out alright for next week.

This was an anti-climax, perhaps – but to a fantastic week climbing Mount Kenya! Full details and itinerary are in my diary, so I'll just give an outline of what happened. Also Peter M has just returned and says that Mgalu definitely goes back on 14th January. Therefore I must leave for Taveta at crack of dawn tomorrow, so I haven't much time to be writing in detail! The climbing party (five YSAs + Anne P, student from Limuru) set out from Naro Moru 'base camp' (English hotel with climbers' bunk-huts) at 08:00 on December 31st 1973. We were taken by Land Rover through the forest which surrounds the base of the mountain, to a height of 10,000 feet. We started walking (accompanied by a guide/porter) and encountered some buffalo in the first 5 minutes! We ascended a 'vertical bog' for 2 or 3 hours, and then dropped down a ridge into the Teleki valley, which runs from the main peaks to the edge of the Mount Kenya plateau, and through which runs the Naro Moru River flowing from the Lewis Glacier. Night at Teleki hut at 13,500 feet. Very, very cold. Unable to sleep much because of the altitude.

We awoke on New Years Day at 03:00, setting out at 4 am, up along the valley. The peaks, above and to our left, looked very dramatic by starlight. I felt pretty sick and dizzy, but we managed to forge on, up the escarpment (scree) at the head of the valley, until at 15,500 feet

we encountered snow. Fantastic scenery as the sun began to peep up over the ridge in front of us, and as it lighted up the snow-covered rocky peaks which form the summit (volcanic plug) of Mount Kenya. Slow going, and deep breathing necessary, because of the altitude. At 08:30 we reached Top Hut, from which rose the last 700 feet up to the top of Point Lenana, our objective. Most of this last stretch was over snow, and a long, steep ascent. We passed close to some spectacular crevasses.

At 09.45 we reached the top, at 16,355 feet – it was beautifully clear, for the clouds generally form at around 10 or 11 am. Terrific views all round, but in particular the cragged shape of Nelian (second highest peak), towering up in front of us, the other side of the glacier, the sun filling the Teleki valley below us. View through the valley and on to the plains around Naro Moru and Nanyuki. Beyond the plains, to the west, rose the Aberdares, and through a saddle in the Aberdares we could make out the outline of the Mau escarpment, on the other side of the Rift Valley (100 miles away). To the north the NFD [*Northern Frontier District*], with a possible glimpse of the Matthews Range. To the east, land obscured by cloud cover below us (just as if we were in an aeroplane), and on the horizon the cloud-mass surrounding the top of Kilimanjaro. Immediately below us, the vast area of the Mount Kenya foothills: moorland, tarns, cliffs, gorges and entire ranges of further peaks.

We left the summit and descended rapidly, developing headaches and general feelings of lousiness. I slept all afternoon (at Teleki Hut), and felt much better as I had taken some aspirin. Stephen L, the organiser and leader of the expedition, was really pretty sick. We descended to Naro Moru the next morning, again everything beautifully clear. Good to get into the warmth of African again, after the bitter cold. I am quite sure that you were warmer on New Years morning than we were! Two pairs of trousers, two jerseys, anorak, three pairs of socks, ice on all the water, frost on the ground! On Thursday we made our way back, by bus and hitch-hiking. Howard and I stayed with Anne P at Limuru. Mr P kindly ran me down to Nairobi the next morning, from where I caught a bus to the Machakos turn, and then got an easy hitch-hike with an African down to Voi. From there, bus to Wundanyi.

Terrific experience all round. Scenery I shall never forget. The atmosphere and companionship of the party was very good too. Six (instead of originally 15) made it more expensive, but I think more enjoyable. Hopes for the future: Mount Kilimanjaro, probably in August, just before my return to the UK. I think I may very well be asked to do all the organisation for a YSA expedition, as I am the closest geographically. I have all the details in a BUSA booklet on travel in East Africa. Will write again on my return from Taveta...

Letter to my parents, 12 to 13 January 1974 (Excerpts)

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, 12 to 13 January 1974:

First of all thank you very much indeed for all the Christmas presents which greeted my return from Taveta yesterday. Have received: 4 films, a beautiful Peacock linen cloth which is now proudly displayed on my wardrobe, a slide previewer (with batteries, I'm afraid, exhausted), a Collins diary for 1974, a note-book and 2 pink handkerchiefs. Thank you very much indeed! Sad, I know, that they were late, but good that all have nevertheless arrived safely. In fact, however, though I haven't said this before, I wasn't surprised that they arrived at this time, nor was I too anxious about their safe arrival. For – though of course you weren't to know this – the W's told me that despite post office last dates, it usually happens that parcels sent off in early October arrive in time for Christmas, and those sent later in the month can often be delayed another 2 months. So I was expecting them at the end of February! Wonderful that they arrived during the Christmas period.

Thank you too for your long letter of January 3rd which I read this morning... I'm sure in all events Christmas next year will be a happier time. The Strawsons' invitation to farm again sounds inviting – I feel very nostalgic whenever I look at the slides of Combine Harvesters and ploughed fields! I think however next summer is going to be run on a fairly tight schedule. Summer term ends early August. *Bas*. And as I said, it is hoped that there will be an expedition to climb Mount Kilimanjaro after that. I may well be organising it. I want if possible to return around August 20th, to give plenty of time before Inverpolly. Thus Zambia,

at the moment, sounds a little doubtful. For one thing, it means crossing Tanzania, and that – I have been told – is quite an ordeal. In fact the last two YSAs who tried it failed and had to take refuge in the Taita Hills! Anyway, we’ll see. Also, I’ll send slides (first 4 films), once everything gets going again and there is time.

A week staying with a student at Taveta, of experiences though not altogether pleasant, yet worthwhile – as a result of which however I’ve been pretty sick these last 2 or 3 days, with upset tummy and nausea. So I’m taking it very easy this weekend, unable really to do much. Also, before I pass on to news, my financial position at the moment is, quite frankly, embarrassing. Still no December salary (let alone January), and although the bank has received the £10 cheque (thank you again very much), they are not ready to transfer it into my account. They said it would be ready last Monday, but it still isn’t. The W’s have lent me enough to see me through, but it’s embarrassing not to feel financially independent. Theoretically though, I’m fine, especially now that the YSA salary has been increased to 600/- per month. Still, I suppose the rough and tumble of African finance is a good way of learning about it all, and next year I’ll budget my income in such a way as to make allowance for any slip-ups or delays. Sorry all this is slightly tedious – as I say, I’ve been feeling a bit down recently, and not too good at the moment. I’ve taken various prescribed *dawa* [medicine], and hope to feel OK tomorrow morning.

Main week’s news. I set off at 6 am on Monday morning, with rucksack containing sleeping bag, mosquito net and fruit (‘beads-for-the-natives’). I saw the Southern Cross for the first time – high in the heavens and with the central axis vertical. Bus out of the hills to Mwatate. I intended to hitch-hike from there to Taveta, or else take the Voi to Moshi bus which was to pass by in three hours time. I stood by the road-side with my thumb out. At that time I was struggling with ki-Swahili, trying to get the language into better shape for my stay with Thomas. After waiting for a few minutes a car stopped. I said to the driver – without thinking, “*Nakwenda Taveta?*” [Are you going to Taveta?] The reply: “*Pardon, monsieur? Est-ce que vous voulez voyager en Tanzanie?*” HELP! However, though for a time I kept saying “*N’dio*” instead of “*Oui*” and “*Hapana*” instead of “*Non*”, the language began to flow at last. It turned out that this French couple “*viennent de retourner en Afrique après des vacances en France, et ils sont sortis de Mombasa hier, et maintenant ils étaient en train de voyager vers Burundi, traversant par Tanzanie. Ils étaient passés le nuit en voiture.*” How’s that for French? Dead-beat; will continue tomorrow.

Fascinating drive through the Tsavo game park, seeing elephant, gazelle, innumerable species of highly coloured birds, and above all seeing – in full glory – Mount Kilimanjaro. The snowy mass of Kibo rose so huge and high that it had the effect of throwing the surrounding landscape out of all proportion. We arrived at the border township of Taveta mid-morning. I made contact with a friend of Andrew W’s, who also knew Thomas M’s family, and who drove me through the sisal estates to Riata-Kitobo, about 5 miles away. For the next four days I entered – possibly for the first time – ‘Total Africa’. A native settlement of mud and thatch huts on a compound of red dry red dust, surrounded by plantations of sisal, stretching away to small hills, and finally the North Pare Mountains on one side, and Kilimanjaro on the other. No rain for four years. Thomas greeted me when I arrived, and when I began to say sorry (for not visiting sooner), he gave me a chair and said, “Ah... no! Just tek it easy!” – the motto, I think, for the next four days. I was then introduced to Thomas’ family – Mum and Dad, both ardent Christians, who would never stop shaking hands and saying “*Bwana kaso, ndugu!*” (Praise the Lord, brother!) “*Alleluyah!*” Terrific. Then I was introduced to Thomas’ brother’s wife and child, various aunts and cousins, 5 cows, 6 calves, innumerable chickens and one cat! The house was made of wood and mud-wattle with the central part covered with a corrugated iron roof.

I won’t relate the next few days chronologically, as the experience left me more with a series of impressions. Walks through the irrigated Riata *shambas* in the heat of the day, molested by flies. Agricultural conversations in Swahili. Meal after meal of *ugali* (stiff maize porridge), veg, boiled eggs, fresh milk – endless *chai*. Flies everywhere. Children howling and crying. The smell of dust and wood-smoke – the memory is still inclined to turn my stomach

somewhat. Bright, bright moonlit nights – the best time for walking around the compound. Very warm and still. Fantastic views of Kilimanjaro with the moonlight reflected on to the snow at the summit. Heavy, sleepful nights, mercifully protected from mosquitoes by a net. Extremely interesting – as this is a typical African student’s background. Not a book to be seen. No opportunity for study or learning. Just a simple rural life, milking cows, harvesting cotton, selling wares in the Taveta market for a family living.

We made a number of expeditions however during my stay – mainly on a bicycle which was very difficult to ride on tracks of dust into which the wheels sank. The first morning Thomas took me to the famous Njoro springs. Outlets of pure, bubbling cold water appearing, it seemed, from underneath the tenuous roots of enormous trees. In fact the water emerges at the springs, after having traveled underground for miles – from the very snows of Kilimanjaro. That incidentally is the derivation of the name Kilima-Njaro, where *kilima* is the Swahili word for hill. The springs were set in the loveliest of forests, cool and green. I saw my first monkey. We then pressed on to the Tanzanian border adjacent to the railway line; and I took my first walk in Tanzania!

Next day, Taveta. Two things, I discovered, make living there unpleasant. Firstly the sun’s heat – appreciably greater than in Taita – and secondly the combination of wind and dust for which the township is notorious. Without any warning everything would disappear in a cloud of fine gritty dust. Taveta has great historical significance – it was the first inland missionary centre in the whole of East Africa. For after the first Protestant missionaries had spent some time at the coast, they pressed inland with the landmark of Kilimanjaro as their objective, and Taveta is the nearest town to it on the coast side. We went to see the old church at Maho – one of the oldest churches in East Africa, made out of wood and octagonal in shape, set on top of a little hill so that it commands a superb view. [*I remember Thomas and I prayed together in that church, sitting in one of the back pews, with windows looking out across the countryside in all directions.*] Also I must mention this. The Taveta Chronicle was the first newspaper ever to be published in East Africa. Andrew W lent me a ‘copy’ (reproduction) of an early edition dated 1899, after it had been going for about four years. The lead article starts: “In this issue we have to acknowledge the existence of the second newspaper to be published in British East Africa: the ‘Mombasa something-or-other’, and judging from the issue in hand, it is sincerely hoped that in future more attention will be paid to the Queen’s English”! Also interesting was our visit to the sisal factory, which housed some fascinating machinery that crushed the sisal leaves and extracted the juice, to leave the fibres from which rope is made. I enclose a small piece of the finished product (fresh from the machine). I also saw the water pump machine. My heart leaped when I saw the manufacturer’s trademark: RUSTON & HORNSBY, LINCOLN, ENGLAND!

Next day, Thursday – the most exciting day, and yet the day that really took me ill. A 20 to 25 mile cycle ride to Lake Chala and back. I don’t think I’d have missed it for anything, though. After hours of gruelling work against wind and gravity, we reached a long, low hill, its sides arid with a few patches of scrub, rising up out of the ‘bush’ which formed all other scenery. We staggered to the top, and looked down. We were met with the most incredible, totally unpredictable sight. About the size of Loch Oscaig, only surrounded by a circular wall of vertical cliffs hundreds of feet high, a lake of dazzling blue! Lake Chala, the third deepest lake in the world, a volcanic crater filled with water. We clambered down through the lush vegetation of green trees and cactus plants until we reached the shore, where a few fishermen were putting out in little wooden rafts. We climbed to the top again, and I sketched (in the midday sun), with Mawenzi in the background. We returned with the wind behind, so that there was hardly a need to pedal. But the sun and the heat had been too much – I was pretty ill that evening. Thomas’s father said, “*Jua kali sana*” (a very sharp sun), and the family very kindly made me ‘English supper’ – omelette, bread, tomatoes, onions, chips and fruit salad.

Friday was an incredible day. I left Taveta early and was back in Taita mid-afternoon – such a relief! The W’s had some Ugandan missionaries staying with them. Andrew had just read that Comet Kohoutek had been sighted in Nairobi – in the west, just after sunset, north-east of Venus, if you regard Venus as the centre of a compass. So he decided we should all drive to

Ngangao forest (remember, where we saw the green mamba and didn't see Kilimanjaro?) and wait till dark to see it. Fabulous evening walk – we watched birds: the Taita white-eye, unique to these hills, and kites, falcons, buzzards. Views towards the Taveta District I had just left, and Mount Kilimanjaro visible at last against the setting sun, infinitely more dramatic now as the two peaks are in line, and the whole mountain curves upwards into a volcanic shape, like Mount Fuji. The sensation of seeing the silhouettes of two palm trees against the western sky, with Venus, bright as ever, between them is something I shall never forget. Finally, at about 8 o' clock, when one car party had already returned because of tired children, we managed to pick out – first with binoculars – a blurred 'star', with a tail beginning to fan out behind, rather like the wake of a small boat in still water. Fairly faint, but eventually visible with the naked eye. Do try and see it. In the west, after sunset, up and right from the two planets, Venus and Jupiter, which are close together and very obvious, low in the western horizon. We finished the day by seeing an African civet – a cat-like wild animal, large and black-and-white. NB – I didn't have a camera with me at Taveta, but I did a number of sketches of the 'compound' and the mountains.

Some good news. Don says it's OK for me to send boxes of slides Air Mail, for 'small packet' rates (about 2 or 3/-) if wrapped in a certain way. So I'll send the first lot of slides soon. Term begins at 07:40 tomorrow morning. I have been helping Don re-categorise the Library today. The first week of the year will give time for sorting out various things. Don has taken over the administration of Mgalu (really his job, or part of it), and Peter seems to have other matters fairly well in order (barring a financial debt of several thousand shillings). It will be interesting to see how many students turn up tomorrow. Don's guess is that they will be outnumbered by the staff! No Form I's (fresh intake) for the next 6 weeks, as CPE Primary School results are not yet out. PS I am now very brown!

Letter to my parents, 16 January 1974 (Excerpts)

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 16 January 1974:

I am writing once again on Wednesdays, so that hopefully this letter will reach you before the weekend of Jan 26/27th and you can then reply to it on Sunday 27th. Please tell me if this does not reach you by that weekend. I am allowing, in general, 9 days for one-way delivery. Just to say that the term has started and that the school curriculum is now fully under way. Peter M is the new Headmaster, and it is incredible to see what a difference he has made to the school already. Yesterday, all those who arrived in the morning later than 07:40 were given extra work to do at the end of the day; and in the true Miss C tradition, any student without a full first deposit of school fees with him, in cash, was sent home immediately and told not to return until he had the money! The effect on the general discipline of the school has been remarkable. I think all the students now know that Peter M means business!

The atmosphere in the staff room has also so far been completely different – improved beyond measure. Of last term's staff, only Crispin M remains. George has given up teaching, and Aggrey has not yet returned. (We still do not know whether he will, or not, but we have found that the teaching curriculum is able to function adequately without his being here.) We have three new lady teachers – Grace, Jacinda and Philicia – I do not know / cannot remember how to spell their surnames. They are all very nice. We also have a new biology teacher called Jared. Seven teachers (including Peter) for five forms, though at the moment we have no Form I's, because (a) the CPE (Certificate of Primary Education) results are not yet out, so that the secondary schools cannot make their selections; and (b) the buildings are not yet finished – progress however is being made again at last. When our numbers are complete (probably early or mid-February) we shall all be teaching between 30 and 35 periods a week. My subjects could not be more radically different from those of last year. I'll be teaching Mathematics for Form IV (coaching for EACE), and Forms IA and IB (New SMP syllabus, all about binary system etc!), Physics for Forms III and IV, RE for Form IV (as last term) and Chemistry for Form IA. Chemistry will be very basic, but probably very useful for me, as I may well be meeting Chemistry ideas in my Engineering course at Cambridge. So I have a

fairly full teaching programme, barring extra-curricular activities (e.g. possibility of being assistant Hostel master?). At present much time has been taken studying the syllabuses, compiling schemes of work and ordering books.

Also, two pieces of good news: one is that I'm feeling well once more, making all the difference to my outlook on the 'things of life', after really some time feeling lousy – an inevitable price I think for my experiences at Taveta. (Thomas still hasn't returned. I can't think why, unless it's a problem with school fees.) The night before last saw one of the heaviest falls of rain, accompanied by wind, for a long time. The result of much praying at Mbale church on Sunday. The countryside is green and fresh once more, though storms did bring problems. That night I had a veritable river coursing through the main hallway, the water coming in through the back door and going out through the kitchen. The S's had similar problems. In fact Don – with his inevitable dry sense of humour on these occasions – remarked "Our house now has all the conveniences of the modern city dwelling: running water in every room!" Don, incidentally, is now in charge of the Administration of Diocesan schools. At the moment he is doing a lot of admin work here at Mgalu. My December salary arrived yesterday. Hurrah! Cheque dated 24th December; sent Jan 14th! Many apologies from Miss Grace C, the Australian missionary who works at the Diocesan office. So I was able to go to Wundanyi this morning, briefly, to obtain cash, pay off various debts and generally feel straightened out... Must stop now, as work is pressing hard. Will send films on Saturday.

Letter to my parents, 23 January 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 23 January 1974:

Thank you very much indeed for your letters which arrived simultaneously at the end of last week. It was good to hear that Christmas, though perhaps not up to usual standard, was as seasonable as ever and enjoyable enough. (I have a glow-worm beside my Dietz lamp!) Thank you too for news concerning posts and A-level certificates. Please could you send the Crusade-for-World-Revival magazines by sea-mail? I think it's not worth sending them by air. I hope you got the slides OK. I sent off 4 boxes by Air Mail (small packet rate) on Saturday. Also, I have received very nice letters from Nick and Eva. News from the 'foreign front' (your African correspondent) – not of course as exciting as that of recent weeks. Things have settled down to a steady pace. The fact that we are without Forms IA and IB means that none of us is teaching a full quota of periods yet, thus allowing necessary time for work schemes, schedules, working out syllabuses, sorting out the library – generally getting the school up to scratch again, after the quagmire of last term.

I don't quite know what I said that gave you to understand that Aggrey was not returning this term. True, he was 8½ days late. He returned yesterday evening, after quite a harassing time recently: Helen (his wife) has been very ill, and last Friday his grandfather died. He seems to be in good form, though. Also, I'm sorry that I gave the impression that he was a *bête noir*. I think that's altogether too strong a term. True, at times he was very trying last term, and towards the end I began to lose patience with him. But I hold no resentment against him – certainly now, at the beginning of a new term and a new year. He seems friendly and cooperative enough now. His arrival of course meant a reshuffle of Science subjects. I am now teaching Mathematics for Form III (beginning of EACE course, much more satisfactory), and no longer teaching SMP Maths for IB (just IA), this lightening my load to 25 periods a week (a good optimum). So, more work schemes to be 'schemingly' worked out!

News. Don S injured (slightly) his arm and leg down at Mombasa, learning how to ride a motor-bike. With his customary sense of humour, afterwards he said, "It wasn't falling off that I minded. The problem was landing..." He's up and about, though, working with the Bishop, and they were both here at Mgalu this morning. I did my first Physics demonstration with Form III – experiments with the simple pendulum. I had a bag of maize flour (measured out to a certain weight) suspended by a long, thin piece of string from the roof of the classroom. We discovered – purely by experiment – that the period of oscillation (time for

one complete forward – backward swing) was (a) independent of the mass on the end; (b) independent of amplitude (initial angle of swing); and (c) varied as the square root of the length of the string! Highly satisfactory results, and I think the students really appreciated seeing Science outside the confines of notebooks, blackboards and chalk. Hopefully there will be more Science demo's once we get our equipment from KTSC (now on order).

I made my first batch of scones from a recipe which Catharine gave me. Very successful (i.e. haven't lasted more than 3 days). Next step is bread, though that does take time. This morning I was awakened at 05:30 by an Earth Tremor. A sustained rumbling accompanied by a slight, universal vibration. A small piece of wall fell away. This evening was spent getting some hostellers to shift cement (from Maynard to Mgalu) as a punishment – as I am Duty Master for this week. They were very reluctant to cooperate, so I had to get very *kali* with them. Not the pleasantest of occupations – the re-installation of discipline within the school is a slow, painful process...

Yes, thank you for your suggestion about a trip to South Africa before I return to Britain. I'll be thinking about the various possibilities and plans. The main problem is time. Term ends early August, and I would like to be back by September 1st for Inverpolly, and to give a chance to see siblings, cousins, aunts etc. before the millstream of Cambridge. Also, during that vacation I hope there will be an expedition to climb Kilimanjaro (taking a week). So I was thinking, as a first plan, of not being too ambitious, but in spending 2 weeks or so making 1 or 2 trips – perhaps Wendy H in Zambia, and then on to one family in Swaziland or South Africa (perhaps). This might ease the financial side in any case. All for now. Look forward to hearing from you...

Letter to my parents, 30 January 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 30 January 1974:

Lovely to get your letter first thing on Monday morning! Good to hear all news and comments. How interesting that the Editor for the Louth Standard would like an article from me! “And this is our East African correspondent...” or should it be “Adrian Hall, News-at-ten, Mbale-dabida”? Anyway, I'd love to write an article. “Africa – personal impressions” or something, probably an account of Life and Work here under various headings, e.g. “(1) The YSA scheme; (2) The Harambee schools of Kenya; (3) Mgalu High School; (4) Taita – geology and fauna; (5) the *watu* (waTaita), people of the Taita Hills; (6) the English in Kenya; (7) East African safaris...” or something like that. Is there any date the editor would like it in by? I'd rather have plenty of time and do it well. Life at the moment runs on a tight schedule.

Don't worry about my recent financial upheavals. My situation has been greatly improved, and I think I should learn to battle these things out on my own – i.e. please don't contact Miss S. Yesterday Peter came back from Mombasa with our January salaries IN CASH. And mine has been increased to 600/-! ‘They’ say however that now no staff houses are to be free, and that therefore I will have to pay rent on the house; but I'm pretty sure that the CMS/YSA regulations cover me against this. I'll ask Mr W for the letter of appointment, which goes into conditions of employment. Aggrey has responded well, and having cleared his debts with a local shop a week ago, also cleared his debt with the W's today. Tomorrow (31st) we have agreed to do a ‘reckoning up’ for the month (I have been buying all the food) and I think everything will be squared up then.

A very full and busy week, really settling in to a new term. Thursday: I had another sudden bout of sickness, but it only lasted a day. I haven't had any trouble since, but I think it's a fact that has to be faced – that in Africa, however careful you are, sickness is never very far away. Friday: we had a massive staff meeting, as a result of Peter having just attended the School Committee meeting (Kireti and Co). Results: (1) Yet another rearrangement of the time-table, in order to level out the teaching loads. I am now teaching English for Form IV (at my own request), giving me an extra 9 periods, and pushing up my total (including subsidiary subjects such as Current Affairs) to 34. so, English Form IV, Maths Form III, Maths Form IA, Physics

Form III, Chemistry Form IA, RE Form IV and Current Affairs Form II! Thus I am likely to be *very* busy in the weeks ahead. (2) Regardless of the state of the new building – on which there has been little noticeable progress since Dec 10th – the Form I's are arriving on February 4th. By order of the Bishop. *Bas*. "Accommodation? Committee's problem!" So, the arrangement is that we are hijacking some form rooms from Maynard Primary School for hostel accommodation and classrooms; and a reshuffle in Maynard Hall (Diocesan property). We are also occupying the Committee Room, next door to the W's. The new building may not be ready till next term, though some progress is beginning to be made. (3) Appointments. Aggrey is appointed as Deputy Headmaster, which should do him a lot of good. So far he's shaping up to it well. Crispin, Hostel Master – a post which he is reluctant to take, Grace as Hostel Mistress, Gerald Games Master, Philicia Games Mistress, Jacinta Stationery Mistress. I retain my post as Library Master. On Monday I wrote to the British Councils at Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu asking for donations of books to the library. The school is to be divided into three houses: Nakuru, Magadi and Chala (what have they in common?) I have been given House-mastership of Nakuru!

Saturday: long meeting at the W's for leaders and sponsors of Christian Unions throughout the Taita District. Entitled "Leaders' Training Day for KSCF – Taita Area" - as Mr W is the KSCF representative for the district. There were eight CU's represented: Mgalu, Kituri, Mwangeka, Mwaghogho, Voi, Aggrey, St Mary's Lushangoni, Murray High School and Kenyatta. Long and useful discussions, mainly to do with CU programmes for the year, and ways they could be improved.

Monday: Peter down in Mombasa for the Form I selection in the light of the primary school CPE results. He returned yesterday with books for the school, including the course book for SMP Mathematics Form I. Real efficiency. I must say, Peter is terrific – maintaining a cheerful attitude, while working very hard indeed. Busy week, so far, of teaching and sorting out the last of the study schedules and work schemes. I have had a look through the SMP course book, and I see that Chapter 1 starts straight-away with the binary system and goes on with fascinating studies on sets, Venn diagrams, topology etc., which should be *very* interesting indeed. I'm teaching both the modern SMP Maths and the Traditional Mathematics, at the same time, to Form III – at the moment we are struggling over indices and logarithms. The atmosphere is good – friendly and cooperative.

I threw my first brick yesterday – literally! I was invited by the *fundhi* to shovel 'concrete' into a wooden mould, press it down, remove the mould, and hey presto! *Olé!* I've laid a brick. Rather like making a sand castle. If the new building falls down, whose fault will it be? Last night Aggrey and I were invited up to the W's for supper, one reason being that Aggrey had never yet tasted the traditional English fare: roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes etc. He seemed very intrigued and impressed. Afterwards we played Scrabble.

A little more rain this week. The weather should be hot and building up for the monsoon, but at the moment it's really quite cold still – very chilly in the evening and early morning. I've found that after five months in Africa my attitude to rain has been completely 'Africanised'. The sun is the killer, drying the streams, scorching the young crops. "*Jua kali sana*" (nasty old sun!) Rain brings blessing. Coolness. The countryside looking fresh and green, revived by a heavy fall of rain. Enables the crops to grow and the farmers to prosper (or escape starvation). Biblical metaphors immediately take on a new meaning – i.e. I now know what it means when it talks about the "early and latter rains". So when I return in August (after a usual English summer), and on Saturday afternoon it begins – as is customary – to rain, don't be too worried or surprised if I rush out on to the lawn, getting soaked, leaping wildly and waving my hands in the air. It may take some time for me to get de-Africanised! Anyway, lovely to hear news. Description of a "quiet gardening weekend" really brought me a touch of home...

February 1974

Letter to my parents, 6 February 1974 Excerpts)

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 6 February 1974:

Cannot write for long, as I am much under pressure. With the arrival of Form I's I am now teaching an average of 7 periods a day – with school duties, private tuition and extra-curricular activities on top of that – so I'm finding that I have very few moments to spare. Thank you very much for your letters which arrived last week. News of the whale was met with great interest. Virginia sent me the Times cutting. I'm sorry about Aunty Syl. Was the funeral service well attended?

I would like to tell you all news. Form I's have come. Teaching is exhilarating but exhausting. More slides have come – some Mount Kenya ones are terrific. Mr Noble, Provincial Inspector for Secondary Schools (Coast Province) came this morning – quite an ordeal, and a bit off-putting as he listened in on one of my lessons, which didn't go very well, though he hasn't made any comments (yet). I would like to tell you more. Perhaps there will be time over the weekend, though it seems that'll be pretty busy too. (Ant, go away.) Next weekend I'll (hopefully) be going to Mombasa to meet the new YSA who's just come out and is working at CITC. Must stop now, as I have preparation for Chemistry, two forms of Maths, English Essay and RE tomorrow and several précis' to mark (though I think those will have to wait till tomorrow). Still, I'm not feeling the strain too much yet. PS Aggrey says 'hello'.

Letter to my parents, 10 February 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Sunday 10 February 1974:

At last I have some breathing space in which to write! I haven't had any letters from home this week, so I assume that everything is OK. I enclose a Christmas Day family photograph (there is another one to follow): back row (from L to R) Mrs (Catharine) W, Old Mr W, Aunty Ruth (Andrew's sister from Tanzania), Guess-who; front row Margaret, Susanna, Old Mrs W, John and Miss C (Aunty Kate). Well, as I've said, this last week has been choc-a-block. Monday marked the arrival of Form I's (double stream) – about 60 students (so far) in all. The building is far from complete, but the situation is as follows. Form I's move into the Maynard Hall classrooms, displacing our hostellers, who move into Maynard Primary School classrooms – whose occupants have evacuated and moved into Maynard Hall itself. Form III is now accommodated in the Committee Room – a corrugated iron structure on the edge of the W's garden, and which looks like a garage. Inside it is very dark, and as I stand there teaching the Theory of Logarithms, I feel like some officer controlling operations in the Battle of the Atlantic – inside an air raid shelter!

Teaching SMP Mathematics for Form IA is very interesting. Though the students have no desks – but are sitting on forms borrowed from the church – they are responsive and alert; also of much higher intelligence than the students of the higher forms. (Government secondary schools are only taking students with exceptionally high CPE grades – competition has become so fierce.) Anyway they are happy counting to base 6, like 'Fred' the Mathematical Fly, who has to count on his six legs instead of 10 fingers. Chemistry: very good for me. Exciting. On Thursday I held a piece of magnesium ribbon with a pair of tweezers and burned it over a candle flame. The whole thing ignited and burned with a furious white light. The tweezers became red hot. I let go. The still burning magnesium set fire to the newspaper covering the desk, and almost the desk itself! More care in future...

On Wednesday our 'Noble friend' came round (Mr Noble, Provincial Inspector for Secondary Schools). He came into Form IV to listen in to my English lesson. A student came in late, half way through the lesson, and sat down in her place – unfortunately displacing the person of Mr Noble, so that he had to stand. I continued with the lesson, tolerating as few further

interruptions as possible. Then Mr Noble's squeaky British voice chirped in, "Thank you, Mr Hall. So nice of you to have offered me a chair." Clearly I had been too interested in the lesson. Thursday: drama in Evening Assembly, when Peter publicly caned three students who had been bullying Form I's or 'monos'. I did not expect to see a cane again – not having seen one used since my early Packwood days! Still, it's certainly had a sobering effect on the school, whose behaviour and standards had sunk very low.

I went on a long walk yesterday afternoon – mainly to get a rest from work, mountains of marking, and a full week's lesson preparation. I managed to get to the top of a very difficult mountain beyond the Iriwa ridge (the mountain I called 'Mount Kulal') – my third attempt at it, the other two previous ones having failed. Much of its slopes are covered with pine forest, and the summit with deciduous trees. From the trig point at the top it is possible, now, to see no more than 10 yards in any direction. Ploughing through the forest was very tricky – real African jungle, like trying to find my way out of a snake-infested maze. Still, there were some beautiful views further down, and I think (I hope) I got some good slides (taken into the sun). Mount Kenya slides – some very impressive – and slides of Uhuru Day, Christmas and Voi railway station, have arrived. I will forward them to you shortly. I go to Mombasa next weekend – I think it will do me good, after five weeks of term, to take a break – also my second pair of gym shoes in hand has holes in it! (Average consumption here: one pair every 6 weeks!) I'm looking forward too to meeting this new YSA, Chris L from Ireland.

Letter to my parents, 13 February 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 13 February 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated February 3rd which arrived this morning. Posts have been a bit delayed this month. On Monday the bus FORGOT to pick up the mail at Voi (frequently happens) and the next day it went into Mombasa for servicing, as it does once a month. Thank you for your news. I'm sorry, Dad, about your back. How in-fu-u-r-i-a-ting!

Not very much news as such, from this end. Also, not much time, so I'll have to be brief in any case. Sunday morning we had the third of the Mgalu student services – in English. This time it really was run by the students, with the sermon (and a very good one) preached by Francis M, the Chairman of the CU. Sunday was Grace's 20th birthday (Grace is one of the new lady teachers). So she invited us all up into her house for tea and a 'get-together' – to the 'helicopter' (so named because of the steep flight of steps up to the front door). A very enjoyable afternoon – also, as several of us pointed out – the first time in Mgalu's recent history that all the members of staff have been together, in one place, on non-school business. Thus, a real sense of unity – so clearly lacking last term. Really encouraging.

The building progresses at last. They have made wooden moulds over the window spaces, and have been pouring liquid 'concrete' into them, so as to make a continuous lintel across the top. I had to retire early from school this afternoon, for the second time this week, due to exhaustion. I think it must be the heat, which has just begun in earnest (pre-rain thermal build up). Also teaching, for any length of time, in the corrugated iron structure which houses Form III doesn't help much – in the afternoon it becomes a room-sized oven! I'm not sure what the answer is. At the moment I feel I'm letting the school down, though I do try to fulfil my quota of teaching periods. I hope to go to Mombasa on Saturday. I will tell you all about it when I return.

Chris D (YSA last year) has just written – in reply to a long letter I sent him. He strongly recommends Kilimanjaro for August, and suggests that if I'm organising it, I should start with recruiting, bookings etc. now. So I'll put a notice in the YSA page of the CMS monthly newsletter – which gets circulated to all CMS members. Finally, some literary gems. "I shot a bird, but it was not SWEETABLE to eat." "A snake bit me on the KNEEL." "After travelling for many years at sea, our ship had a wreck." Oh yes, please don't return the slides. The less travelling they do the better, and they keep better in the British climate. I'll send another batch from Mombasa.

Letter to my parents, 20 February 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 20 February 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated February 10th which I received on the 15th. At that time you hadn't received my more recent letters, so cannot reply to your replies to them – if that makes sense! (Sounds like some real Asian music coming over the radio next door, VOK Mombasa. Either Arab or Indian...) Thank you for the newspaper cutting. What gave me almost a shock of surprise was seeing the people (in the photograph) on Donna Nook beach, clad in duffle-coats, wellingtons, scarves, gloves etc. – somehow I just can't appreciate it – cold is now something almost completely out of my experience. On Saturday afternoon, at around half past two, I was wallowing contentedly in the waters of Nyali Beach, just north of Mombasa. And though the water a little way out from the shore was cool and refreshing, the shallower water further in was very warm. After splashing around in it for 20 minutes I felt like pulling the bath plug out! Mombasa beaches. Blue skies; white, white sands, peaceful palm trees, and the water – oh so blue, a colour almost fierce in its brightness when compared with the gentler hues of the English coast.

My attitude to rain, I think, *will* survive, if only partially, back in England – unless we're flooded out of our homes. I can't describe how sad I felt, coming back from Mombasa on Sunday, and seeing, just outside Voi, fields upon fields of maize mercilessly destroyed – by the sun. Just yellow stalks, bearing a few shrivelled leaves, set in parched fields as dry as dust. And Kenyans rely on maize for their staple food. In the hills here, the situation is not much better. In November, when the rains finally came (a month late), people furiously started planting their maize. The plants have grown up – the people pray for rain sufficient to see them through to maturity and to a good harvest. But now they're just drying up. Only the *shambas* with irrigation stand a good chance of producing a harvest this year. The grass on the football pitch and on the W's' lawn is turning from rich green to a scorched brown. Flowers wilt and die. The hills are losing their beauty. The water level in our tank is going down and down. In a few weeks time, we'll be back on river water (Eheu! Alas...) This is a picture of the Dry Season. A time of waiting. Just as in winter, one 'traditionally' waits for the arrival of spring and new life, so here, in the long drought, we are waiting patiently and prayerfully for the long rains (the 'early' as opposed to the 'latter' rains), which may be here by the end of March. Perhaps I'll get sick of too much rain when I return to the UK. But at least things *grow* in the rain, and the countryside stays green.

I went to Mombasa on Saturday, leaving Wundanyi at 7 on the OTC. I found Chris L (the new YSA) at CITC. Long hair, a beard – and great fun! We got on really well together. Graduate in Engineering from Belfast University ('ees Oireesh!) Described by missionaries as being 'on fire for the Lord' – i.e. really hot-on-the-Gospel. He has brought out (as hand-luggage) a 12-string guitar, so we did a lot of singing of the latest hits (in Britain / America / thus in European circles here in Kenya). We spent the afternoon swimming, and shopping later in Town when it was cooler. Mombasa as intriguing as ever; I still think it's much nicer than Nairobi! Evening at a Christian fellowship meeting, with a Roman Catholic missionary living near Kilindini harbour. Mainly CMS missionaries (from CITC), American Southern Baptists, several Africans and also two naval officers (I think) from the two RN ships HMS Scylla and HMS Ariadne in port at the moment. A terrific sense of unity, even though we were so many people from different backgrounds and walks of life. Chris was there – with, of course, his 12-string guitar!

Sunday morning – saw the F's (CITC). Tom F is the Principal (and has been since CITC started 9 years ago). I also had a long chat with the O's. Ken and Betty were at Foxbury during our selection and briefing conferences. Then a few months ago they came out to Kenya, hoping to go on to the Sudan – the 'land of their calling', so to speak, and whence they were told to leave, during the political troubles a few years back. So far, though the Church of Sudan has specifically asked them back, their visas have been refused by the government twice. However, they feel they are 'called' there, and so they are confident that they'll get in sooner or later. At present they're at CITC. I went to Mattins at 11 am at

Mombasa Anglican Cathedral. It was good to attend an English service once again. It was good to see, once again, the Provost, the Very Revd Desmond G, who was at the CMS weekend at Murray. He has given me a standing invitation to stay at his house, so next time I go down to Mombasa, probably towards the end of term, I'll do that.

A good week, school-wise. On Friday I spent a happy evening drilling holes in the concrete floor of the library, and pouring in gallon after gallon of deadly poisonous *dawa* to get rid of the white ants (not the pleasantest of jobs). I had been accused (by Don) of feeding the library books to the termites! Lessons have been interesting, and I feel greatly refreshed after a short holiday. At the moment, in English Form IV I am attempting to improve their conversational fluency by constructing imaginary 'telephone conversations'. I supply the students with the receiver's part only. They in turn have to make up the caller's speeches to fit into the story – which I have made up and tried to 'Africanise'. The result is quite amusing: "The arrival of Mr Owengo".

Telephone: Rrrrrrrrrring! Rrrrrrrrrring!
Jeremiah: Mombasa 2747. Jeremiah Mwazenge speaking.
Enos: Oh, hallo Jeremiah! It's Enos here! How is it with you?
Jeremiah: Oh, hallo Enos! Good to hear you! Where from are you calling?
Enos: From the phone box just outside Abdul's. Do you know it? Top of Kilindini Road...
Jeremiah: I know. It's a long way for you to walk just for a phone call...

And so on. I give them Jeremiah's parts. They have to make up Enos' parts. Tell Virginia – I think she'd be quite interested.

Also I am Housemaster of Nakuru House. I am mainly responsible for the House's sporting activities (and success), in Football, Netball, Volleyball. We have a league competition with Chala and Magadi. So far, in football, we have played two, and lost two. So I'm going to have a few words with the house team before they play their next match. Very little offensive, that's their trouble. Sound defensive tactics and an excellent goal-keeper, but no attack. I'm also in some way responsible for the welfare of Nakuru students as a whole. At the end of term I will have to write a Housemaster's report.

Finally, before I 'pen off' (Anglo-Kenyan strikes again), two things which need replies (RSVP): (1) Is it OK to go ahead with an article for the Louth Standard? If so, when would the Editor like it by? If he can give me complete freedom as to timing, so much the better. I can't foresee a period of time to write it before next holidays – they'll be pretty booked too. (2) Any further thoughts concerning a visit to Zambia / South Africa mid-August, just prior to my return to UK? I'd love to spend a few days with perhaps one or two families of relations. The ones in Zambia sound most interesting. Perhaps you could advise me here, and send me the names and addresses of any relations you think I'd be able to visit? Should I write to them? Or could you? Will try to get slides off on Saturday...

Letter to my parents, 27 February 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 27 February 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated February 17th. Thank you for passing on information from Dr FEINSTEIN's letter – my goodness, I haven't heard that name for a-g-e-s! Hello, an *aeroplane*? (roar in the distance) Can't think what an aeroplane would be doing at night over the Taita Hills. Perhaps it's on its way from Mombasa to Kilimanjaro airport (Moshi) and has got diverted by storm clouds. Anyway, all's under control, as I received the same letter – i.e. containing an identical reading list – during my last term at Haileybury, I think. I bought a light-weight book (on the list) which I have with me here: Electronics for the Physicist by CFG Delaney (Penguin, Library of Physical Sciences) – very relevant. I worked my way through some of it, on arrival, when I wasn't fully employed. But now that my time is fully occupied, I very much doubt if I'll get down to

some serious study before my return. The term's weeks are full up, and I can see these holidays as being full too – because there will not be much time after Term 2: it ends on August 9th, then Kilimanjaro, Zambia (?) and my return around 20 – 25th. Thus any touring of Kenya, e.g. to the West, will have to be done in the Easter holidays. Thus I should write to Dr F to say that I received a book-list in June 1973, and have one of the books here (and which I have been studying to some extent).

Well, a very busy week once again. Life here is very full, and committed – which is just what I like: no hanging around, very little frustration (at present), a steady forward pace. The staff room atmosphere is very good – we all seem to be working together as a team, helping each other with the teaching and extra-curricular activities, sharing each other's problems, interests – and meals! As a result I feel very much more settled and 'at home' with them – I would say, with the Africans in general. Grace was sick yesterday, so we all solemnly went up to the 'helicopter' (her house, shared with Jacinta and Philicia) to cheer her up. Today she was fine.

The work is challenging, but great fun – it makes a difference (now) feeling that I have control over it, rather than finding myself controlled by it! In English I am giving Form IV a (part-time) course on various types of English language – literary, poetic, conversational, scientific etc., which they find interesting – e.g. today we spent discussing style, diction, figures of speech etc. of a very 'purple' passage by TE Lawrence. All helps towards EACE, for what they most need now is interest (thus the necessity of stimulating lessons and topics) and confidence in fluent handling of the language in a given situation.

Form IA have gone berserk on the binary system (zeros and ones). This morning in Chemistry there were the satisfying squeals of delight when I added a light blue liquid (copper sulphate solution) to a colourless liquid (ammonia) to produce a d-a-r-k blue liquid (copper hydroxide and ammonium sulphate). "Ai! Bwana, you must be a genius!" Challenging too being a Housemaster and concerned with the success or otherwise of the house team. We have now played three matches and lost three – even though they were really hammering away at the Chala goal on Monday. Busy weekend, time spent marking. Sunday: Mgalu School Service. I preached my second sermon, on "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4 v 19). It seemed to get across OK (I felt they were listening!) – but it only lasted about 10 minutes! Do you know, I've spent almost exactly HALF my TIME here! Six months have gone *so* quickly!

March 1974

Letter to my parents, 6 March 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 6 March 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated February 24th. Wonderful to hear description of spring – one of the things I really miss out here. Everything here is parched and dry, though over the weekend we had *some* rain which enlivened things a bit. I am told that the Easter East African Safari Rally and the beginning of the long rains are usually simultaneous. So we're expecting our main rains in late March or early April.

Life here is *very* full indeed, and now that recently I've been able to live up to it, it is all the more invigorating. Certainly I'm *not* cracking up! Just doing some hard work, that's all – which is no bad thing, as I felt I didn't really do much hard work in 1973! The strain tells at times – and inevitably this must show through in my letters, but even at the worst moments I always seem to find time and opportunity to relax, draw breath and regain strength. This week is particularly committed as I am Duty Master: this means morning assemblies, keeping an eye on the prefects and the school (especially during the Headmaster's absence). The worst thing so far has been punishing defaulters who have missed Morning Assembly by hiding in the school *choo* (= loo)!

Not much in the way of news. Busy weekend spent doing battle with the library – arranging books into proper shelf categories, labelling, indexing, classifying – the result is very satisfying as the room now looks tidy and well-organised as a library and text book store. The W's returned from Naivasha (seeing children for half-term) last Friday, and guests are staying with them: a second cousin, Mrs W and daughter Jenny, recently bereaved and spending three months in Kenya. I was invited to supper on Saturday, and we had a fascinating evening in the (I must say) refreshing atmosphere of English company, recounting various travellers' tales [*I recall Jenny's mother telling us the story of a plane journey to Finland to 'rescue' one of her daughters who was not looking after herself, and seeing the Northern Lights from the aircraft*], and listening for election results. Jenny, incidentally, knows lot of undergraduates at Clare – most of whom will have left by the time I go up, but she is going to pass my name around, so that will give me some contacts!

On Monday our new teacher arrived, though Peter *did* write to the Bishop to say that we did *not* need another member of staff (particularly from a financial point of view). His name is Venant M – very nice, also physically handicapped (I think he has a prosthetic leg). The same day – welcome news – Nakuru beat Magadi (the strongest house team) 1 – 0 in one of the most exciting games of football I have ever watched! Some superb skill and teamwork on both sides. We won again today, versus Chala.

This week the only literary gem has been Sophie T's description of a snake. She is a rather shy, timid girl with a stutter, but she wrote, "The huge cobra then opened its mouth so wide that I was able to count its teeth"! (one, two, three, four...) Monday night: I played some Bach chorales from the St John Passion on my wooden flute by moonlight. Last night I have never seen the moon so brilliant. I had to walk across the valley to the 'helicopter' for a meeting – it was like daylight: no torches needed or anything! Hope all is well. I'm glad the painting went OK. PS My tummy tells me it's time for supper: home-made Alpen, eggs, tea, bread etc.

Letter to my parents, 13 March 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 13 March 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated March 4th. I'm distressed (somewhat) about the other film of slides – Film 5, containing shots of Voi railway station, *Jamhuri* (Independence) Day and Christmas. I hope they will have arrived by the time this letter reaches you. It is possible that they have got shipped out by sea-mail by mistake, and may therefore arrive about June. Well, nothing fearfully exciting to report. A steady week, on the whole. Not a very strong (personal) reaction to the news that Harold Wilson once again occupies No 10 – it's too early to say what his Government is like, though I hear it's in for problems with the coal-miners asking for yet *more* money! Here of course it's impossible to say really what's going on behind the political scene. I've come to the conclusion that the papers here are state-controlled, and in reading them I find a thing I really miss here is the Free Press (i.e. which reveals the Government's mistakes as well as its achievements).

The teachers have had their HCS (Higher School Certificate = A-level) results. Jacinta did very well to get 3 principals (2Bs + C) and she stands a chance of being accepted by University. Grace, unfortunately, got all subsidiaries (O-level passes, I think) which is disappointing. Monday evening, in walks Aggrey – only 8 days late! He had been very ill with a fever he had contracted last Monday – and (he said) had tried very hard to ring Mombasa and to send telegrams. I can't believe it's *that* difficult to ring Mombasa from Nairobi! This morning (before breakfast) he upped and went away in disbelief as we were settling February accounts, and I showed him that I had spent 302/- on food + groceries + gas + kerosene + Jackson's salary etc. (understandable when we were constantly four for lunch). So he still has a fairly substantial debt unpaid. I just have to hope for the best! I think his latest scheme is to buy all his own food and kind of 'barricade' himself – which is

really very juvenile. Still, perhaps he'll think twice about it when he's in a more rational frame of mind (perhaps it's the fever).

Monday afternoon afforded a fairly testing experience. I was asked to referee a house match between Magadi and Chala (as Housemaster of Nakuru I would not be biased). The players did not like my rules of refereeing or something, because they were arguing over every decision I made. By half-time the game had begun to degenerate into anarchy. So during a quarrel over a corner / goal kick, I blew the whistle long and loud, summoned both teams to the centre of the pitch and administered a ROCKET – stating in conclusion that if there was any more shouting, quarelling or arguing with the referee, I would simply blow the whistle and close the game. The effect was satisfactory and the game proceeded in an orderly manner until the end. Today, with 20 minutes to go, Magadi were up on Nakuru 3 – 1. Then, with furious play (against really a stronger side) and fervent cheering, Nakuru managed to pull through to an exciting 3-all draw! PS Happy Mothering Sunday for 24/03/74! And, help! Sudden thought – Virginia's birthday! (The passage of time seems not to register nowadays.) Please say I'll be writing her a special Birthday Letter, soon. IT'S RAINING!

Letter to my parents, 19 March 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 19 March 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated March 11th. Welcome news that Box No 5 of slides has arrived! I now have Films 7 and 8 with me, but I think I'll keep them here until after the YSA conference in April, as we'll be sharing some of them with each other then. These films are mainly of local views, including ones taken during various walking *safaris* in the hills – some very artistic too. I feel what I need to concentrate on now is taking close-ups of people doing things – e.g. *fundhis* at work, members of staff, Jackson cutting grass, students queuing for hostel lunch, lessons in progress with myself teaching (!) Photographs will be difficult to take, as Africans, if given half a chance, *will* pose (and very solemnly too!) I have taken most of today off after a fairly unpleasant headache this morning. I think my body must have a defence mechanism against over-work, and so this will give me a chance to catch up on myself, and I hope to be fit for tomorrow. (I hope, even though symptoms are similar, it won't be anything like as long-drawn out as last term!) There's a difficult period ahead, with setting exams and then marking them afterwards. The term then should probably end around April 9th, and in any case I hope to go to Mombasa for the weekend on April 6/7th, and see Chris and others again.

On Thursday, Mrs W gave a talk to the Christian Union on the subject of Christian giving – which was well received and provoked some intelligent questions. On Friday, I had a hilarious and very interesting evening marking the 'Newspaper Articles' from Form IV, in which each student was given a picture, cut out of a recent picture of the Daily Nation, and was then asked to write an article with headline and sub-headline to which that picture would have been relevant. We had one student, Norman M, who wrote a documentary about tea-picking in western Kenya. "Lorries and vans take tea to shops, where it is sold to buyers to make a very good and *delirious* tea." Accompanied was a picture of *delirious* tea-pickers! Another student who had a picture of a crowded refugee camp, wrote about Nairobi during the tourist season. And with a picture of Maggie Smith demurely seated upon a donkey, Livingstone M wrote a very erudite article about horse-racing at Ngong! On a more serious note, was there anything in the newspapers about the Kenya documentary by Lord Chalfont by the BBC? It has become a real scandal here in Kenya. Vice-President Daniel Arap Moi is reported to have said: "We should not remain silent when our President is attacked from outside... it is an attack on us and the entire nation." Headlines, Daily Nation, Friday 15th March. On Saturday there was a Christian Union rally at Aggrey High School, Wundanyi. Peter M was the speaker on "How can a young man keep his way pure?" (Psalm 119 v 9), which is very topical...

Letter to my parents, 27 March 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 27 March 1974:

Thank you very much for your letters and postcards. Your letter, Dad, arrived on the 21st March and your postcard, Mum, came on Saturday, though as it's now hanging up in front of my desk, next door to a previous postcard of a Norwegian fjord, I can't see the date it was sent! Concerning Zambia in August, I've written off to the EAA Office in Nairobi (where Aggrey's wife works) to enquire about prices for an economy return flight to Lusaka. Aggrey has lent me an EAA time-table. This indicates that there is a flight from Nairobi each Monday, departing 09:00, arriving Lusaka 11:40, and another one on Saturday, taking off at 09:00, changing at Dar-es-Salaam. If I find that these days are inconvenient there are other airlines operating, e.g. Zambia Airways. Concerning dates: our term ends on Friday August 9th. I've not heard any news from the Marangu and the Kibo hotels at Marangu (near Moshi) in answer to my inquiries about accommodation, but our dates for Kilimanjaro are hoped to be Sunday 11th August (arrive Marangu) to Saturday 17th (depart after a 5 day climb Monday to Friday). This means my earliest date for take-off to Lusaka would be Monday 19th August. If I return approximately a week later to Nairobi (e.g. August 26/27th), I'll try and arrange to get a flight back to UK as soon as possible – I would like to be with you by 30th (at the latest)! This means that if I fly to Lusaka, I'll have all my luggage packed and ready at Nairobi. When I am able to forward to you information concerning the fare (Aggrey suggests c 700/- = £40) and if you agree to it, I think the dates of my visit would lie between August 19th and August 27th.

I've just received the parcel from Godmother Barbara. Despite the external volume, the present inside was contained in a little box beautifully wrapped. It is in the form of a leather buckle strap, to which is attached a metal (gold-coloured) plaque inscribed with the words "ADRIAN HALL, LEGBOURNE ABBEY, LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE". Is it to be attached to my brief-case or something? Anyway, I've written a long letter to Godmother Barbara, telling her of my adventures in Africa. By the way – while I think of it – did you happen to see the controversial TV programme about Kenya and Kenyatta by Lord Chalfont? It created a *furor* here in Parliament. The Daily Nation front page showed a picture of the Vice-President angrily accusing Britain of attacking the entire nation of Kenya. I thought we'd all be sent home!

The end of last week was spent setting examinations, mock EACE (O-level) papers for Forms III and IV. On Friday evening I went over to Murray High School with Peter, Grace and Mrs W who was driving. We saw Miss C and discussed examination results at great length. Murray did not do too well in EACE, owing to staffing problems. Mgalu had 13 (out of 35) passes in KJSE, a shade *down* on last year. Tut, tut! The school (Murray) was having some kind of Lent Mission, so we joined in with the singing and listened to the preaching – some of the best I've heard. Saturday: I picked up Lord of the Rings from where I'd left off before coming out here. Culturally *very* refreshing. Also, I managed to get out into the hills, of an evening, which did me a world of good. The first time really in six weeks, owing to pressures of work and the heat of the middle-day. Examinations galore – and marking beginning to pile up, though today I wasn't committed to much – all my exams come up tomorrow and Friday!

April 1974

Letter to my parents, 3 April 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Mbale-Dabida, Wednesday 3 April 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated March 25th and also for the photograph of the PHAB course, which arrived at Iriwa yesterday – I had to sign out for it, as for a parcel. Only a year ago – bit it seems ages! I suppose it's because it all took place in a different

country and during a different period of my life – i.e. my school days (hope that doesn't sound too senile!) Also, interesting comparing it with photographs taken here in Kenya, e.g. family groups at Christmas. Everyone in England looking so heavily clad and sombre: the African sun seems to have a brightening effect. However at the moment I'm beginning to feel other effects – due I think to the heat, heavy thundery weather and the usual end of term strain. I've been taking your advice about not overdoing things; last night I went to bed around 8 o'clock with my head 'swimming' after a very thundery, head-achy day. Now, as a result of about 10 hours sleep I feel much better.

I'm finding also, however, that it's becoming increasingly easy to lose patience – over little things, in class – and general discipline, which at the moment is very low. I was talking it over with Don, together with other things, just now as we were walking up the hill. When I mentioned 'discipline', his immediate remark was "What discipline?" He understood my problem completely, as he often finds himself in similar situations. He also gave me some really good advice – in the short term: 'If you feel you're about to lose your temper in class, change your piece of chalk!' Very scientific – the action takes your mind off the situation for just long enough for you to regain control! Also, long term policy: do lots of crosswords and read plenty of novels. I've picked up Lord of the Rings again, and finding this a great help. Novels: more essential here, I would say, than in the UK.

Our term is drawing to a close, and 'though it has been in many respects an enjoyable, well-organised term, I'm not sorry we're near the end (for the reasons above). We close on April 10th, Wednesday before Easter, which gives us plenty of time for handing back exams, writing reports, and generally winding up. (Keeping the students occupied is the problem!) We've come to the end of a fearfully busy week. Thursday and Friday were spent, for the most part, helping Rhoda, the clerk, with the overwhelming business of getting exam papers 'off the press', so to speak, in time. I learned how to operate the very temperamental school duplicator. Operations were not helped by our having the wrong paper, the wrong ink and the wrong stencils; alternatively we have the wrong duplicator! However, it was good fun all the same. This meant, though, that all marking had to be done in the evenings, and on Saturday.

After I'd finished *all* marking on Saturday afternoon (very satisfactory), I set out on *safari* into the hills, equipped with raincoat and umbrella, because storm clouds were rising in the East. I noticed an ominous silent heaviness – coinciding, very appropriately, with similar conditions in the Lord of the Rings, as Frodo and Sam approached the walls of Mordor. Terrific heat. Not a breath of wind. No sound, except for the monotonous and incessant calling of birds. As I climbed upwards I became more aware of the damp heat contained in the slow and sticky air. Finally I reached the top of the ridge and rocky outcrops, just as the moisture in the air eased itself into a fine rain. By the time I had descended I was soaked through and through, as a result of brushing through the undergrowth and foliage which tended to stretch out over the paths. I changed rapidly back in the house, and set off almost immediately for the W's, to make some arrangements about Sunday.

It was then that a curious thing happened. A few minutes previously it had been almost too dark to see, for I had had to light the Dietz lamp while I was changing. Now, as I set out, it had become curiously bright. Grey clouds still covered the sky, but everything was now permeated by a thick yellow light which came from thinner clouds to the West. This was particularly noticeable in the way it reflected off the red surfaces of the roads and paths, which took on a vivid orange glow. And as I turned into the W's drive, the red poinsettia flowers of their garden, set against the grey hills and sky, shone with an earthly brightness. That momentary contrast between the vivid scarlet red flowers, and the deep, rich blue-grey background is a sight I shall never forget. I reached the house, saying hello to Susanna and John who had just returned from Turi – and then the heavens opened! The rain came down in torrents. The edge of the verandah was almost a sheet of water. The children were dancing with delight. A Mgalu girl with a plate of food crouched under the eaves of a nearby building. Lightning and thunder were at times almost instantaneous, and it was

some time before I could return, cautiously feeling my way down the flooded paths in the gloom...

Sunday too was a full day. Mgalu student service, the last this term, in the morning. Mr M, the Headmaster of Aggrey High School, preached – very powerfully and for over an hour! (They seem to like it that way here: time is no problem.) Terrific humour and theatrical touches helped bring the points across. In the afternoon I accompanied Andrew W to a communion service in English at Werugha (such opportunities are too rare to be missed!) The Willastons [not their real name], a very nice Indian family with one small boy Robbins, invited us in after the service. Very interesting conversation about various things in Kenya / Uganda / India / UK over strong tea and Asian delicacies. After work in Uganda the Willastons came over here about a year ago, and have been teaching in Harambee schools since then. At the moment they are at Kituri, which is near Werugha.

This week has not been so full, teaching-wise, but there are reports to cope with. The staff is a bit depleted. Aggrey left for Nairobi on Sunday – we suppose – after being roaring drunk all Saturday, and without having informed anyone or left any written message – what I call highly irresponsible. It's made things pretty difficult, especially for Peter, who wants things to be ship-shape. Gerald's uncle died yesterday, so he left today. Grace has been ill. Still, we are managing. This weekend I hope to go to Mombasa, to see Chris and others. Though I'll have to be back on Sunday, as our term doesn't end till Wednesday. Then I'm here over the Easter weekend. I mustn't miss the East Africa Safari Rally, which passes through here on Easter Sunday – I'm told it's quite an event. (Cars on trial runs have been passing through all week, amid cheers of applause from children and students who line up to watch!) After Easter I go to the YSA 'Get Together' at Limuru, near Nairobi – where we can discuss further holiday plans.

Now, the most important thing. I had a flood of mail on Monday – including your letter, because all last week the bus was out of action, suspended by the police (!), and we had no post. However, among the letters that arrived was a very nice letter from Mrs (Elaine) H, writing from Luanshya, Zambia, in reply to yours, Mum. They are all *very* keen for me to come over and pay them a 'flying visit' (and I'm very much looking forward to seeing them). And she suggests the end of *these holidays*, at the beginning of May. She also writes, "Do not worry about the expense of flying, as this can be arranged from this end – the point is to come if you can possibly arrange it." She says, earlier on, that if I accept the invitation, she will enquire about flights from the travel agent at Lusaka, and have an air ticket sent out to me! So, terrific! I hope it's alright, I've written straight back – time is short – and said I'd simply love to come over, and have suggested dates between May 5th and May 11th. (She says, "We do not have a particularly busy time-table here and it is fairly elastic, so you name the dates... and we will fit in with these.") I think in all respects – if plans do work out OK – going to Zambia in May will be better than going in August. First, there's Kilimanjaro (again, if things go according to plan) – which will end around August 18th – and then the business of getting back to England – with all the accompanying packing, farewells and journey panic (to which I am prone!) Secondly, I feel that a week in Zambia, while I still have 3 or 4 months left in Kenya, will be a really worthwhile break (a break-within-a-break, if you see what I mean) – an opportunity for seeing, as you say, a different part of Africa, with a different culture, and also to meet the H's (could you explain my, or your, exact relation to them?) This will enable me to return refreshed for my last term at Mgalu. PS Plenty of rain. Terrific. About to make supper of Alpen, scrambled eggs, rolls and tea.

Letter to my parents, 15 April 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Nairobi, Monday 15 April 1974:

Just a quick note to accompany my letter of 11th April which I am sending from here – as it will reach you quicker than if I had posted it from Wundanyi. Still no letter since March

24th, but the Easter present arrived in good time – thank you very much indeed. I trust everything's OK and am not worrying unduly. I have arrived at the C's safely after an incredible journey which I'll tell you about. Some news that's just got to me by 'bush telegraph' (or round-about) – Mrs C said that John C had called round about 2 months ago saying that (via news from his family) that he heard that you were worried about me, or something. I hope not due to lack of mail – as posts have been erratic recently. If it was about the various 'fainting fits' (metaphorically speaking) and illnesses, this is to say that I'm now OK, and that really odd times of illness are just an occupational hazard of working and living in Africa. For, as people say, one just can't do as much, or go as fast in Africa as one can back home: things take longer, one has to take things more slowly, and there are less workable hours in a day. So I think I have been making the mistake of pushing it, in the circumstances, i.e. trying to live as actively as I would in Britain. I'll take precautions next term – perhaps in resting after lunch, or going to bed earlier, though it's not easy when there are so many commitments to fulfill.

I had a wonderful Easter, once again drawn very much into the W family circle over the 2 or 3 days. On Good Friday, after a long service at the church, we climbed Susu (on the South edge of the hills) and gathered moss and other vegetation for the traditional Easter garden. Views from the top were once again terrific – especially as there were rain storms sweeping across the plains – atmospherics very dramatic. On Saturday I entertained them for lunch down at my house – roast beef etc. (Jackson did most of the cooking!) Only hitches were burnt milk in the coffee, and the jelly refusing to set; but one learns... Meat – a solid chunk of lean meat, a most delicious roast (weighing 3 of 4 lbs) costing 8/80 (= 50 or 60p), i.e. about 2 of 3/- a lb! The Easter Sunday service was really good, and I really felt close in spirit (so to speak) with the service at Legbourne: exactly the same hymns (only in ki-Dabida), and with a three hour time difference, we probably took communion at about the same time, as though we started at 10:30 am, we didn't get to the Eucharist until about 1 o'clock! Easter lunch of Roast Cock, to which Peter also came. Then the excitement of the day: the last leg of the East African Safari Rally – Nairobi through Taita to the coast, and back again through Taita! We heard on the radio that the cars had left Nairobi at 1 pm. At 4 pm we heard the press / TV planes flying over. We then sighted the first car and rushed up to Espy's corner to watch them come through (at intervals). Very dramatic – many of them got it wrong: a hairpin bend unexpectedly uphill. Cars braked, skidding from side to side, slewed round, all but coming to a halt in clouds of dust, changed gear, and went on up towards Wundanyi. Joginder Singh, the winner, was second to pass through.

I got up at 04:30 this morning. Sunrise walk to Wundanyi, OTC to Voi, arriving there at 08:30, just before the rally was due to pass through Taita the other way. I hitch-hiked, and an MG sports car picked me up at 9 am. We were in Nairobi at 11.30! Cruising along at 100 to 110 mph we were *just* ahead of the Safari cars until, about 100 miles from Nairobi, the leaders overtook us – lights flashing, horns blaring, racing at 130 to 140 mph! We then overtook them again as they detoured to go to Machakos (see map). We streaked into the city, just ahead, mistaken by some for a safari car – we were given rounds of applause and some films were taken! It was a hair-raising last 30 miles, as much and unruly traffic was coming the other way. I stood on Uhuru Highway at 12 noon to greet the winning cars! PS I shall be returning to the above address on April 22nd – please could you reply as soon as possible to that address?

Letter to my parents, 24 April 1974

Letter to my parents, written from Nairobi, Wednesday 24 April 1974:

I have just received your letter dated April 20th – super to hear from you so soon after writing! I'm sorry about the sudden cold and hope your has now fully cleared. I've been experiencing (for this country) extremes of temperature. First, we had a very enjoyable and worthwhile YSA conference up at Limuru (just at the foot of the Aberdares). We used the Limuru Girls School as a centre – height of 7,000 to 8,000 ft, English architecture (with Latin inscriptions); not only were the views in every direction very European, but even the weather was similar to

a poor English summer: rain each night, mists in the morning, and though there was an open-air swimming pool, one felt disinclined to stay in the water for long! The Conference itself was really good. It was wonderful to meet many 'old' friends, as well as making new ones. It was fascinating to share our experiences of Africa: enthusiasm, frustrations, problems. Some of the other Harambee schools sounded even more disorganised than Mgalu (last term), and one group of YSAs had had difficulties with their Headmaster. Chris L was there (with his guitar), thoroughly enjoying himself as usual, also 'Beth and Julia' (whom I met at the CMS selection conference in April last year) were there – two graduates who have come to Kenya to 'sing the gospel' around the Nakuru Diocese – very much welcomed wherever they go; they are certainly highly talented musicians (I had a long talk with them). The days were filled with informal topical discussions, Bible studies, travellers' tales, practical hints, a CMS film on Kenya, and a 'concert' of music and sketches in which we all took part. Also I was a member of the panel for an 'Any Questions' Brains Trust session. I found it quite difficult, in some instances, to think up relevant and interesting answers on the spur of the moment. But it went well – some very good questions, relating particularly to YSA experiences, African culture, Christian doctrine and ethics – the more controversial subjects were thrown open to the floor for discussion.

Friday (19th) – day in Nairobi and then the night express down to Mombasa, with half a dozen other YSAs who are hoping to get up to Lamu by *dhow*! Travelled 2nd class. The journey was a terrific experience; when it grew light in the morning we were right in the middle of the bush, with the sun rising out of the Eastern horizon. Breakfast was announced by a waiter pacing up and down the corridors striking a xylophone! I had a very adequate meal (for a low price), with excellent service, in a dining car which must be a bit like those of British Rail 30 years ago! Mombasa was gloriously hot. I spent the first two nights with the O's at CITC. For some of the time I joined up with the other YSAs, and together we explored much of the Old Arab Town, including the Harbour, from which *dhow*s leave for Dar-es-Salaam, Lamu and Arabia – reminiscent, I am told, of Venice. We visited Fort Jesus, built by the Portuguese to protect the Town from Arab invasion from the sea. Fascinating; architecture completely different from anything you could find in England. We managed to get across the bridge to Nyali on Sunday afternoon. We swam in bright evening sunshine in a stormy sea, with a high and incoming tide. Some of the waves which crashed on to the shore were almost too powerful for 'surfing', and frequently I found myself knocked clean over, propelled through the churning waters and almost thrown on to shore! Still, it was all very exhilarating and great fun. In the evening I met a couple of VSO's who are out in Kenya for two years. One of them, Paul, is teaching at a Harambee school near Mombasa, and may come up to the Taita Hills at the end of May.

On Monday I stayed with the Very Revd Desmond G, who is the Provost of Mombasa Cathedral, and who lives in a large Diocesan house, beyond the Cathedral and fairly near Fort Jesus. The S's are also staying there, as Lyn has just had a baby (on April 17th) at the Katherine Bibby Hospital next door. It's a boy, and they have named him Mark, and both Lyn and the baby are in good health! It was Desmond's day off, so he took me to Nyali beach at low tide to do some goggling. A terrific experience! We waded through the shallows with a rubber dinghy, until we found some outcrops of rock and coral (the reef itself was just too far away), put on underwater masks with breathing tubes, and glided under water, observing beautiful outgrowths of coral and shoals of highly coloured fishes. We came out from the bright waters and fierce sunshine at around 12:30 pm, and then had lunch (as previously arranged) with the British High Commissioner (Deputy) at a luxurious house just off the beach. The Chairman of the British Council and the RN Liaison Officer were, amongst others, also present. The contrast between this kind of society, and that of the rural Africans in whose houses I have stayed, was startling in many ways, and enabled me to see things in a completely different light. The evening was spent at the Chairman of the British Council's house at a 'Gramophone Society' meeting, listening to classical music (the first time I have really listened, for many months): the programme included some Elgar, Bruch's 1st Violin Concerto and Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, on a high-powered stereo record player. A very successful evening.

I returned to the Taita Hills the next day, by bus – the hills had had a lot of rain. At one point along the mud road the bus got stuck – we all baled out and had to push-start it, for some reason, uphill! I came up to Nairobi yesterday with the W's, to go to a week's conference with the Trinity Fellowship (equivalent of Fountain Trust in UK), entitled 'Charismatics at Work Convention', and taking place at Lenana School on the Ngong road out of Nairobi. I'm not exactly sure what we'll be in for, but in the words of the programme, the purpose is as follows: "To understand more clearly what the Holy Spirit is doing and saying throughout the world today; to share teaching on the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life; and to help Christians enter into their ministries and develop in the spiritual gifts." It sounds very high-powered I know, but I think the teaching should help me see the Christian life, and the work to which I may be called in the future, in a fuller and more balanced perspective.

This ends on May 1st, after which I'll probably have to return to the Taita Hills to collect mail – I have still had no reply from the H's at Lusaka, so that at the moment Zambia is uncertain. I think at all events, after the conference, I shall try to get over to the West to see Peter White at Chulaimba, near Kisumu. This morning – more *shauri* (business) with Central Bank to obtain permission to get non-East African travellers' cheques (quite a business!), and then I'm meeting John C for lunch, and he'll drive me to Lenana, as the Conference begins this afternoon at 2 pm. More news and further developments in plans in my next!

May 1974

Letter to my parents, 2 May 1974

Letter to my parents from Taita, Thursday 2 May 1974

Thank you very much for your letter of April 28th which has just arrived. It's good to know that all seems well at home (and that you're rid of the cold!) – as this has been a pretty traumatic day one way or another. I received a letter this morning from Mrs H (from Luanshya) saying that the flight booked and paid for me was due to depart this very afternoon, 2nd May! Her letter was dated 11th April, and it had arrived here on April 19th. But when I called in at the Post Office for the mail on April 23rd (after I had returned from Mombasa), I was led to understand that all my mail had been collected for me by the W's, and I received both of your letters via them. In fact, as it turned out, they had only collected half of my mail; the rest, including Mrs H's letter and official letters from Zambian Airways, had been collected by the school secretary. This doesn't usually happen during holiday-time and I was not told about this. Mr W saw my predicament, and as he was going to Wundanyi, he took me, so that I could telephone the office in Nairobi to try to book a later flight. Then it turned out that the telephone lines were down! As Mr W saw the utmost importance of contacting the Nairobi office before my flight departed (14:25, because my ticket had been prepaid), he very kindly took me to Voi, where – after nearly 2 hours – I managed to book a place on the next possible flight to Lusaka – on May 8th. As it stands, this is not very satisfactory, as I'm probably returning on May 11th and this only gives me three days in Zambia. However, I'm leaving for Nairobi first thing tomorrow morning, I'll go to the Zambian Airways Office and try to press for an earlier flight there (May 5th or 6th, which was my original intention), and perhaps a later flight back. (This may mean missing the first day or so of term, but these are usually pretty inactive, and I feel I should do my best to stay with the H's for longer, as they've done so much to make my journey possible.) So this is the situation as it stands. I just pray that events will turn out favourably.

The Conference went well and I felt it was really worthwhile. It was held at Lenana School, between Nairobi and Ngong, in a beautiful setting of forest, flowers and green fields. However it was very cold at times! We had rain most evenings, and they were really no different from April evenings in England! There were a lot of young people there: American, Canadian or British, the latter being on VSO, though there was one other YSA, Kay T from Kisumu. One of the VSO volunteers was John M, who has just completed

Engineering at Cambridge (Sidney Sussex), so we had long conversations, and he gave me some useful tips about Cambridge life. There were also overseas missionaries from other parts of the country. The Conference was run by the Trinity Fellowship, an inter-denominational organisation based near Kisumu, so the staff were for the most part African. The spiritual side was valuable. The talks were given by a variety of people – one a missionary from Dar-es-Salaam, another on tour from America. Their purpose was to instruct as well as to inspire – and I think they did both. It was certainly good to hear uncompromising and clearly reasoned teaching, related both to the Scriptures and to present-day Christian experience. It was also exciting to see, in times of corporate worship, and the Communion itself, denominational, social, national and colour barriers almost completely broken down. This, I felt, was the much desired ‘Ecumenity’ (is that the right word?) not so much preached in theory as actually put into practice. The conference ended yesterday, and we returned to Taita then. I will write again from Nairobi before I leave for Zambia. PS Owing to the fuel crisis, BUSA needs £10 for my return ticket. Please could you forward the amount to BUSA Ltd, 21 Queens House, Leicester Place, off Leicester Square, LONDON WC2?

Letter from Elaine H to my mother, 13 May 1974

Letter from Mrs Elaine H, written from 90 Funyama Avenue, Luanshya, Zambia, to my mother dated 13 May 1974:

My dear Mary, As I sit down to write this to you, your very charming son should be back at his bush school deep in the turmoil that usually accompanies the beginning of a new term, as I believe school started for the Kenya children today, as it has done for ours here. I hope he is not too tired after his whirlwind visit to us – achieved after a series of crossed messages, postal delays that can hardly be credible, and undelivered telexes and telegrams – added to all these obstacles was the fact that the school secretary played it ultra-safe with Adrian's post, and he did not receive his air ticket till a fortnight after it had arrived at the school and so did not know what arrangements had been made for his travelling to Zambia. When Adrian had finally caught up with affairs it was impossible for him to leave Nairobi as arranged, so he had the trouble of contacting the Zambian airline office in Nairobi to re-arrange the times and dates of his journey, and sent us a telegram to say he would be arriving on the 8th instead of the 2nd as expected. As he was due to return on the 11th to be back in time for the first day of term, it did not give him much time to be with us, or to see much of Zambia as the distances here are calculated in hundreds of miles quite literally.

On the night of the 4th we had arranged a small dinner party with friends in the expectation of Adrian being with us, to look at some of the slides our friends had taken on their many travels overseas and in Africa, as we thought this was a way of giving Adrian an impression of the country – albeit second-hand – and a basis for comparison between the totally different ways of life. We carried on with the arrangement in spite of the fact that Adrian was not to be with us after all, although we had met the plane he should have been on in N'Dola the night of the 2nd; and again the first plane in from Lusaka the following morning in case he had been left behind there, hung up by Customs and Immigration formalities which is a frequent occurrence here – so we had resigned ourselves to seeing him on the 8th as stated in his telegram which arrived much later on the 3rd, but not before Zambia Airways had sent off signals to Nairobi enquiring about Adrian and his whereabouts. So, as I said, we went off to our dinner party on the 4th and returned about midnight with the temperature falling rapidly as a prelude to a spell of rain and cold – most unusual for this part of the world as our rainy season ended long ago.

To our surprise (which is putting it mildly), a long shadow untangled itself from the pillar near the front door, and seemed to be rising out of a haversack on the ground. It was Adrian who had been waiting on the doorstep for about four hours for our return, having arrived earlier than his telegram indicated, and been fortunate enough to find a kind stranger at the airport who was travelling to Kitwe (some 32 miles west of Luanshya), who

was willing to take a 16 mile detour into Luanshya and find the house before dropping Adrian off and going on his way! There are no buses at that time of night and taxis are not easily found either, nor are they very safe for a variety of reasons – so I am very grateful to Adrian’s unknown benefactor who knew local conditions better than Adrian could have imagined, as he is still very idealistic and trusting of humanity. I fear he will think us beyond redemption with our views on local politics and practical living in the circumstances of Africa in rapid change and transition. However, he will have much to think about this last term in the Hills, which he says he is looking forward to as a grand finale to his African experience prior to his going up to Cambridge in September. Maurice and Graeme took him to Livingstone to see the Falls and at least have a look at the border between us and Rhodesia, and to see the spot where two Canadian girls were shot and killed by trigger happy Zambian troops, and their American companions kept under probing fire for four hours till night fell and they could be rescued. The day before Maurice left the Zambians shot and killed a Rhodesian policeman in a police launch patrolling the Rhodesian waters of the Zambesi river and well within his territorial waters. This is not the first time this has happened – in fact this is the fourth incident that we know of, but Rhodesians are expendable, so not much is said in the press, and the local paper says the authorities have no official report, so it did not happen!

You will be glad to know that Adrian is well and seems happy – longing to get back to the family in due time, but seems to have made the most of his time in these parts lest he should not return for a long time. We were so glad he could spare us the time to cram in this hurried visit to us, and to have had the opportunity of meeting him – the only member of your family I have met so far! Space once again defeats, but I hope all is well with you and yours, and the coming of spring will put a new and more cheerful complexion on things. Love and best wishes, Elaine.

Letter to my parents, 17 May 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Friday 17 May 1974:

I hope you are well. No letters since April 28th, but I expect I’ll get a letter before this reaches you. Have you written between April 28th and May 12th? I’m afraid posts are so erratic these days: the Kireti bus (ferrying post from Voi to Mbale-Dabida and vice versa) came to grief the other day. Two of its wheels came off (I think) at Mwanguvi, a mile away, and I’m not sure whether it’s on the road again yet. In the mean time, Felix Kireti is supposed to collect mail from Voi by Land Rover – which he does, only I’m not sure how often. I hope you received my double letter written in the plane coming back from Zambia. It certainly *was* an experience and made quite a revealing contrast to Kenya. Though I did not unfortunately have the chance really to meet the people of Zambia, I got the impression that her culture is basically non-Christian, truer to the genuine tribal culture of Africa than seems to be the case here in Kenya; and that the native traits of character lie much closer to the surface. Infiltration by the Europeans, including some exploitation, and probably unsuccessful missionary activity may well have been the cause for much bitterness among themselves, and a lack of friendliness (if not hostility) towards strangers. So in a sense, from the point of view of culture and local atmosphere, though I very much enjoyed staying with the H’s, I’ve found it quite a relief to be back.

Harry C met me at the Air Terminal, after we had landed at Nairobi, and after a night at the C’s, I took the OTC bus to Wundanyi. I met the S’s there – who have just returned from Mombasa with the baby – a boy, MARK – they very kindly took my suitcase down with them in the car, while I walked down to Mbale where I received a warm welcome from Peter, and then the W’s. The term has now started properly. We have a *complete* change of staff – barring Peter and myself; and including a member who hasn’t yet arrived, only two of us are scientists (compare the Christmas term, when all of us were scientists!) So I started off by having a very heavy teaching load, but following advice about not trying to do too much, I’ll manage to pass on some of my periods, so that I now have 30: Maths

Forms IA, II and III, Physics III, Chemistry IA and RE Form IV. I have, of necessity, surrendered the English with Form IV. Aggrey O is no longer with us – by order from the Bishop, because of his irresponsibility last term. I'm now sharing the house with a very nice person (who is a Christian) called Rastor (or Rastus) N. He is an mGiriama, i.e. from the coast near Mombasa, a VIth form leaver in History, Swahili and RK [Religious Knowledge]. Last term he was teaching at a Harambee school near Mombasa, sharing a house with Paul G, a VSO whom I know, having met him twice in Mombasa – small world!

I was out of action, Wednesday and yesterday, suffering from exhaustion – the result of last term and a month's non-stop activity and travel. However I feel much refreshed now to start the term properly, and intend, physically, to take things easier in any case. I'm just going to see the hostel students, to escort them from the school to the hostels (after they have finished prep). Yesterday night, on the way back from Wundanyi after seeing a play, some of our girls were molested by students from Aggrey High School, and I think there may be further trouble this weekend if we don't keep a lookout. *April* salary arrives on May 21st! Tomorrow, Saturday, will be fairly occupied as there's a Training Day for Christian Union leaders and staff sponsors for the Taita District, up at Wundanyi. Mr W has invited the travelling secretaries for Scripture Union and KSCF to come and lead the conference. Please pass important news on to my siblings, as – though I shall be writing to them soon – I can only find time to write in full to you both. More news (and views) in my next...

Letter to my parents, 22 May 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 22 May 1974:

Thank you for your letter dated May 7th. I regret that it only reached me on the 20th May, but the reason is quite apparent: on the back is a big, round postal stamp, dated May 13th, and labelled MBALE-UGANDA! Would you believe it (I would!) The "Mbale-Dabida" label should be a safeguard. I hope that subsequent letters do not / have not gone the same way. Lovely to hear about the kittens – any increase on 3? Have you thought up suitable names? Hook, line and sinker; lock, stock and barrel...? And the swallows – the year is beginning to turn full circle. I still haven't been asked to fix a date for my flight back, but I shall aim for between August 20th and 30th. Kilimanjaro plans are beginning to take shape. The Marangu Hotel is booking huts and guides for us for the five day ascent beginning on August 13th, and we have been offered accommodation before and after the climb in the Marangu Bible College, at a cost 5/- per night (which saves the impossibility of paying 70/- a night in the Marangu or Kibo hotels). The number of applicants is now 15.

The news this week is not wildly exciting, compared to previous weeks. The term has sort-of got under way, with the inevitable staffing and administrative upheavals, resulting in some disorganisation. New teachers seem to arrive almost every day – most of them completely different people to those Peter was told, by the Bishop, were coming. I spent Tuesday afternoon completely redrafting the time-table for the term: I am now 31 periods per week (as only two of us are scientists), teaching 21 periods of Maths (14 with Form I's, both streams), Physics two classes, Chemistry and RE.

On Saturday we had a CU leaders Training Day at Wundanyi, with the travelling secretaries for SU and KSCF as the main speakers. The morning's arrangements proved to be a good illustration of the Africans' attitude to time. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 10 am. Our Mgalu delegation, therefore, had to leave here at 9. However, it took staff members 15 minutes to decide to get the students together (five of them), and a further half an hour chasing them up before we were even on the road. Thus we left just before 10 and reached Wundanyi just before 11 am. In my inexperience, I thought we would be hopelessly late, and would have missed important items in the programme. When we arrived we found that nothing happened for another half an hour – because everybody else was over an hour late! It is a fact that punctuality, planning and efficiency mean so much less to Africans than to Europeans, whereas I feel that people mean more. I hope I don't find it too difficult to

readjust when I come back – it's easy to forget how important time is: I don't think I've taught many lessons this term without – usually of necessity – arriving in the class room between 5 and 10 minutes late!

I was on duty this week – so there was a fair amount of work. On Monday, I go to a one-day Science Teaching Seminar at Kenyatta High School, Mwatate. PS Yesterday the Chairman and Treasurer of the Mombasa Diocesan Committee arrived to collect school fees. I was paid my *April* salary – with many apologies for the delay!

Letter to my parents, 29 May 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 29 May 1974:

Very many thanks for your lovely long letter which arrived here on Friday 24th May. Thank you also for the letter from Cambridge, and the form which I have just filled in and am returning today. I have enclosed 3 passport-photographs, which were taken at Inverness nearly 2 years ago (I hope they'll be OK) just before my interview at Clare. It seems so strange, all the Cambridge names and correspondence (e.g. DR C H FEINSTEIN) suddenly coming back to life again, after lying fallow for 18 months! It certainly *is* exciting! Concerning accommodation, I have asked for a 'Set', with separate bedroom and sitting room, with rent slightly above average – I think it's worth the extra £5 to £10 per term, rather than being in a bedsitter. I have also asked for details about (1) Choral singing; (2) Playing timpani in the orchestra; (3) CICCUC; (4) Rowing. Term begins (for freshers) on October 4th – Friday.

Other news is that YSA volunteers have been asked to attend a de-briefing conference at Foxbury, Chislehurst from Monday 16th September to Wednesday 18th September. This is for all of us who will have just returned from Kenya. I've said I'll be able to attend; presumably we'll be back from Scotland by then?

News from here. On Saturday there was a Christian Union meeting at Aggrey High School, Wundanyi (for all CU's in the area), at which the main speakers were Mr and Mrs F, missionaries from Nakuru (whom I met at the Lenana Convention) – who were staying with the W's. I spent the evening with them on Sunday. I also met (staying with the F's) an American Methodist missionary from India, who had come to Kenya to get away from the heat (necessary every year for the six weeks before the rains); I had a fascinating conversation – India sounds a completely different mission field, much tougher in many respects!

On Monday I attended a Coast Province Science Teachers Seminar at Kenyatta High School Mwatate – which (though I thought at first would not be worthwhile) I found *most* interesting. It was run by the British Council (with a scientist from Nairobi) – and an American couple came with video-tapes etc. We were shown TV tapes of two different science lessons taught by Kenyans: one using the traditional approach, and the other using SSP (modern technique) – we discussed and compared their merits and failings. A video-tape was made of our discussion, to be sent to the Science Teachers Training College in Nairobi. Teachers from Murray, Aggrey and other Taita schools were present. Also the famous Mr Noble (with the squeaky voice) – Provincial Government Inspector; also Mr Newton, Chairman of the British Council, Mombasa. The BC Library has just donated 100 to 150 second-hand books to our library! So I have been busy. Work at school is going ahead well: toolkits and hardboard etc. taken out from the UK are beginning to prove their worth in practical demonstrations in Physics lessons.

June 1974

Letter to my parents, 5 June 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 5 June 1974:

Thank you very much for both of your letters which arrived together on May 31st. Lovely to hear all news. First, about the date for my return. I've just received news from the Marangu Hotel to say that my intended dates for starting the climb have got booked (a case of double-booking? Mismanagement somewhere) and they can only offer me either August 10th or 17th for *starting* the climb – with a possibility of August 15th. They asked me to cable a reply. So I went up to Wundanyi first thing this morning (having received the letter yesterday), and sent a telegram asking them to book for 15 climbers to start, if possible, on August 15th, or otherwise definitely August 17th. (The 10th is no good, as we break up on August 9th.) I have yet to get a reply, but assuming we start on 17th, that means 17th to 21st climbing, 22nd Marangu to Taita Hills, 23rd (if I'm packed in time), Taita to Nairobi, which means my earliest date back will be 24th. I see in my diary that that's bank holiday weekend. CMS haven't asked me for the dates, but I will probably choose August 25th or 26th (or thereabouts). Will this be OK? I'm sorry it's difficult to make an earlier return, but I expect a lot of things that need to be done can wait till after Inverpolly.

Fairly eventful weekend. Saturday June 1st was MADARAKA DAY – the third of Kenya's national days, celebrating the time when Kenya first got self-government (in 1963). I went up to Wundanyi, arriving there late (in true African style) to find that the Presidential Speech had already been read! However I managed to find a printed English copy – a good speech all about the coming elections, and using local production to combat inflation. There were then the usual church choirs singing, in turn – both national and Christian songs. There was then a short demonstration of traditional tribal dancing – about 25 old ladies shuffling round in a circle to the hypnotic rhythm of drums, uttering strange wailings, and waving their arms in the air. Far removed, I'm afraid, from the colourful glamour of many people's idea of national dancing. This, I was told, had tribal religious overtones, and it was all rather sinister and repulsive. One woman was as if almost 'possessed' – she wouldn't stop shaking, even when friends helped her away from the shuffling circle of aged dancers. No one under about 60 taking part – a reminder, I was told, of Africa's past. After that we were able to laugh as we watched the world-famous Taita Hills sugar-cane eating competition – to see who could chew his way through an 18 inch stick of cane fastest. One of our students came second. Finally football: men versus women. The men had hands tied behind their backs as a handicap. Many of the chiefs and government officials were playing!

I went up to see the S's in the evening – not having really seen them since Mark's arrival. They invited me to stay for supper, as Julius and Vivian R were coming (Julius owns the Wundanyi bookshop and is a lay reader at Mbale church). We had a wonderful evening, with King-fish steak and chips, listening to music and having long conversations while we did the washing up. The next day I came up again for tea – as it was Iain's fourth birthday. Miss C and Peter M were there as well. Mark's christening is on June 23rd at Wusi (near Murray High School). Peter and I have been invited, and to stay on to lunch with Miss C afterwards.

The weather here is bitterly cold (or am I just not used to it?) Yesterday I wore a jersey while teaching, the whole day! Even at 12 noon it was too cold to take it off. Today it has been warmer, but I am wearing a jersey now! Quite a lot of rain, plenty of mist and clouds. You'll be glad to hear that – at last – my folding piece of wood, which I took out from Britain, is doing a useful job. I have drawn squares (2½ inch x 2½ inch) with a felt tip pen, and stuck drawing pins at the corners, and I am using it with Maths Form I to demonstrate the principles of co-ordinate geometry, using coloured elastic bands. Great fun, and the students seemed thrilled with it! Rastor has just returned from Mombasa, with cheese,

mangoes-as-big-as-melons (scrumptious) and flash-cubes: I hope to get slides of me actually teaching.

Letter to my parents, 19 and 20 June 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 19 June and Thursday 20 June 1974:

Only time to start a letter this evening, as the fellowship meeting (at the S's) last night made us very late to bed, so early bed tonight! Also, last night was quite a novel experience, as I huddled under two blankets, reluctant to keep my head above the bedclothes because it was so cold – getting up this morning was like December in Britain! - a painful reminder that soon I shall be leaving behind me the (normal) Heat of Africa. Strange weather – with very sudden rises and falls of temperature. Last night too I'm afraid the sub-chief of Mbale Location died, so there was much wailing, and many crowds during today.

Thank you very much for your letter of June 9th, arriving here on 18th. I'm sorry that the RAINS have hit you as well. Here we've been getting much more settled, routine rain and mists, rather than the violent cloudbursts and storms which characterise the short rains of November / December. And what fun about the Orfes! How orfe-ul if they were to die – but being optimistic, orfe' ink they'll be alright – unless birds or feathered friends happen to be around – or-failing that the cats could see them orfe. Orfe' ink orfe finished for tonight (or I'll f-orfe-it much needed hours of sleep trying to think orfe more!)

20 June 1974 – an eventful day (Thursday). Emergency staff meeting called during the lunch break, as we had a take decisive action against a difficult staff member who has been creating friction in staff relationships, flaunting the authority of the Headmaster (and therefore the Bishop), and (in writing) resigning from all extracurricular duties. (He teaches under 20 periods anyway.) He really is a fool, to seal his own fate by signing a letter to that effect, and then giving it to the Headmaster. Following unanimous agreement by other members of staff, Peter is going to Mombasa with the letter, together with a Memorandum (which I had a type laboriously this afternoon) from staff members asking (for the benefit of students and staff alike) for his removal from the school. He clearly is a difficult case, having been recently transferred from A to B to C to D because of problems he has brought to schools to which he has been posted. News came through this morning that Miss Evelyn M is to be transferred to Mwaghogho – in the Memorandum we requested that she be retained, seeing (as Mr K put it) she has the interests of the students and the community at heart.

I'm not too involved in staff inter-relationships this term, as it has happened that for all but 5 periods a week I am teaching either Form I's or Form III, which are all away from the school compound. (Form III is in the W's' garden, and Form I's are up at Maynard Hall.) Friday evening: Christian Union, to which members of the Trinity Fellowship (on tour from Nairobi) came to speak. (Two I had met before at the Lenana Conference). Thus the meeting was made compulsory for the whole school. Saturday afternoon: I walked up to Wundanyi with Mr K to watch Mgalu football team play against St John's Mganganika. They were rather a wet lot, not least of all the goalie, and Mgalu pulled through to a triumphant 4 – 1 victory. I had a long talk with Mr K. He is at the Makerere University of Kampala, and he returns there for his final year tomorrow. He hopes to go to Cambridge for further post-graduate studies in 1976. His younger brother goes up to Leeds university this year.

A fairly steady week, but with very few moments to spare – masses of books to mark, every night – about 70 piled up beside me right now! Still, Maths doesn't take too long to mark. Tea with the S's on Monday; home-made scones made (partly) by the children. Mark's christening is on Sunday. The W's have returned from Nairobi without a new car, which they were hoping to buy – they still have the off-white Renault 6! I received a very full letter from R-J, mainly about the Lent Mission with David Watson (writer of "My God is

Real”), which apparently was a great success. Half term is from June 27th to July 2nd. I am going to be staying with the O’s at CITC, Mombasa – a welcome break, as it will be the first time out of the Taita Hills for seven weeks.

Letter to my parents, 26 June 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 26 June 1974:

Thank you very much for your lovely long letter which came the other day (I’ve lost count of the days – they go so quickly!) What fun about the VIP plane coming into Binbrook! And Legbourne tribal dancing! I’ve just had a circular letter from John R, asking me to give 1st and 2nd choices of dates to fly back. BUSA are chartering only East African Airways flights for Wednesdays: Take off at 11:00 am and landing at Heathrow at 6 pm the same day. So I’ve requested Wednesday August 28th (with a second choice September 4th – with a note to say ‘please not if possible’). This means that if all goes according to plan, I’ll be arriving in London at 6 pm on Wednesday August 28th. Then, if someone came to meet me, we could drive up to Legbourne either that evening or on Thursday, and I could join you for August 30th Friday – perhaps a bit of a rush, but for my part – believe me, I’m used to it!

Talking about rush – a very, very full week, and a lot to write home about. I feel I’d just love to write a good long letter, but it’s 10 past 9 pm already, the day began at 6 am – so I’ll have to call it a day fairly soon. Half-term tomorrow. I leave by Kireti bus at 3.30 pm (after school), and catching a Mombasa bus at Voi at 6, I hope to spend the night at Taru (between Voi and Mombasa) with David J, an extremely nice VSO volunteer (who has been out for 2 years – and also returns on August 28th!) Mombasa Friday, Saturday, Sunday, staying with the O’s at CITC. Back here on Monday, bringing I hope some Science Kit from the British Council. It’s going to be interesting seeing town life and ‘modern civilisation’ again – this’ll be the first time away from here in seven weeks! I expect I’ll get time to write again from Mombasa.

Friday evening: after a very busy week’s work. Jackson was sent to Iriwa to buy eggs in the morning, and then did not show up the rest of the day. In the evening a student informed me he was down at Mdongondongo with a swollen leg, unable to move. After examination by Mrs W, he was taken up to Wesu hospital. He was later diagnosed as having a carbuncle, or multiple boil – which causes excruciating pain. He is still there now. So this week we’ve had to manage without domestic help. (Have you ever tried fried bananas? Very nice with fried eggs, onions and salt!)

Saturday was Catharine’s birthday – the W’s invited me to join them for a picnic lunch and expedition. This time we went ‘down’ into the Mbale valley – as it was too cold and cloudy to go up. We entered a wonderful stretch of a real rural Africa – seemingly untouched by the outside world. Steep slopes of shale-rock, dry bush and cactus, inhabited only by a few farmers living in mud/grass thatch huts. Just across the valley from us – as we had our picnic – was a glade of green grass, with a herd of cows grazing: a herdsman, sitting nearby, played a curious one-stringed instrument, amplified by a gourd, and – as the wind stilled – the air was haunted by a three-noted melody; as it filled the valley, it had an almost timeless quality – a glimpse of the real old Africa which seems slowly to be passing away. An incredible life: just looking after cows day after day, playing three notes, and waiting for the maize to grow!

Sunday was a very special day, as Robert Mark S was christened at Murray High School Chapel, Wusi. The Baptism service was conducted in Swahili and Mark was baptised by Archdeacon Jeremiah K – I followed in the 1662 Prayer Book. Godparents are Mr O, David J (the VSO), and Miss C, who was holding the baby – he kept peering over her shoulder, wide-eyed, in a rather engaging manner! At the moment of Baptism the Archdeacon spoke the words in Ki-Taita (a wonderful touch). This was followed by Holy Communion conducted in English by Mr W. Lunch at Miss C’s house afterwards, and a

relaxed afternoon – conversation and photographs. Tea by candle-light and in front of a roaring fire (mid-winter!) with the christening cake.

Busy week again. Miss Evelyn M has been transferred, and the other member of staff (in question) has *not*: when the Bishop makes a decision, he does *not* change his mind! Tuesday morning was spent completely redrafting the time-table, as a new teacher has arrived to replace Evelyn. Fortunately, none of my subjects have been altered. I got a letter from Dan Hearn the other day, who sounds in good form. Haileybury continues to thrive. Wonderful to hear from him; I look forward to seeing Haileybury friends when I return (I was thinking of dropping in on my way back from the debriefing conference at Foxbury – perhaps). Have the slides arrived?

July 1974

Letter to my parents, 3 July 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 3 July 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter dated June 22nd, which arrived when I returned from half-term. I've read the Cambridge letter. I understood that the O and A-level certificates were to be sent only if a candidate was accepted *on condition* of passing certain specified exams. These certificates were to show that conditions had been fulfilled.

Well! Talk about rush – it's well and truly back into non-stop activity as the term launches into the second half. Half-term was fun – I stayed with Ken and Betty O down at Mombasa. Last Thursday afternoon, I came out of the last lesson and leaped aboard the Kireti bus, reaching Voi at 5:30. I met Peter coming back from Mombasa, a bit dejected – *without* our June salaries! They are now due on July 9th (!) - something I've learned to live with. I've written personally to the Bishop asking him to send my July *and* August salaries before the end of the month, so that I'll have enough money for a trip to Western Kenya, and for Kilimanjaro. I boarded a Mombasa bus, and reached Taru at 6:30 pm, just before dark. I had a very pleasant evening with Dave J and Granville (a Scotsman 'freelancer'). I saw a bit of the school the next morning. Though in the bush, in all respects the school is streaks ahead of Mgalu. Pre-fab buildings left by the Yugoslavs from a rail-maintenance station, Headmistress a nun, sister Margarita. Discipline superb, resulting efficiency very apparent.

Friday to Monday in Mombasa. Not, on the whole, very active days: a lot of sleeping, conversation, reading – emphasis really on rest which I felt I really needed – after seven weeks teaching without a let-up, and six more facing me now! On Friday evening, I was hauled in (very willingly) into the Cathedral Choir by Ray, the Choirmaster (a VSO), and we practised the hymns for Sunday in four parts (I was bass!) Just like old times! Also, on Friday evening, Ken J, teacher at Shimo-la-Tewa, 10 miles up the coast, and a close friend of those at CITC, had a heart-attack. A phone call came through, and we were all asked to pray for him. As a result he quite suddenly recovered, and even by the time the doctor reached Shimo, he was perfectly OK. He was kept in hospital over the weekend, as a precaution though!

The Saturday night Christian fellowship meeting took place at the J's at Shimo. On Saturday morning I took a long walk 'round the island', or part thereof – following the coast-line past the golf course and the Oceanic Hotel (I expect you know that part of Mombasa, Dad?) and as far as the Likoni ferry, on the south side of the island. Beautiful to watch the sea breaking on the rocks – knowing that in two months I shall (I hope) be watching the (very much colder) sea breaking on rocks in Scotland! On Sunday evening I sang at evensong / Holy Communion in the cathedral. Afterwards, evening at the O's with Paul (VSO at Rabai), Di (VSO at Kaloleni) and Ki (VSO nurse at Tana river) – very interesting to meet others who are having similar experiences, though most VSOs are on two to three year contracts.

On Monday I picked up the KSTC Physics kit, on loan from the British Council, intending to take it with me on the Mbale bus. I reached the bus station to find that it had broken down and wasn't running! So, morning at Mombasa, and OTC at 2 o' clock. *Very* slow journey, and when we reached Voi, I had missed the Kireti bus (going to Wundanyi the Mbale way). So I stayed on board, and we got to Wundanyi at 8:30 pm (1½ hours late) – faced with a three mile journey, in the dark, carrying a rucksack *and* a case full of science kit! Fortunately a student was on the bus, and he brought the kit down the next morning, and (that evening) escorted me almost back to Mbale – a beautiful moonlit night. I went straight to the W's (by previous arrangement) – I had been expected back much earlier, but they had a good meal ready for me! (Very welcome, too!)

Yesterday Mr N and I experimented with the science kit with the Mgalu Scientific Society. Today – duty master – involved in punishing latecomers by getting them to bring stones for the new school building. Also, a long letter from Robert T (from Haileybury) – refreshing to hear from home, here in the middle of Africa! I'm really looking forward to seeing all friends again when I come back...

Letter to my parents, 10 and 11 July 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 10 July and Thursday 11 July 1974:

Thank you very much for your letter of July 2nd – *lovely* to hear all news. Thank you too for sending the Clare College Cambridge, Students' Guide which arrived this afternoon. I've been reading – in snatches (over supper!) in the midst of 40 Form I Maths books on 'measuring angles in degrees' (Wow!) and 30 Form III Maths books giving the solutions of quadratic equations by graphical method (now off my hands at last!), not to mention preparation for centre of gravity and prime numbers. Certainly the booklet is most interesting, becoming increasingly relevant every day – cause for excitement! However, though, I'm greatly looking forward to coming home and being with you all once again, after now exactly 10 months out here. Don't take me seriously, but I'm getting kinda 'attached' to Africa (having got used to it at last) – and I know that when the end of my year comes, I'm going to find it sad to leave. The hills – when it stops raining – are looking *lovely* once again – fresh green and very cool. I went for a good afternoon / evening's walk on Sunday, managing to tear myself away from business-type letters concerning Mount Kilimanjaro.

Sorry, this is now written 24 hours later – my next 'free' moment (after another 50 to 60 books!) I must try to finish this tonight if possible, as tomorrow's going to be very full as well. On Sunday afternoon, after a rainy weekend, I found a new route through the hills, winding round a gloriously fresh, green, fertile valley tucked away in a fold between the hills. Belts of rain were sweeping in from the plains around Sagalla and Kasigau (in the east). In the west the sun shone briefly, before it went down – very beautiful. When I came down to Mdongo-ndongo again I met the W's who also were just returning from a Sunday afternoon's walk – they had gone a bit further along, and at one point had seen me standing meditatively on the extreme summit, rising clear above the bushes, in my bright red shirt (which has become something of a local feature!)

Apart from that, this has been a fairly uneventful, though very full, week. Our June salaries arrived on Tuesday, with many apologies – and very eloquent reasons – from the Mombasa Diocese. We had a full staff meeting after this. Mr N and I requested that we should be allowed to buy the KSTC Physics experiment kit, and they agreed. (Cost of kit + box is only Ksh 355/-; as the Government Inspector has stressed the need for science equipment, I consider that to be very reasonable). Jackson is back with us again, after having had an incision in his right leg on Monday (- hello! I think we've just had an earth tremor – the second I've noticed this year – a boom, a rumble, and some of the furniture creaking, slight vibrations.)

Social weekend ahead: Ray and Paul (VSOs from Mombasa), possibly Di, and David, Granville and Delores from Taru are coming up for the weekend, staying mainly with the S's. We hope to organise a trip up Wesu / Yale for the Saturday – and I think there's going to be a barbecue laid on at the W's on Saturday evening. Aunty Kate is coming over, and so are Harry and Liz C, the Dutch family from the Taita Farmers Training Centre, who are returning to Europe in a few days. So, quite a gathering! The next weekend, I hope if possible to stay with Rastor at his home in Kikambala, on the coast between Mombasa and Malindi. On the 27th I'm hoping to be down at Mombasa, really to say goodbye to all – as, after the end of term, I'll be heading straight for the west: Kisumu, Kericho, Nakuru, before we all join up in Nairobi for Kilimanjaro. Then, home James!

Tomorrow's another day – must break off now – I hope you can read it! PS So cold at night now that I'm using my sleeping bag as an eider-down! Also wearing a jersey for much of the time! Oh, for British summer!

Letter to my parents, 18 July 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Thursday 18 July 1974:

Already Thursday evening, and no letter written this week! I'm sorry for the delay. Thank you very much for your letter of July 8th sent from Banchory. I hope you had a lovely time there, and the Renault didn't bring too much trouble on the way down! Once again, Dad, Happy Birthday! I'm sorry the card did not come to you on time. Once again, gunwales under with schoolwork, trying to reach a proper landmark in the various syllabuses before teaching finishes (virtually) on July 29th, when school examinations begin. We are also trying to get our papers into Rhoda this week and next, so that she can make a start on the typing and duplicating – rather than having all the papers in at the last minute and have to race against the examination time-table, as last term. A lot of marking still, but teaching will now be easier, as the two Form I classes are covering 'each other's ground' in Maths – so to speak – having previously branched apart to do different chapters, because one had involved the use of Geometrical Instruments, of which there were not enough to go round both classes – very complicated! Sickness has also struck – on Tuesday Rastor, Mr N and Mrs M were in bed with a current flu virus. Peter and I were feeling a bit 'off' – and today I've had a fairly persistent headache – but I don't think I've got the bug! Jackson's mother is seriously ill – cause for some concern. He's been sending off telegrams, so that all the 'extended family' can be present.

Eventful weekend. Ray A (VSO Town Planner at Mombasa) came up Friday night, staying with the S's. Paul G (VSO teaching at Rabai) joined us on Saturday, having come up from the coast on his Yamaha 150. Unfortunately the Taru contingent were unable to come as Dave J is pretty ill – in fact he's now been admitted into the Katherine Bibby hospital (Mombasa). However we had a good day together. I showed them round Wundanyi. We were going to climb Wesu (or Yale), but it was nearly 4 pm by the time we had finished lunch (time is of no account!) and it had begun to rain. However, Paul had a friend of his teaching at St Mary's Lushangoni and wanted very much to see him. So we set off at 4:30 pm on the bike – I was acting as navigator – 7 or 8 miles by mud track, some journey! We met George M (an mKikiuyu) on the way to Mgange, at a point where we had a superb view of Vuria, and beyond, on to the plains to the Tanzania North Pare mountains – Paul was very impressed, not having been up into the hills before. We had tea, eggs etc. and conversation till about 6 pm; we started back in fine weather, but just short of Wundanyi we ran into heavy rain and the road became more and more slippery. Safely through Wundanyi, and back to Mbale – perched perilously on the back I kept asking Paul to slow down. Fortunately he did: when eventually we skidded, slithered sideways (near Mwasungia), toppled over and came off, we were going so slowly that there wasn't a scratch between us, though we got covered in mud! We arrived back safely in the driving rain and dark, and we had hot baths. Indoor 'barbecue' at the W's that evening. Harry and Liz C from the Farmers Training Centre, Peter M, just back from a CU rally at Voi – and all the children back from Turi.

Quiet weekend ahead – some time spent setting exams, I expect. Also supper with Jackson and family, up in the hills. Next weekend down at Mombasa, saying goodbye (probably) to all, and also to join in with the Christian musical ‘Come Together’ – which has an English / American origin, but which has really ‘hit the scene’ in East Africa. The W’s send you their greetings!

Letter to my parents, 25 July 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Thursday 25 July 1974:

Thank you very much for your postcard of the Dee which arrived a few days ago. What a lovely picture it is: it’s hanging on the wall in front of my desk, and is a happy reminder that soon I shall be in the Scottish hills once again. No letter from Legbourne since then, but it may arrive today. Well, guess what! It’s happened again; with unyielding regularity, the end of a Mgalu term spells sickness. I went down on Monday, after a morning’s struggle with teaching. I spent Tuesday up for a little – mainly sedentary work, averaging about 10 to 12 hours solid sleep at night (except on Monday night when I was woken up by something stirring in the room. I found it was a mouse! It had somehow got inside a plastic carrier bag!) Yesterday morning was spent entirely in bed.

The W’s returned from Mombasa on Tuesday, so Catharine came down yesterday morning, and brought some tapes of ‘Scripture in Song’ – swinging verses set to music, very relaxing. Jackson made some fresh orange juice, as we are now in the middle of the orange season. I think my sickness probably started on Sunday afternoon, when I went for a rather cold walk in the hills – even though I was wearing a coat. But I went haring up the ridge, far too quickly, getting very hot and sweaty, and then stopped at the top to talk to a lady (persuading her to make me a basket), with a keen east wind and grey clouds. I feel a bit better today, and have got up, though I’m still not well enough to teach. That has put paid to my last 4 hours syllabus teaching! Exams begin tomorrow (Friday), or is it today? I’ll have to prepare the stencils for duplication.

I’m hoping to get to Mombasa over the weekend, travelling down on Friday evening. If possible I need to go to the Diocesan office on Saturday morning to see if I can make arrangements to collect my August salary before the end of term (August 9th) – otherwise I don’t think I’ll get it at all! Also, at the Cathedral on Saturday night, there’s a very famous Christian musical (more of an Act of Worship than a presentation) called ‘Come Together!’ It originated in America, but it’s really hit the scene in East Africa. In Mombasa it is being performed mainly by members of the Nairobi Baptist Church. Through hearing tapes I now know the music off by heart. Chris with his 12-string guitar will be playing, as well as the VSOs Ray and Paul. It looks as though I shall be involved in one way or another, so that’ll be fun. Supper with the W’s tonight, as they have 2 guests, a graduate and under-graduate from Cambridge, who are out here (one’s based in Ethiopia) for short-term service.

Evening with Mr N and Mr K on Friday – real African-style meal, cooked on a charcoal *jiko*, and eaten with our bare hands. I had tea at Jackson’s house on Saturday: their family compound is about 200 feet up the ridge. Very African: mud / tin huts, and everybody – sisters, cousins, aunts, grand- and great grand-parents – all living in about three small houses. Jackson’s mother was very ill, so we all gathered in that hut to comfort her. The W’s’ 10th Wedding Anniversary on Friday. Wasn’t sure quite what metal was appropriate, but I gave them a ‘paperweight’ lump of copper ore (very colourful), which came from the mines of Luanshya. Some ideas for birthday presents (when I return)! (1) A metal Parker biro to replace the one I lost (this may have to wait till I show you); (2) a good Parker fountain pen for use at Cambridge; (3) things for Cambridge room – a colourful but artistic poster, suspendable bookshelves (I’ll wait and see); (4) a pair of scissors; (5) a good umbrella (grey). These are just a few suggestions...

Letter to my parents, 31 July 1974

Letter to my parents from Mbale, Wednesday 31 July 1974:

Thank you for your super letters which both arrived recently. So, my card arrived *on* the day, did it? Well that's a small miracle, as I didn't send it off till July 16th! Good to hear Inverpolly plans are going ahead. I've just written to confirm my bookings for Wed 28th August and see no reason why they should be changed – BUSA only operate the charter flights once per week in any case! It's good to hear about Nick W; I can't understand why we never made contact here during our time at Haileybury, when he only lives about 4 miles away – though I didn't know him all that well at school. Still, I'll put that to rights when I get back. I feel also that before I go to Cambridge I must make a trip to Nick and Eva – but final plans can wait until I return.

Well, terrific weekend – sadly my last in Mombasa! On Thursday I began to emerge from the bout of flu, and though recently (this week) I've been temporarily down again, I think it's just about out of my system at last! On Friday morning, examinations started. After a morning's work, Peter and I left for Mombasa with the S's. Peter had to collect the money for school uniforms from the Diocesan Office. Quite a journey: a Cortina station wagon, stacked with (not-very-well-packed) luggage including Werugha vegetables (very cheap) to give to Mombasa friends, and Don, Lyn, Peter and myself, Anne, Iain and the baby in his carry cot! Lunch at 2:30 at Taru, seeing Dave J once again. We also stopped at Port Reitz (near Mombasa airport) to see a retired CMS missionary, who's a friend of the S's. Then we reached CITC. A lot of comings and goings because of 'Come Together' the following day – a Christian musical (more of an Act of Worship than a presentation) performed (mainly) by members of Nairobi Baptist Church. Saturday morning was spent in town. I went into Diocesan Office. Richard M (the Administrator) assured me that the Bishop had agreed that he should bring my July *and* August salaries when he comes to Mgalu on August 2nd. So, I should have over 1,100/- (£70) to spend inn just over three weeks! An opportunity to get some super presents – for folks at home, and the families who have been so kind to me out here in Kenya! The Nairobi party arrived (by private bus) mid-afternoon, and we had tea for all (= 60+) at CITC, laid on (quite a preparation) before the guests dispersed to various pre-arranged hosts for accommodation. It had fallen on Tom and Mary F (CITC) to do all the organising! Among those who came were Jonathan A, YSA at CITC Nairobi, and Ann P who was on the Mt Kenya expedition; also some whom I met at the Trinity Fellowship Lenana conference. Early evening spent commuting between CITC and the Cathedral, where the first performance was to be held, rigging up amplifiers, speakers, drums etc.

We assembled by 7 pm. I was asked if I also could sing in it, as I had heard the tape of 'Come Together – in Jesus' name' as it was originally sung (either in USA or UK), and we use many of its songs in our fellowship meetings. The singers from Nairobi were mainly *wazungu* (white): English, Americans, Canadians. Our 'conductor' was American. The narrator was African. There were one or two Asians (for good measure) as well. But a tremendous one-ness. Three electric guitars, piano, a battery of percussion! I was a bit nervous, just before we started – though I had a score I didn't feel up to the standard of the rest (whose 14th performance it was) – and the 'congregation' filling the Cathedral to overflowing looked as solemn as a Speech Day audience (you'd have thought they'd come to a funeral!) But within 10 minutes of singing – fantastic music it is, really alive and plenty of rhythm – I found that it was the Spirit rather than exactness that mattered, i.e. if in doubt, sing anything! (Only loudly!) My impression – shared by thousands of others – was that it really brought over the Gospel in a live and exciting way, and in an idiom geared, perhaps, particularly to young people (though we were all ages), but really in keeping with the times. Twice during the time of worship the choir 'descended' upon the congregation, from the front to the very back of the church, first to shake hands with everybody, and secondly to share and pray in groups. I found myself (I discovered later) sharing with one of the people who's coming on the Kilimanjaro expedition, and also Michael M-T, one of the only other YSAs to have been posted to the Taita Hills! We ended (by the time

everyone had left the church) around 10:30 pm, and came back to the F's for some much needed food. It was then that some of the Nairobi people, including the conductor, suggested going for a midnight swim, as it was a bright moonlit night. Not everybody welcomed the idea, but I was keen, as I did want to see the sea, once more before I went away from the coast. We took the CITC car to Nyali beach (north of Mombasa Island) and spent a very pleasant time – the water pretty cool, palm trees swaying against the moon – many crabs scuttling across the moonlit sands! An experience, anyway!

Not bedwards till 2:30 am. Then we discovered that in Chris' house, where I was staying, there were 5 people and only 4 beds! So I had to kip down on the floor! Never again will I not be grateful for a warm, soft bed! I fell asleep around 3 am, to awaken sore and stiff at 5 am. My consolation, however, was watching the sun rising over the Creek. 'Come Together' again at St Margaret's Presbyterian church – a rather 'high society' parish, predominantly Kikuyu (and thus personally favoured by the President). A third performance to be held that afternoon at Elim Pentecostal church, but after an early lunch, I bade farewell to all: O's, F's, J's and Chris, and took two hours to Voi on a very *safi* (=swep' up) Asian bus – on which I slept (almost). I took the Kireti bus winding up into the hills by moonlight. An amusing conversation with the driver, mainly in Kiswahili, but *some* KiDabida.

Hard at exams this week. The inevitable, endless trouble with our duplicator! Also, I've been helping Rhoda with the typing of exam stencils – very good practice for me (using all 10 fingers). I'm *thinking* of possibly investing in a typewriter when I'm settled at Cambridge. Must stop now!

August 1974

Letter to my parents, 10 August 1974

Letter to my parents from Nairobi, Saturday 10 August 1974:

Sorry this will be only a short note, as it is late, and there will be more travelling tomorrow. First, thank you very much for super birthday presents, cards and telegram. I had a wonderful birthday: African style 'tea-party' in the house; many gifts. We closed the school on Thursday, and had a 'last supper' at the hostel – made farewell speech etc. on Sunday we had a final Christian Union meeting, and I was asked to address it as the main speaker! Goodbyes all round. Friday – busy with reports and full packing. Everything now complete. I think I am less 'over weight' than I was when I came out, having got rid of a lot of heavy books and worn-out clothes. 2 or 3 kg of paperbacks I am sending in a sea-mail parcel. I left the Taita Hills this morning, in cloud and rain. Three mile uphill walk at dawn with a heavy rucksack. Taxi (30/-) from Voi to Nairobi. I'm staying with the R's, whose sons, Mark and Chris, are coming on Kilimanjaro. Next door to the Archbishop of Kenya, and ½ a mile from State House! (Also very near the C's.) I had a bath this evening, first for a term!

NEWS: My flight has been changed again – for the last time – to stand at TUESDAY August 27th – postponed by 1 day; same place, same time (Heathrow 6 pm). This has been confirmed, and now remains only to be checked two days before departure (please await telegram if changed again!)

Tomorrow, after church at Nairobi Baptist Church, I go to Nakuru (Manager of Bethany Bookshop); Monday to Kericho (Uplands Bible College); Tuesday to Maseno, near Kisumu (Mr and Mrs D, Trinity Fellowship); Wednesday return to Nairobi, staying with the R's. Thursday to Moshi by OTC. Friday to Marangu. Saturday (17th) to Wednesday (21st) Kilimanjaro. Thursday (22nd) to Taita Hills. Collect luggage. Say all goodbyes. Friday to Nairobi by OTC, staying with the C's. Saturday, Sunday, Monday in Nairobi. I shall contact Dr and Mrs C. Tuesday (27th) back to England!

Sorry this is very brief. I tried to write before we closed the school, but I was working flat-out with marking, reports, and then packing, to be away on the Saturday. I think for these last two or three weeks, all detailed news will have to wait till I come back!