

Taita Hills Teacher - a Year in East Africa

Mbale-Dabida, Taita Hills, Kenya:
Part 2: January 1974 to April 1974



Adrian Hall

Contents

CHAPTER 5: MOUNT KENYA, TAVETA AND THE TAITA HILLS	1
January 1974	1
Return to Mbale	2
‘Africa kabisa’ (five days in Taveta)	2
Comet Kohoutek	5
In Search of the Mountain.....	5
The new school year.....	7
New headmaster and new teachers	7
Back to teaching	8
Letter to the British Councils, 28 January 1974.....	9
News of the new term	9
“ <i>Akasema Simeoni</i> ...”	11
CHAPTER 6: TEACHING IN THE TAITA HILLS	12
February 1974	12
The first week of February	12
Mount Kulal, Student service and Grace’s birthday.....	13
Teaching in the heat	13
An eventful day	14
Weekend in Mombasa	14
Blue water and parched fields	15
The final week of February	16
CHAPTER 7: SCHOOL LIFE IN THE TAITA HILLS.....	18
March 1974	18
The first week of March.....	18
Six months ago.....	19
The second week of March.....	19
Busy days.....	20
Delirious tea-pickers.....	22
<i>Kazi nyingi sana [very much work]</i>	23
A safari to remember	25
Tea with the Willastons	25
CHAPTER 8: EASTER IN THE TAITA HILLS, MOMBASA AND NAIROBI	27
April 1974	27
April fool’s day.....	27
End of exams and holiday plans	27
Mombasa fellowship	28
Excerpt from Desmond G’s Newsletter, April 1974	29
The fever of life is over.....	30
The ‘Real Africa’ – Part 2	30

Safari to the top of Yale	31
Good Friday to Easter Sunday	32
East African Safari Rally	32
YSA get together at Limuru	33
Train from Nairobi to Mombasa	34
Mombasa and back to Nairobi	35
Teaching on the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life	36
Charismatics at Work Convention, Lenana High School, Nairobi	37
Nairobi prophecy	39
ILLUSTRATIONS	40

CHAPTER 5: MOUNT KENYA, TAVETA AND THE TAITA HILLS

January 1974

Based on notes recorded in my diary:

Tuesday 1 January 1974 – The alarm went off at 03:00, and we had breakfast of hot 'Alpen' muesli, but I felt dizzy and sick. We set out slowly in pitch dark, following the valley floor as far as Mackinders Camp, where we picked up our Guide. It was bitterly cold, ice on the marsh-water, frost underfoot, summit dramatic by starlight – trudge, trudge, trudge – singing Good King Wenceslas and other Christmas carols silently in my head. We left our rucksacks at Rangers Post at the head of the Teleki Valley and then, as the morning light began slowly to replace the darkness, we started the final ascent up the scree. It was slow, arduous work. I began to feel worse; faintness and nausea almost compelling me to turn back. But I revived considerably when, with a conscious and sustained mental effort, I slowed my pace and increased my breathing, averaging a full deep breath for every upward step.

The sunshine breaking on the peaks above was reflected in the opaque blue-green water at the foot of the Lewis Glacier. We came across patches of snow towards the top of the scree at an altitude of about 15,000 feet. We reached the Austrian Hut at 08:30, where we enjoyed our first views over the ridge and to the east, with much of the surrounding plains covered by a layer of cloud below. Behind us, the sun had now filled the Teleki Valley, which curved down and to the right, with the foothills, plains and Aberdares stretching out beyond. We had a brief rest at the Austrian Hut; by now there was full sunshine and it was much warmer. The main peaks of Mount Kenya rose sharp ahead, the cragged pillar of the 'Point John' rock spire like a gigantic cathedral buttress, its sheer sides golden brown with the rising sun, the higher twin peaks of the 'Bishop's Mitre', Batian and Nelian, looming behind – too impressive to describe, and looking virtually impossible to climb. Point Lenana, lower and less dramatic, our objective, rose gently to the right of the Lewis Glacier, with the left side of the ridge bounded by snow. We followed this ridge, partly on rock, partly on snow, passing close to some dramatic ice caves and crevasses. We had several rest stops to admire the view, the climb ending with a long steep ascent over snow to the summit at 16,533 feet.

09:45 – fortunately there was no cloud forming. The view all around was incredible, but particularly the cragged shape of the Point John rock spire towering over the glacier; the Aberdares, and visible through the saddle, the outline of the Mau escarpment on the other side of the Rift Valley, the NFD (Northern Frontier District) stretching to the north, with a possible view of the Matthews Ranges in the far distance. Mount Kilimanjaro was not visible, but its position was clearly marked by the gathering of clouds on the horizon to the south-east, over a continuous layer of cloud cover, as if seen from an aeroplane. To the east, immediately below us, stretched the vast area of the Mount Kenya foothills – moorland, tarns, cliffs, gorges; and then entire ranges of further peaks.

We left the summit after brief New Year celebrations and photographs. We were anxious to begin our descent, as most of us were feeling the adverse effects of high altitude. We descended rapidly, losing the sunshine as clouds began to form. I had a severe headache, and felt terrible on reaching the valley, but I managed to stagger unsteadily to the hut, arriving there at about 14:00. I lay down immediately, suffering from a headache and nausea, which only cleared after a couple of aspirins and two hours of the most solid sleep. I awoke at 17:00, with the sun streaming in through the window. It took Jackie a long time to convince me that it was only 5 pm, and not 5 am the next morning! Our dinner consisted of soup, beef and baked beans. Early bed – tired, and slightly unwell, but glad we had achieved our objective. It was difficult to sleep once again.

Wednesday 2 January 1974 – We were grateful to get up in daylight; breakfast consisted of cold Alpen. By the time we were ready to leave, sunshine had filled the Teleki Valley, making our journey warm and comfortable. We followed the same route back, over the ridge and down the vertical bog. The weather was very clear, and we enjoyed superb

views of the peaks above and the plains below. We made good time, and reached the bamboo forest and Land Rover at 11:00 am. We spent the afternoon relaxing and washing, and cooked dinner of corned beef-in-oxtail soup, macaroni and peas, on an open wood fire, as our gas cylinders had run out. We had drinks in the Naro Moru Lodge bar afterwards.

Return to Mbale

The next morning we enjoyed our last view of Mount Kenya, as the sun rose from behind the peaks, and we were on the road by half past eight. We waited at Naro Moru village for a bus, or a lift, and after half an hour an Asian took us all to Nyeri at breakneck speed in an open van. At Nyeri Anne, Howard and I caught a bus to Sagana, a distance of 40 km – a journey that took more than 2 hours. The bus was stationary at Nyeri for $\frac{3}{4}$ hour with the engine running and occasionally revving – rrRRmm! rrRRmm! rrRRmm! – no regard for the world petrol shortage! We waited at Sagana until at 1 o' clock, when the District Medical Officer kindly picked us up and took us not only to Kagio, but right down the dust track to Mutithi – which was certainly out of his way!

We had a quick lunch and repack at Mutithi, said goodbye and thanks to Steve and Jackie for all their hard work and organisation, and hit the trail again in the early afternoon, this time foot-slogging our way up to Kagio, as there was no transport available. It was a hot, long, thirsty walk, in silence. Nearing Kagio an hour later, we flagged down a *matatu* which took us to the main road just in time to catch the Embu bus back to Nairobi. It was a long bus journey via Murang'a and Thika, with the sun ahead of us all the way. We reached the country bus station at Nairobi just on 6 pm, and walked to the Hilton Hotel, where Anne rang her father, who picked us up and took us to their home in Limuru. Dinner, bath and bed – in civilisation!

The next day, Friday, Anne's father took me into Nairobi, where I caught the Machakos bus. I reached the turn-off by 10 am, and after a ten minute wait, an African Seventh Day Adventist, on his way from Kisumu to Mombasa, picked me up, taking me as far as Voi, where I caught the OTC bus to Wundanyi, arriving there at half past five.

So I returned to Mbale as the sun began to set and the hills looked greener than ever – but several shocks awaited me. Firstly, there had been no progress whatsoever on the school building. Secondly, Jackson had taken my request for him to *panga* [scythe] the grass surrounding the house with a little too much enthusiasm: he had succeeded in removing most of the bushes outside the verandah, including *all* the flowering geraniums – a precaution, he said, against snakes! Thirdly, I received a very sad note from Thomas M, asking me why I never came to Taveta as promised – as he had invited me to visit his family during the Christmas holidays, and I had accepted his invitation at the time. There were valid reasons, of course, but I felt thoroughly ashamed that I had not made more effort to find his address, so that at least I could have written to tell him I was unable to come. However, he kindly extended an open invitation, and as there was the prospect of a week's extra holiday, I saw that there might be an opportunity to spend the following week with him at Taveta...

'Africa kabisa' (five days in Taveta)

On Sunday (6 January 1974), after a long church service at Mbale, I was just in the middle of writing home, when Peter M appeared at the door. He was just back from a Christian camp for girls at Mount Meru, near Kilimanjaro, and he told me that Mgalu would not reopen till the following Monday January 14th, so I decided to leave for Taveta the next day. That evening I went up to the W's, and Andrew lent me a mosquito net, and gave me some valuable advice and directions concerning Taveta, including a contact (Jacob K) who would, Andrew was sure, help me to find Meshack, Thomas' father...

The next five days were recorded in detail in my diary, and the following account is largely based on those diary notes. I was wise not to take my camera to Taveta, as it might have provoked unwanted attention, and in any case I had run out of film after the Mount Kenya expedition. But I had some time on my hands while I was there, so I took my sketch pad and some pencils, and did some sketching.

Monday 7 January 1974 – up at 5 am, and I was rewarded with a superb view of the Southern Cross, with Alpha and Beta Centauri close beside her. I left the house at dawn, taking the Mwanguvi short cut, and leaving Wundanyi on the OTC bus close on 7. Fantastic views from the road – the sun rising above a layer of thin white cloud below us, palm trees silhouetted in the foreground. I alighted at Mwatate and walked down the tarmac road towards Taveta, hoping for a lift. At a time when I was fairly struggling with ki-Swahili, trying to get my language into better shape, a car with a European-looking couple happened to come by and stop; the driver got out.

“Unakwenda Taveta?” [Are you going to Taveta] I asked, in my ‘best’ Swahili. “Pardon? Est-ce que vous voulez voyager en Tanzanie?” Help! My French began to flow at last, though for a time I kept saying “Ndio” instead of “Oui” and “Hapana” instead of “Non”. It turned out that *ils viennent de retourner en Afrique, après des vacances en France, et ils voyageait de Mombasa en Burundi traversant par Tanzanie. Ils étaient passés la nuit en voiture* [they had just returned to Africa after holidays in France, and they were travelling from Mombasa to Burundi via Tanzania. They had spent the night in the car.]

It was a swift journey past the enigmatic Salt Lick Game Lodge, and we left the last of the Taita Hills behind. Almost immediately the snow-covered peak of Mount Kilimanjaro lifted above the horizon, and finally came into full view – very dramatic, and so ‘big’ that it threw all the surrounding hills and landscape out of all proportion. On our journey we encountered elephants (“*drôle de nez*”), antelopes, gazelles and innumerable highly-coloured birds.

Taveta. I contacted Jacob K (though that was not actually his name). After *chai* and omelette at the back of his shop, he was kind enough to run me through the sisal estates to Riata Kitobo in his van. I remember the scene at the back of his shop – a young teenage girl was holding her baby brother, bouncing him up and down on her knee, rocking him and making ‘swishy’ noises. There were some other teenage girls present. Jacob knew Meshak M (Thomas’ father) well, and so he took me right to the door of his house.

I entered *Africa kabisa* (total Africa). Thomas greeted me, and when I said I was very sorry about the delay, he seemed to think nothing of it and said, “Just tek it easy, sir” – the motto for the next few days. We had lunch with Thomas’ ‘cousin’ in a mud-wattle and thatch house across the compound. After a siesta and a good wash, I was shown around the Riata *shamba*, as we forged our way through maize, rice fields, banana, mango and citrus plantations, and fields of sugar-cane in the afternoon heat – molested by countless flies, but somehow feeling that I was ‘in the heart of Africa’ for the first time.

Heat. Plantations. People. Dust. The North Pare Mountains rising full ahead. *Chai* by the quart. I met the other members of Thomas’ family – his father and mother were both ardent Christians, full of “*Bwana kaso!*” [Praise the Lord!], and “*Alleluyah, ndugu!*” Terrific. I also met Thomas’ brother’s wife, his nephews and his nieces, five cows, six calves, innumerable chickens and one *pusi* [cat]. Dinner consisted of stewed chicken, served at 9:30 pm. Bed under a mosquito net.

Tuesday 8 January 1974 – I rose early in order to sketch Kilimanjaro, when the mountain was reasonably clear of cloud, to an appreciative audience of children. *Chai* at 07:30 and breakfast at 9.00 am. Thomas and I then took bicycles and, having stopped first to look at the Church and Primary School at Riata Kitobo – walls in precarious condition, great chunks liable to come away in your hand – we made for the famous ‘Njoro Springs’. We entered the forest, green and silent, and descended to a rapid stream of cool water, fresh and clear, coming – it appeared – from under the tenuous roots of a huge tree. We looked closely at three such springs, in the third of which an old man was washing himself. The waters come from the snows of Kilimanjaro, and travel a great distance

underground, until they emerge at Njoro Springs. The name 'Kilima-Njaro' is actually formed from the words '*kilima*' (the Swahili for 'hill') and Njoro (the name of the river).

We then proceeded by bicycle along the Voi-Moshi railway line to the Kenya / Tanzania international border. I sat against a wooden post, with half of me in Kenya and the other half in Tanzania! Then I took my first walk in Tanzania, across a *shamba* to the nearest trees. I remember a very old man, with almost no teeth, pointing at the ground and the trees and saying, excitedly "*Iko Tanthania! Iko Tanthania!*" [This is Tanzania, right here!]

We returned for a late lunch and a long siesta. I sketched the front of the house in the afternoon, and as the sun declined I took a walk with Thomas' cousin in the fruit *shamba*, conversing at length in ki-Swahili, beginning at last to get the noun and adjective prefixes right. I taught him a little English, at his request. Thomas' father cooked us an 'Englishman's dinner' of omelette, fried tomatoes and onions, *ugali* and beans – very nice it was too. After sundown the moon was full and high, the air warm – a scene of mud-huts, moonlit dust and sisal poles, beneath the ever-present shape of snow-covered Kilimanjaro.

Wednesday 9 January 1974 – The next few days crystallized in my memory as a series of impressions, rather than a succession of events in strict chronological order. Memories of long hot walks around the heavily irrigated *shambas*, pursuing agricultural conversations in Swahili; meals of *ugali* and boiled eggs; endless *chai*; flies; the smell of wood-smoke; the screaming of children; fitful nights recovering from the day's heat. It struck me that this surely is the background of so many African secondary school students. A compound of primitive dwellings. No rain for four years. No books, no opportunity for learning and study. The simple, rural life – milking a few cows each day, harvesting cotton and selling it at the local market for a family living – a life-style attractive in its sheer simplicity?

Cycle to Taveta market. Very, very hot. The combination of wind and fine, gritty dust was another factor that added to our discomfort. For periods of several seconds the entire surroundings would disappear in a storm-cloud of dust. Thomas and I visited the historic Maho Church – one of the oldest churches in Kenya, for Taveta was the first inland missionary settlement. The church was octagonal in shape and set upon a small hill, with large windows on all eight sides commanding superb views over the township of Taveta and the surrounding countryside. I recall inviting Thomas to pray with me. I prayed for him, for his salvation – I'm not sure how genuine his response was, but he seemed appreciative and he thanked me. Eternity alone will show what fruit has been borne as a result. We returned via a sisal factory, where we saw the pointed leaves of sisal enter a huge machine and emerge as the fine white fibres from which sisal rope is made. The manufacturer's name plate on the water pump engine made my heart leap: 'Ruston-Bucyrus, Lincoln, England'! We also saw the Mombasa-Moshi Express Train standing in the station and were shown the engine – a school boy's dream! Evening not feeling well.

Thursday 10 January 1974 – A day of much sensation, and yet the day which took me ill, as it involved a 25 mile cycle ride in the sun, which Thomas' father described as "*jua kali sana*" [a very 'sharp' or fierce sun]. Ten miles the other side of Taveta rose what any casual observer would consider to be a very ordinary-looking hill, low and smooth – covered only with sparse bush, and otherwise as arid as the plains in which it was situated. We struggled to the top of this hill, and it was there that we were met by an incredible, wholly unexpected sight: surrounded by wooded cliffs hundreds of feet high – a huge lake of dazzling dark blue! Lake Chala, the third deepest lake in the world – the remains of a volcanic crater, filled almost to the brim with water. We made our way down to the water's edge, where we saw some fishermen putting out against the wind in little log rafts. We climbed up to the rim again, and I sketched part of the lake, with the peaks of Mawenzi in the background. At midday we cycled back, downwind and downhill. I collapsed into a couple of Fanta's [bottled orange fizzy drinks] at the Asian shop in Taveta. Little else, as I was feeling wretched.

Friday 11 January 1974 – Farewells and many thanks. I left the house by bike, with my rucksack strapped on to my back, accompanied by Thomas. After a mile the rear tyre valve broke, so I had to walk (fast) along the railway into town, arriving just in time to catch the Moshi-Mombasa bus. I said goodbye to Thomas, and then proceeded towards the hills. I was fortunate to get a lift in an open van from Mwatate to Wundanyi – such a

relief, as the sun seemed so much more gentle in the Taita Hills. Some English missionaries serving in Uganda were at that time staying with the W's, and Andrew W had just heard that the comet Kohoutek had been sighted in Nairobi the evening before, north-east of Venus. His idea was for all of us to go up to Ngangao Forest to see it...

Comet Kohoutek

It was a fabulous evening walk, watching birds – the Taita White-eye (exclusive to these hills), kites, falcons, and buzzards spiralling in front of the Ngangao rocks. The plains over which I had just travelled were spread out towards the now familiar North Pare Mountains, and to the conical shape of Kilimanjaro – the most dramatic view of the mountain I had seen, as from the Taita Hills the two peaks are in line, and the mountain assumes a truly volcanic shape – like a shallower version of Mount Fuji in Japan. And as the sky reddened in the west, the mountain took on an 'other-worldly' appearance, recalling scenes from CS Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. There were two palm trees silhouetted against the sky, with Venus, bright as ever, framed between them. We climbed through the forest to the top – shafts of orange light breaking through the gloom of the trees. The first car party returned home around 7:15 pm, as the children were tired, and there seemed no hope of seeing Kohoutek. Indeed it was not until after 8 pm, when it was completely dark, that Andrew found, through his binoculars, what appeared to be a blurred star. And as we watched, almost imperceptibly, the comet's tail began to fan out behind, like the wake of a small boat on still water... We made tracks for home half an hour later, after seeing an African civet which ran across our path.

The next day was Saturday, but I felt too ill to do much. Andrew kindly drove me up to Wundanyi to cash a cheque, and to collect Christmas mail from England – four slide films for the camera, a slide previewer, a notebook, a diary, a wall hanging, and some ginger fudge. The following day, Sunday, I did not go to church, as I was still not feeling well. I spent the morning helping Don re-categorise the school library, and spent a relaxed evening with the W's, playing some Badminton, looking at slides with the viewer, and having an early night.

In Search of the Mountain

Poem written about a year later, at Cambridge

Drawn by instinct to the forest edge

pushing westwards through cool jungle

I catch faintest whispers, stirring the crests of pine;

strange voices, receding from twilight avenues of pine,

richly carpeted; swift footfall, silent

Dense light searches primeval depths;

I sense the ancient magic, arrested

in each tree and fern and forest flower

Fantastic roots that curve and fall

prostrate before ancestral trees;

proud as chieftains they rise in zenith,

crowned by highest branches that embrace,

and weave themselves a vaulting for the jungle sky;

and other trees I saw, their glory passed,

and now whose splendour slept,

*embalmed in moss, and scented ferns
and lichens hung like stalactites, glistening;
deep crimson orchids, mauve and purest white
breathed incense strange and sweet...*

*Still the forest climbed, and steep
as on I sped – through glades
that flowed in cataracts of wild flowers;
anemone and aconite,
bright flames of saffron, scarlet, gold,
tumbled like a mystic garden
in a sacred dynasty*

*Like a child waking from a dream
I sense the forest open,
the clamour of magic stilled;
through heather gaunt against the burning west
striving
over smooth rock bright as bronze
wary of silence... Summit*

*Alone, lost
above huge and empty plains
watching the last sun surrender
blood-red upon the ashen plains
I search, I strain
till, beyond the shadows, rising
above the gathering darkness, climbing
with colossal wings outstretched
in perfect symmetry
the Mountain;
immense, magnificent, remote*

*On highest peaks
last embers catch
in shimmerings of distant snow*

*And as I gaze, entranced
the visions fade
and night advancing
like an ocean
carries them away...*

The new school year

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

14 January 1974 – The first day of a new year at Mgalu High School. Peter M, back now as Headmaster, took morning assembly, opening the term with Psalm 103:

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,

Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

Who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

Who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your life youth is renewed like the eagle's (Psalm 103 v 1 to 5).

A wonderful psalm of praise to God – for his goodness, his steadfast love and faithfulness.

And from the very beginning there was a perceptible change in the atmosphere and general quality of life at the school. The complement of staff had changed radically; many of the hard drinkers of the previous term had left, and we were joined by three very nice young ladies (sixth form leavers): Jacinta, Philicia and Grace. But to begin with the new regime meant hard work – getting the wheels turning smoothly once again – and the steady instilling of discipline into the school was a slow and painful task.

Later on, when the primary school results were out, the Form I's arrived (with double streaming), the time-table was redrafted – leaving me with a full quota of periods and a wide range of subjects to teach, and we all began to work to full capacity as a team – like a sailing ship that lies becalmed, when suddenly a fair breeze springs up, the sails billow out, and at once the ship begins to make way, surging swiftly through the sea...

New headmaster and new teachers

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 16 January 1974:

Just to say that the term has started, and 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 students without a full first deposit of school fees, in cash, were sent home immediately and told not to return until they had the money! The effect on the general discipline of the school has been remarkable. I think all the students now know that Mr 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 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 quite adequately without his being here.)

We have three new lady teachers – Jacinda, Philicia and Grace – they are all very nice. We also have a new Biology teacher called Jared. There are 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, although some progress is being made again at last. When our numbers are complete (probably early to 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), Physics for

Forms III and IV, Religious Education (RE) for Form IV (as last term), and Chemistry for Form IA. Chemistry will be very basic, but probably useful for me, as I may well be meeting Chemistry ideas in my Engineering course at Cambridge. So I have a fairly full teaching program, barring extra-curricular activities. At present much time has been taken studying the syllabuses, compiling schemes of work, and ordering text books.

Also, two pieces of good news: one is that I'm feeling well once more, making all the difference to my outlook on life, after really quite some time feeling lousy – an inevitable price I think for my experiences at Taveta. Secondly, 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 the storms did bring some problems. That night I had a veritable river coursing through the main hallway, with water coming in through the back door and going out through the kitchen. The S's had similar problems. In fact Don – with his characteristic dry sense of humour – 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 the administration work here at Mgalu. My December salary arrived yesterday, Hurrah! – with many apologies from Miss Grace C, the Australian missionary who works at the Diocesan Office in Mombasa. So I was able to go to Wundanyi this morning briefly, to draw some cash, pay various bills, and generally feel straightened out...

Back to teaching...

I recall the first two weeks of the new term as a series of impressions:

One morning during the first week back there was a real stampede among the latecomers, all of them running as hard as they could while the bell was ringing for Morning Assembly! I took my first Maths lesson with Form IV, discussing Standard Form Notation.

At the end of that first week, the Christian Union held its first meeting of the year. There was plenty of singing, the familiar songs beginning to take on new meaning as I began to understand the Swahili. Francis talked about the Kisumu Conference. Apparently General Idi Amin 'dropped in' by helicopter on one of the open air healing services! Peter M talked about the camp at Kaga Girls' High School, Meru.

On Sunday I attended a somewhat 'arduous' service at Mbale Church. I left after some 2½ hours, which was as much time as I could afford, let alone stand! The Padre explained some 'arithmetic' concerning fund-raising for the nearby Choke Church. Also Samuel M – with a lack of both tact and wisdom – rebuked Mgalu for misbehaviour during church services, thus making the school a public example. I found this hard to understand, as this was the very first Sunday of term!

That evening I took a walk up on to the ridge with the W's, once again enjoying the soft light on the green *shambas*. We made for a prominent rock half way up the ridge, bright flowers taking on a luminous intensity against the dark green background of foliage as the light began to fail. Peter called in to say that Don had returned from Mombasa, having injured his arm falling off a motorcycle which he was learning to ride; and that Aggrey had been seen, and was due to report back at Mgalu.

So, the following Tuesday, who should turn up but Aggrey! He was in good form, though he had been through quite a lot – his wife Hellen had been very ill, but had now recovered, but sadly his grandfather had died the previous Friday.

The next morning there was an earth tremor at 05:30 – a sustained rumbling and slight vibration, and a small piece of plaster from my bedroom wall fell away. Aggrey's arrival meant yet another rearrangement of subject allocation in the Science faculties. The result, as far as I was concerned, was that I was now teaching Form III Maths instead of Form IV, as the former were starting a new course (EACE). Also, I would only be teaching Form IA SMP Maths, thus lightening my load to some 25 periods a week – which I thought was a good optimum.

Letter to the British Councils, 28 January 1974

Circular letter to the British Councils, Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu, which I wrote on the school type-writer from Mgalu High School, Mbale, dated 28 January 1974:

Dear Sir, I am writing to you from a secondary school which trains students for the EACE examinations (Form IV). It is a Harambee School, which means that its financial requirements are met only by fees paid by the students themselves. It is located in a rural area, 130 miles from the nearest large town. The students who attend this school all come from rural backgrounds, which means that their families rely entirely on the produce of their *shambas* both to feed themselves, and to pay for their children's education – at both secondary and primary schools.

Once again the rains have been poor, so that it has been even harder this year for families to find enough money to meet their children's educational requirements. Thus, as I'm sure you will appreciate, it is difficult to ask students to pay an extra fee, necessary for the building of an adequate school library. Nevertheless, the importance of such a library for students who are being trained, both for EACE and in the hope that they will become mature citizens of Kenya, cannot be overemphasized.

I am asking therefore, in the light of such a situation, whether you would be in a position to make a voluntary donation to the Mgalu School Library, of books which you would consider suitable for the academic enrichment of their minds.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully, Mr A M D Hall (English Master).

News of the new term

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 30 January 1974:

It was lovely to get your letter first thing on Monday morning! 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", 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 financial upheavals. My situation has been greatly improved, and I think I should learn to battle these things out on my own. 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 my 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, as I have been buying all the food, and I think everything will be squared up then. A very full and busy week, really settling into the 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. 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 to 34 periods per week. So, English Form IV, Maths Form III, Maths Form IA, Physics Form III, Chemistry Form IA, RE

Form IV and Current Affairs Form III! 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 there's to be a reshuffle in Maynard Hall (which is a 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, 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 (named after famous Kenyan lakes). I have been appointed House-master 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, Murray and Kenyatta. Long and useful discussions, mainly to do with CU programs for the year, and ways they could be improved.

Monday: Peter was 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. I've had a look through the SMP course book, and I see that Chapter 1 starts straightaway 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* [artisan, builder] to shovel 'concrete' into a wooden mould, press it down, remove the mould, and hey presto! I've laid a brick! It was 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 dinner, one reason being that Aggrey had never yet tasted 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 that enables the crops to grow and the farmers to prosper. Biblical metaphors take on new meaning – I now know what it means when it talks about the 'early and latter rains'. So when I return in August, after a typical 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 arms in the air!

Anyway, it was lovely to hear your news. Your description of a "quiet gardening weekend" really brought me a touch of home...

“Akasema Simeoni...”

From my diary notes:

Thursday 31 January 1974 – Situational composition for Form IV about the Marathon race – very topical, as Ben Jipcho [a Kenyan] won several medals at the Commonwealth Games [held in Christchurch, New Zealand]. Christian Union meeting, and the singing really went with a swing. “*Akasema Simeoni; nitakwenda kwa amani...*” [And Simeon said, ‘I will go in peace’ – the Swahili version of the Nunc Dimittis.]

In the evening, Jackson returned from Wundanyi, drunk. It was the first time I had seen him in such a state. Not a pleasant sight. Very sad.

CHAPTER 6: TEACHING IN THE TAITA HILLS

February 1974

The first week of February

From my diary notes:

Friday 1 February 1974 – a hard day’s teaching. Aggrey cleared his debt of 130/-. As I was marking essays on The Battle of Marathon, I came across the following:

“The Battle of Marathon Race was being held by the heroic Greeks. Their battle was to give up their lives to save the Athens and all Greece...”

“The Battle of Marathon took place from 490 BC to 192 BC...” [that is, an interval of 298 years!]

“He ran twenty-six miles which is three hundred and eighty five yards...”

Saturday 2 February 1974 – Morning walk to Wundanyi, taking some photographs on the way. I did not go to the bank, as the crowds were phenomenal. I gave some private tuition to two Form III students, to enable them to catch up with the class’s Mathematics. Worked busily.

Sunday 3 February 1974 – Holy Communion at Mbale, taken by Andrew W. I managed to follow the course of the sermon in Swahili, which was about the Eucharist. Evening *safari* to Figinyi, following the road to Choke. I attempted to climb ‘Kulal’, but it was covered with dense pine forest and there was time only to contour round until I found the upward path – so the ascent had to be postponed for another occasion. The countryside was looking truly beautiful in the late evening sunshine.

Monday 4 February 1974 – Arrival of Form Is, and a very warm welcome to them all! We managed to persuade the Headmaster of Maynard Primary School to vacate two classrooms so that members of Mwashigadi Hostel could move their beds down there. Form IA was installed in the former Form III; Form IB was in the former Mwashigadi Hostel; Form III moved to the Committee Room [iron-clad structure resembling a garage or large shed]; the examinations forms were unaffected. Peter had put an order for desks for Form I’s while he was still at Kituri at the end of last term. He went up on Friday to see if they were ready, but they had ‘forgotten’! So Form I’s had to sit on forms borrowed from Mbale Church.

Tuesday 5 February 1974 – Full day’s teaching. Peter came for lunch. Amusing conversation concerning the now world-famous ‘Mgalu Mango-eating Society’. Its motto: MHS – not Mgalu High School but *Maembe Husaidia Sana* [mangoes help very much], the Swahili equivalent of ‘a mango a day keeps the District Medical Officer away’! The reward for outstanding loyalty is the ORM (EA) or The Order of the Rotten Mango (East Africa). When I return to the UK, I am to be Overseas Representative (London Branch)! Fellowship with the W’s in the evening. We listened to an American tape of gospel singing by the ‘Jesus people’ [this would have been the ‘Come Together’ musical].

Wednesday 6 February 1974 – [referred to later as ‘the day I forgot I was white’]. The Schools Inspector, Mr N arrived at Mgalu to conduct his inspection. It was not very encouraging – in fact, it was acutely embarrassing, as he listened in on my English lesson with Form IV. A student came in late and sat down at her desk – thus (unfortunately) displacing the person of Mr N, so that he had to stand. I took no particular notice and continued with the lesson, tolerating as few further interruptions as possible. Then without warning, a high-pitched, squeaky voice rang out across the classroom: “Thank you, Mr Hall, so nice of you to offer me a chair!” I had been too interested in the lesson... In the staff room afterwards (when the Inspector had gone), we kept making jokes about him – but I kept thinking, what was so strange about him? Then it dawned – he was white! Then I thought, but I’m also white... no, I had forgotten, I felt more at home being black!

Thursday 7 February 1974 – Chemistry Form IA: experiments to demonstrate the properties of elements. These included burning a piece of magnesium ribbon with a candle. The whole thing flared up in my hand! The tweezers scorched – so I let go of them. Then the brightly burning ribbon fell on to the newspaper that was covering the desk, immediately setting the paper on fire and burning its way into the desk at the same time. So much for Chemistry! Evening Assembly was also dramatic. After Peter had given the school a thorough dressing down on discipline (i.e. stealing, drinking, smoking, immorality and bullying of Form I students), those who had been bullied were asked to come out in front and indicate the culprits. Three were chosen, all Form II 'lads'; they came out in front and were caned on the spot ["a rod for the backs of fools"]. This gave the school a very sobering effect. However, one had the impression that it was done not out of anger, but out of love and discipline [see Hebrews 12 v 1 to 3].

Mount Kulal, Student service and Grace's birthday

The following weekend was eventful. After a busy Saturday morning's work, I went on *safari* in the afternoon, making, at last, a successful attempt at 'Mount Kulal' [see note on 4 November 1973 for this name]. It was a real struggle to get through the forests to the summit, from which (as the forest was still very dense) a view of no more than 20 feet in any direction could be obtained. Then I struggled down the mountain, and it was like trying to find my way out of a snake-infested maze! There was fabulous scenery, however, once I was below the tree line – down into the dark steep sides of a valley, with the sun ahead cresting the tops of trees with rich yellows and greens, the contours of hills and ridges brought suddenly into sharp relief in a soft horizontal sun.

On Sunday we held the third of our Mgalu student services. Francis M, the Chairman of the Christian Union, preached a really sound sermon – a very difficult thing for him to have done. It was also Grace's birthday, and she invited us all up to her house – the 'Helicopter', so named because of the steep flight of steps which led to the front door – for tea. Aggrey rolled in, mildly drunk, and got a bit annoyed when, after half an hour of disconnected monologue, he was accused of being a 'chatter box'! However, it was a pleasant occasion, and as many of us remarked afterwards, the first time in Mgalu's recent history that all staff members had been together on non-school business. This was very encouraging for us all, as it helped to engender a true spirit of 'working together'.

Teaching in the heat

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 13 February 1974:

Posts have been a bit delayed this month. On Monday the bus *forgot* to pick up the mail at Voi (this frequently happens), and the next day it went into Mombasa for servicing, as it does once a month! Not very much news as such, from this end. Also, not much time, so I'll have to be brief in any case. On Sunday morning we had the third of the Mgalu student services – in English. This time it was really 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 to her house for tea and a get-together...

The new building progresses at last. They have made wooden moulds over the window spaces, and have been pouring liquid concrete into them, to make a continuous brick '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...

An eventful day

Thursday 14 February 1974 was an eventful day (based on my diary notes):

1. English lesson – we discussed how to compile a circular letter informing students of the new world-famous Taita Hills Secondary Schools Marathon Race, from Wundanyi to Wanganga. This they did, outside in groups. The exercise was voted to be very successful.
2. Archdeacon Jeremiah K and Don S came round on a routine visit. The Archdeacon addressed the whole school. Don informed me that I was guilty of (unknowingly) feeding the school library to termites: the library had become infested with white ants!
3. The Chemistry lesson with Form IA involved experiments to illustrate the difference between a physical change and a chemical change. These included burning magnesium ribbon (this time without setting the classroom on fire!), and adding concentrated sulphuric acid to sugar to produce carbon: effervescence, squeals of excitement and general drama: "*Ai, bwana! You must be a genius!*"
4. News came through from the School Inspector from Mombasa, Mr N, that Mgalu remains Grade D, and that therefore no General Science will be taken by Form IV.
5. The Christian Union open meeting was attended by guests from Kilili Pentecostal Church Choir. The Form IV classroom was full to capacity, and the joyful noise of singing was quite overpowering.
6. There was an uproar in the hostel over students refusing to collect water: the girls, having had their lunch 2 hours late, now go without dinner.
7. I spent the evening with the W's – it was good to relax. Andrew told me that Crispin M has been offered a teaching post at Mwatate Full Primary School. So he leaves us. Yet another timetable reshuffle!

Weekend in Mombasa

Friday was another tough day. I spent the afternoon drilling holes in the library floor, and pouring lethal *dawa* [termiticide, perhaps Aldrin] into them, in an effort to get rid of the white ants, and made preparations for Mombasa.

On Saturday morning I was up at 05.00 and had an early breakfast. I set off in the cool of the morning, watching the stars of the Southern Cross, now beginning to tilt to the right, and fade as the sky paled in the east. The orange glow of the rising sun was striking the summit of Wesu as I scrambled aboard the OTC bus, which despite a premature 'rev-up' – which put panic into my heart as I was still half a mile short of Wundanyi – did not leave until 07.15. There was a further delay at Mwatate when the driver – having at last got back in the bus after his 20 minute 'rest' – drove the bus forward a further 20 yards, got out again and started queuing for meat! Our journey took us through the Townships of Mackinnon Road, Taru, Mariakani and Samburu, and we arrived in Mombasa at midday. I met Chris L for the first time; we got on really well. He was a graduate from Belfast and had a 12 string guitar – so he played (and I sang) various hits from 'Come Together', the Christian musical that was popular at the time in Britain and America. We drove into town (in a CITC car) to find that the shops did not open until 3 pm on a Saturday afternoon, so we went on to Nyali Beach and spent a

happy hour swimming and walking along the beach. Though the water was cool and refreshing a little way out from the shore, close in it was very warm. After wallowing in the shallows for twenty minutes I felt it was 'time to pull the plug out' and let the water out of the bath! White sands, palm trees and clear blue water, its colour almost fierce in comparison with the gentler hues of the English coast. We went back into town to do some necessary shopping (e.g. for a new pair of shoes), and had an evening meal of Spanish rice; we then set out for the Saturday evening Christian fellowship, stopping on the way so that Mrs O could bandage a boy's broken wrist. The fellowship took place at the house of an English Roman Catholic near Kilindini Harbour, and was attended by CMS missionaries, Southern Baptists from America, several Africans, two Officers from Royal Navy ships in the Port of Mombasa (HMS Scylla and HMS Ariadne), and Chris with his 12 string guitar. There was a terrific sense of unity, although there were so many of us from different backgrounds and walks of life.

On Sunday I saw the F's and had a long chat with Mary. I also had an interesting conversation with Ken and Betty O, who were waiting to get into the Sudan, the land of their calling. Although the Church of Sudan had specifically asked them to return, their entry visas had been refused by the Government twice. Nevertheless they felt they were called, and so they were confident that sooner or later the doors would open. Mattins at the Anglican Cathedral was taken by The Very Reverend Desmond G, the Provost. Then after lunch, I took the OTC bus back to Wundanyi. After an interesting wait in the dark, outside the Police Station, I was picked up by the W's, who happened to be returning from a day at Murray High School. I had dinner with them, and enjoyed a relaxed evening, recounting the weekend's events.

Blue water and parched fields

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 20 February 1974:

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 [in North Lincolnshire], clad in duffle-coats, Wellington boots, 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. 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, field upon field 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 front lawn has turned from rich green to scorched brown. Flowers are wilting and dying. 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 to drinking river water. 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.

[Next follows a detailed account of my weekend in Mombasa.]

Mattins at 11 at Mombasa Anglican Cathedral. It was good to attend an English service once again. And it was good to see the Provost again, the Very Reverend 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. 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: Rrrrrrrrring! Rrrrrrrrring!

Jeremiah: Mombasa 2747. Jeremiah Mwazenge speaking.

Enos *Oh, hallo Jeremiah! Is Enos here! How is it?*

Jeremiah: Oh, hallo Enos! Good to hear from you! Where are you calling from?

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.

Also I am Housemaster of Nakuru House. I am mainly responsible for the House's sporting activities (and success), in football, netball, and volleyball. We have a league competition with Chala and Magadi. So far, in football, we have played two matches, and lost both of them. 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...

The final week of February

As recorded in my diary:

Thursday 21 February 1974 – Christian Union lacking life, because many members were diverted by a rival attraction, some match against Maynard, I think.

Friday 22 February 1974 – Very busy day. Grace, Jacinta and Philicia were invited over to a meal. I had to excuse myself and retire early, as I was not feeling well.

Saturday 23 February 1974 – Early run up to Wundanyi to conduct various miscellaneous business. I took the Mombasa [Kireti] bus down, then worked pretty well flat out, marking mainly. Prepared for tomorrow's sermon.

Sunday 24 February 1974 – Mgalu Service – well attended and well organised. Form IV really did look like a chapel, with a cross drawn on the blackboard and the chairs in rows. I preached my second sermon, taking as my text 1 John 4 v 19. Some lovely hymns – Grace led the singing. Milo and chai up at the 'Helicopter' afterwards. Afternoon writing letters.

Sermon Notes: "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4 v 19).

1. Do you love (a) your neighbour? (b) God?
2. Do you find it hard to love God?
 - you try: "I must love God"
 - you ask your friends, "Help me!"
 - you pray, "God help me to love you."

3. The secret of loving God: "We love because He first loved us."
4. We need a vision of God's love for us:
 - "He crowns you with steadfast love and mercy" (Psalm 103 v 4)
 - His love is revealed in His Son Jesus: "For God so loved the world..." (John 3 v 16)
5. The Bible says this about Jesus: "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53 v 3).
6. Jesus suffered. Why? For you and for me. Upon the cross – physical agony. The spiritual burden for our sins, laid upon His shoulders.
7. Let us be drawn to Him by that love.
"We love because He first loved us." Let us pray.

Monday 25 February 1974 – Nakuru played Chala at football, and in spite of good play and a determined effort, we were once more put to shame. Time spent marking Form II English essays: "You are alone on a desert island", following our reading of Robinson Crusoe. Sophie T, a rather timid girl with a stutter, wrote about a giant cobra that reared up in front of her and opened its mouth "so wide that I was able to count its teeth"! (One, two, three...)

Tuesday 26 February 1974 – Clubs organised at last. We now have (1) Drama; (2) Debating; (3) Singing; (4) Wild Life; (5) Science; and (6) Young Farmers. I am the patron of the Singing Society.

Thursday 28 February 1974 – Jackson went into a real tizz about his salary – accusing us, practically, of not giving him his full share (because he had most of it in advances earlier this month), and demanded we give him another rise. Aggrey handled the situation fairly decisively.

CHAPTER 7: SCHOOL LIFE IN THE TAITA HILLS

March 1974

The first week of March

Based on my diary notes:

Friday 1 March 1974 – Beginnings of the first signs of rain. General Election in the UK.

Saturday 2 March 1974 – I spent the morning doing battle with the library, arranging all books into shelves, dividing them into 'Student Library', 'Staff Library', 'Text Books' etc. – and indexing new books. The result was very satisfying as the room looked well organised. A dark, rain-laden day – two falls of rain, giving (amongst other more important things) 150 gallons into our tank. The W's had returned from Naivasha, after seeing the children for half term. Guests were staying – second cousins from the UK, mother and daughter, recently bereaved and spending three months in Kenya. I spent a fascinating evening in the refreshing company of English folk, recounting various travellers' tales, including seeing their Northern Lights on a plane journey to Finland. We listened to the BBC worldwide news at 9 o' clock. Election results: Labour 301 seats, Conservative 296 and Liberal 14. The Liberals thus hold the balance of power, and at present Ted Heath is trying to persuade the Liberals to form a Coalition Government with the Tories. Perhaps this is the answer?

Monday 4 March 1974 – I was called out of third lesson (Maths Form IA) by Peter, who told me that a new member of staff (Venant M) had arrived from Kituri, transferred by the Bishop's orders, and against everybody's wishes – and really against common sense! However, I'm making a point of trying not to complain or to be critical, in any way, of the various situations that arise. An attitude of criticism, I have found, only engenders bitterness and resentment. So I am accepting whatever comes my way, determined to do my best in the circumstances. The main point is that our new teacher is physically handicapped: he has a wooden leg and has to move about on crutches. He cannot possibly be accommodated in Crispin's old house because it is situated miles up the hill. So perhaps he'll have to move in here – which means that unless I share my room with him (which I want to avoid at all costs, as I need privacy), either Aggrey or I may be asked to move into Crispin's house. Still, as nothing more has been said at present, there is no use in answering unasked questions. For another thing I learn here is the uselessness of speculation. Life here in Kenya is full of uncertainty: life's fortunes are liable to sudden, unpredicted reversals, for better or for worse. Here again I think that acceptance is the key: not allowing myself to fall into the trap of wishing things (over which I have no control) to be otherwise.

Today I was on duty. Football match – Nakuru vs Magadi. Nakuru won! A terrific victory, as our team was really playing hard and well. Great cheers in Assembly as the result was announced. In the evening, I played some Bach chorales on my 'flute', in the moonlight.

Tuesday 5 March 1974 – Venant seems to be settling in OK. At present he's staying with Peter at his house. An unpleasant incident – I went up to the W's house at lunch time (to clear my February debt), to find Catharine bandaging a Maynard boy's head. Standing beside him were a number of Mgalu students, one of whom (he will remain nameless) was responsible for the injury. Apparently they had been carelessly throwing stones against a wall, and one of them, thrown by the boy in question (a IVth Former at that), rebounded, striking the primary school boy on the head. Catharine said it was a deep cut; if the stone had hit him slightly further forward (i.e. on the temple) it could have killed him. When Catharine told this to the student responsible for the accident he was profoundly shocked.

Singing in the afternoon: "All hail the power of Jesus' name", in Swahili –

Jina la Yesu salamu

Lisujudieni, lisujudieni,

Ninyi mbinguni hukumu,

Na enzi, enzi, enzi, enzi,

Enzi, enzi, enzi-iii-iii-iii,

Na enzi mpeni.

A fabulous evening with bright moonlight, and wind in the trees swaying above. Fellowship at the Helicopter. Jenny (the guest from the UK) came along. Some good singing.

Thursday 7 March 1974 – I was on duty, with Peter away at Mwatate registering our first EACE candidates, and the Deputy Headmaster still not returned. Thus I felt like being on the bridge of a ship – in temporary command of her course. Christian Union singing – meeting not very inspiring, as has been the rule in general this term. Something (or Someone) is lacking – attendance is half-hearted, both in number and spirit. Let's hope this will be put to rights in the weeks ahead. HCS (A-level) results came through. Jacinta did well to get 3 'principals' (passes) and 1 subsidiary. Grace and Philicia did not do so well, which is a pity – they are feeling a bit down-hearted at present.

Six months ago...

From diary entries:

Exactly six months ago... Hoddesdon, Haileybury, Heathrow... up, up into the darkness, the last lights of England slipping beneath... Brighton, the coast... Channel Islands, France, the Riviera, the Mediterranean, Sicily, the Sudan... dawn breaking over Kenya, and then down, down across the Athi plains, crossing the Mombasa road, on to the runway, temperature 57 degrees F outside... the clear skies of Africa...

I'm more than half way home now. I have mixed feelings, 'though I look forward to being in Britain and at home once again. My brightly painted wooden three-masted model galleon above my desk [which my grandmother gave me before I left England] carries me home across the waters of time. Above and to my left the familiar mountains of the Coigeach [in the black-and-white photographs stuck on to the side of the wooden wardrobe] draw ever closer. I am past the point of no return. My outward journey is complete.

Though these thoughts are perhaps premature, and there is still a long, long way to go – and much opportunity – nevertheless, there's a sense in which I feel that the anchor has been weighed, and my course is now set for home...

The second week of March

As recorded in my diary:

Friday 8 March 1974 – Evening meeting up at Aggrey High School with Ambrose M (Headmaster). Andrew drove Peter and myself up. Miss Phoebe K from Murray High School and Miss Kate C also came – it was the first time I had seen Kate in three months.

Saturday 9 March 1974 – Busy working day, marking books and preparing lessons for the following week. Dinner with the W's, during which the moon came up out of the east, bright orange, and then disappeared behind a thick black bank of cloud – its rays shining through from behind. We listened to the 'Come Together' tape – from an American Gospel musical, which has become very popular among missionaries here in Kenya, and I imagine is catching fire in Britain too.

Sunday 10 March 1974 – The Mgalu service was at 10 o' clock – Phoebe preached a brilliant sermon on 'One's Goal in Life'.

Monday 11 March 1974 – I refereed the football match between Chala and Magadi, which was quite a shattering experience. The players didn't like my rules of refereeing or something, because they were arguing over every decision I made! Towards half time the game began to degenerate into anarchy. So, during a quarrel over whether it should be a corner or goal kick, I blew the whistle, long and loud, summoned both teams to the centre

of the pitch, and blew my top! Finally, I stated that during the second half of the game, if there was any more shouting, quarrelling or needless arguing with the referee's decisions, I would simply blow the whistle and close the game. The effect was satisfactory, and the game proceeded until its end in an orderly manner, though it was not always easy to discriminate correctly in every situation. By the end of the game I was pretty well through! As I was having dinner, who should walk in through the kitchen door but – Aggrey! Eight days late. He said he had been ill with a fever he had contracted last Monday. He said he had tried very hard to ring Mombasa and to send telegrams.

Tuesday 12 March 1974 – Interesting afternoon singing various Swahili songs, which I managed to write down in a notebook. Margaret W (aged 4) almost joined us, until she was rescued by anxious Mum, though she admitted afterwards, she had been anxious for our sakes!

Wanadamu wote watalia
Watakapo tupwa motoni,
Watalia "Woe-woe-woe,
Woe-woe kama tungejua!"

[Everyone will wail, when they are thrown into the fire, they will wail "Wo-ey, wo-ey, if only I had known Him" (Jesus) – from Revelation Chapter 1]

ki-Swahili *Mungu ni njema x 3*
 Ni njema kwangu...

[Oh God is good x 3, He's so good to me...]

Turkana *Akoju naramba kuchu x 3*
 Ramba kuchu x 2

Venant M left us – transferred to Mwangeka High School by order of the Bishop!

Wednesday 13 March 1974 – I attempted to settle the February accounts before breakfast. Aggrey had spent (as recorded) 113/- on food and groceries during February. I had spent 302/- (including gas, kerosene and Jackson's salary). When he heard this he upped and went out in disgust and disbelief, leaving his debt of approximately 100/- unpaid.

Fairly interesting lessons teaching the art of note-taking to Form IV – Shaka and the Rise of the Zulu Empire. Physics involved lifting a kilogram mass of sugar, and pushing a ball around to illustrate the concept of force. Exciting finish to the Nakuru vs Magadi football match. With 20 minutes to go, Magadi was winning 3 to 1. Nakuru fought with fury, and managed to push the score up to a 3-all draw finish!

Busy days...

The next few days were very busy. On Thursday there was still no debt paid, as Aggrey left again during breakfast, with scarcely a word. Then there was confusion over lunch as Aggrey had allegedly told Jackson that both he and Gerald were coming for lunch, but Jackson hadn't understood that he had. As all the conversations were in Swahili, I was (fortunately) unable to act as an independent witness! The result was that Aggrey and Gerald hived off while we were saying grace, again without a word. Jackson's move was now to refuse to work for Aggrey, but for myself alone, and to refer the matter to the W's. Aggrey's plan of attack (or defence) was therefore to buy all his own food and groceries, and to kind of 'segregate' himself from the rest of the house – which is really very juvenile (perhaps he still has a fever). Really, the situation is becoming beyond a joke – everyone, as I see it, behaving like little children!

But the Christian Union address by Catharine W, on the subject of Christian giving – a highly relevant topic – provoked some intelligent questions. The singing was much livelier this time, which may be a sign that things in the Christian Union are beginning to

turn for the better. Also, in the same vein (only on a much larger scale), I received a letter from Andrew G [school friend, studying at Durham University] to say that he had just received an unconfirmed report from Haileybury concerning the success of the Lent Mission with Revd David Watson – that very many (perhaps 100 or so) boys had been touched by his message and had come to faith in Jesus Christ as a result! I hoped to hear more direct and detailed news from friends at Haileybury over the next few days, but this, during a period when here the strength of Christian commitment has definitely cooled, was encouraging news indeed.

Friday was a hard day's teaching and marking. Aggrey agreed to pay his debts. When? Sometime. Soon? Perhaps. I spent an amusing evening correcting newspaper article contributions from Form IV. Livingstone M wrote about horse racing at Ngong in true journalistic style: "Cowboy Roger Clerck Puzzles Kenya Onlookers at Ngong. Cowboy Roger was yesterday a subject of interest after winning the Ngong Race, with a very fascinating style at the end." We also had Vice-Minister Daniel Arap Moi discussing the Advantages and Disadvantages of Co-educational Schools –with the rest of the Government!

On Saturday I got up early to go to Wundanyi carrying a pressure lamp, which I hoped a *fundhi* would be able to mend – the problem being that the valve had gone, so that when pressure was introduced into the container, liquid kerosene had a habit of rushing out through the pump. I left it with the cobblers because the *fundhi* had not yet arrived. Then I took the Mombasa bus back to Mbale, and sat in the front. We very nearly had a head-on collision with a safari car – we met on a blind corner just between Mwasungia and Mwanguvi – the car managed to swerve out to the left and round our front, missing us by inches! Christian Union Rally at Aggrey High School: I had intended to set off at 12.30 pm with 40 students who had put their names down, but we actually left half an hour later, with (to begin with) less than half that number. After initial delays things went well. The rally was led by Mr M, and the address was given by Peter M on: "How shall a young man keep his way pure?" [Psalm 119 v 9].

On Sunday I attended morning worship at Kilili Pentecostal church. The service went on till 2 o' clock, but I left at 1.30 pm, as it was very hot. I spent a relaxed afternoon, managing to get some letters written. Then I had dinner with the W's (apple pie and cream), after which we looked at photographs and the latest films of slides. The stars were brilliant – the plough, upside down in the north, and below the Southern Cross, two stars, one below the other, further south – as I called it – the 'Star of the Utter South'.

The timetable for weekdays this term has generally been as follows:

- 06.15 Rise
- 07.00 Breakfast – *uji*, [liquid maize porridge], toast, coffee
- 07.30 Jackson arrives – briefing on day's work – money and list if he is to go to Wundanyi
- 07.40 Assembly - notices
- 08.05 Morning registration
- 08.10 Lesson 1
- 08.50 Lesson 2
- 09.30 Lesson 3
- 10.10 Break – medical cases
- 10.25 Lesson 4
- 11.05 Lesson 5

- 11.45 Lesson 6
- 12.25 Lunch, prepared by Jackson – meat, vegetables, *ugali* [stiff maize porridge] fruit
- 14.00 Afternoon registration
- 14.05 Lesson 7
- 14.45 Lesson 8
- 15.25 Prep – optional lesson
- 16.15 Games, matches, clubs, Christian Union
- 17.30 Evening assembly
- 17.45 Marking, preparation as necessary
- 18.30 Dinner – Alpen cereal [muesli], boiled egg, bread, tea
- 19.15 More work, as necessary
- 21.00 Finish work
- 21.45 Light out [blow out the Dietz lamp]

Monday was a busy day marking books. There was no football, as there was a match between Choke and Figinyi Full Primary Schools.

On Tuesday I retired after the third lesson feeling distinctly unwell. I slept and rested until the afternoon, when I managed to get a few letters written.

Delirious tea-pickers...

From a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 19 March 1974:

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!) 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 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 edition of the Daily Nation, and was then asked to write an article with a 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!

Kazi nyingi sana [very much work]

Based on my diary notes:

Wednesday 20 March 1974 – Feeling much better. I managed some simple experiments in Chemistry: separation of mixtures – salt + sand, solution, filtration etc. Much time setting examinations in Chemistry, English and RE.

Thursday 21 March 1974 – Today is the first day of Spring [in England]: outside it is dry and hot – living things parched, dust everywhere. Again I was feeling slightly wuzzy. The Christian Union meeting was addressed by Sister Clara, an American missionary who has recently joined the Rock Pentecostal church at Werugha. She spoke (very well) on the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The substance was well received by the students, who listened attentively, without the usual distractions (vocal or otherwise) at the back – perhaps because some of us staff members were also sitting at the back. Her long, slow, full trans-Atlantic accent was beautiful to hear. After she left, a Maynard student bust his knee whilst playing football. Dreadful *kalele* [= loud commotion]. We managed to get him transported up to Catharine W, who found that nothing was broken and that a cold press was all that was needed.

Friday 22 March 1974 – The entire day was spent setting Maths papers for Form III. It was quite an entertaining exercise, as some of the examination was in the form of a multiple choice, and this meant making up the wrong answers as well! It came as quite a shock to discover that I found difficulty in answering some of the questions myself! “If 17 labourers dig a ditch 88 m long in 9 days, how many labourers are needed to dig a ditch 51 m long in 5 days?” Interesting question. More relevant, perhaps, would be: “How long does it take a team of African builders to complete a two-room classroom block at a Harambee school in the Taita Hills?” The *fundhis* [skilled workers] seem to have deserted us yet again – engaged, I suspect, in some other money-making project. I went over to see Miss Kate C at Murray High School with Catharine, Peter and Grace. We nearly ran into several wild animals on the way back.

Saturday 23 March 1974 – A full morning tidying up my desk, room etc. I discovered various items I had taken out with me from England (e.g. a folding hard-board screen), which I had never used. I finished a bout of mathematical marking, and then cooked myself a delicious stew with rice – with which I was rather pleased. I got a bit despondent in the afternoon – what Andrew W describes as his ‘Sunday afternoon’ feeling. A sudden lull in the middle of a period of intense activity, a sudden ‘passivity’, a disinclination to do anything or to go anywhere. If only I could lay my hands on a really good book...

This mood was rapidly dispelled by my managing to go out (almost the first time in six weeks), on my own, walking in the Hills. I only managed to get up the ridge and a bit beyond, as I’d left it rather late, and I was not as ‘in trim’ as I had hoped. But there were terrific views, now so familiar. I returned thoroughly refreshed, calling in at the W’s to ask if I could borrow *Lord of the Rings* – which I could! I picked up the story half way through *The Two Towers* (from where I’d left off the previous year, back in England) – and everything flowed back into place. I felt the story was enhanced greatly by the magic of the language, the first ‘good’ English literature I have read for quite some time. I was held in its spell until a quarter to eleven – ‘deliciously’ late by African standards!

Sunday 24 March 1974 – Church at Mbale, Holy Communion – which took a very long time, as there was some *shauri* [business] afterwards concerning the fund for the translation of the Old Testament into ki-Dabida. I found myself in something of a missionary capacity in the afternoon – helping to bring a group of Christian Union members together (at their request), to discuss plans and problems, and to read the Bible and pray. The great thing was that, although I played my part in the discussion, I need not have been there. The students were leading the meeting themselves; and if this continued, much was to be gained.

Monday 25 March 1974 – School examinations began. I only had Chemistry Form IA to mark. Only three forms can do examinations at any one time, because there are still no

desks in Form IA or IB. That is why the examinations are spread out over the whole week. This, however, gives Rhoda a chance to keep pace – it has been calculated that she has 38 examination papers to type and duplicate!

Tuesday 26 March 1974 – Still no progress with the school building. Though this does not accurately reflect the situation at present, an imaginary interview with the *fundhi* might reveal problems in the network of African administration such as this one:

- Layman Tell me, why are you unable to work today?
- Fundhi* We have no nails.
- Layman Can't you buy some?
- Fundhi* We have no money.
- Layman Who keeps the money then?
- Fundhi* The Treasurer of the Building Committee.
- Layman Have you seen him?
- Fundhi* Yes.
- Layman What did he say?
- Fundhi* He said he can't give any money unless he has permission from the Chairman.
- Layman Is he able to get permission then?
- Fundhi* No.
- Layman Why not?
- Fundhi* The Chairman is ill...

= in Mombasa hospital, where he has been for the past six weeks. So. *Bas*. End of story. No more need be said.

Wednesday 27 March 1974 – Still no post. Why? Because the Kireti bus is in Mombasa (where it has been for the past week) being serviced. Or it has broken down. Why are other buses unable to collect the post from Voi? Because they are not licensed to do so. At 5 o' clock the examination papers came flooding in – English 2 for Form IV, a paper with which the students found much difficulty.

Thursday 28 March 1974 – *Kazi nyingi sana* [= very much work]. Flat out the whole day. Peter went off to Mombasa. I learned how to operate the (extremely temperamental) duplicator, so that I could help Rhoda with her overwhelming work load. Jackson went home because his wife was not well, and one of his children was very ill.

Friday 29 March 1974 – Tricky re-organisation of the time-table because the Maths Form III papers were not ready yet. There was an argument as to what should be done. I confess I nearly lost my temper with Aggrey – in the staff room – over deciding the best course of action... My complaint is that he simply refuses to listen to my suggestions, cutting me short immediately I open my mouth. I am sure, though, that I was equally to blame!

Morning and early part of the afternoon spent duplicating – clank! clank! clank! Difficulties over the fact that we had the wrong paper, the wrong ink, and the wrong stencils (or perhaps alternatively we had the wrong duplicator!) Often a turn of the handle would cause a dozen sheets to go through the works, with the top one printed beginning half way down the paper. I managed to complete, however, the bulk of the marking. It was a miracle that we managed to finish all the exams before the day was out – we thought we would have to reassemble on Saturday morning!

Saturday 30 March 1974 – Morning spent finishing the last of the marking. Form III results were abysmal – true, they were hard papers, but even so, when they can't even

get the simple things right one feels it is unjustifiable to continue with the EACE syllabus until they have mastered the basics...

A safari to remember

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

Beautiful walks among the complex of hills and ridges above Mbale continued, though less frequently. I remember particularly one Saturday afternoon at the end of March, when I set out on *safari* with a 'mac' and umbrella, because of the storm clouds gathering in the east. At once I noticed all about me a sense of heaviness and ominous silence. There was not a breath of wind, and no melody from the birds – only a single-noted call, like a warning signal. I climbed through forests tense and silent, feeling the damp heat contained in the slow and sticky air. The heavy sky hung, poised and menacing above the hills. As I gained the rocky outcrops near the top of the first ridge, the moisture-laden air eased itself at last into soft fine rain, and the mists rolled in from Sagalla. I made a brisk descent and reached Iriwa before the storm – observing how the dark grey skies made a dramatic contrast with the golden expanse of the Tsavo plains and hills catching the last rays of the sun. At Iriwa I did a little shopping and was invited in for tea and wafers with Benjamin, the Jehovah's Witness brick builder. I was soaked to the skin, having come down through the wet undergrowth, and the foliage from bushes and small trees, which had a habit of stretching out over the path at chest height.

I returned home, changed rapidly into dry clothes, and set off again for the W's to make some arrangements for Sunday. It was 6.30 pm and a few minutes before it had been almost too dark to see – but now, all of a sudden, it was curiously bright. Grey clouds still covered the sky, yet everything was filled with a thick yellow light coming from the hills 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 front drive, the red poinsettias in the W's garden, set against the grey hills and skies, were enhanced by an unearthly brightness. That momentary contrast between the vivid scarlet of the flowers and the backcloth of rich blue-grey is something I shall never forget. As I reached the house a light rain was falling. I said hello to Susanna and John who had travelled from Turi last night and had been picked up from Voi at 4 am this morning. Then the heavens opened and rain fell in torrents. The children were dancing with delight. Flashes of lightning, followed almost instantaneously by long fearful peals of thunder. It was some time before I could leave, cautiously feeling my way down the flooded paths in the gloom. At about 9 pm Aggrey rolled in, soaking wet, and far gone – blind drunk. He spent several minutes just trying to open the front door...

Tea with the Willastons

The following day, Sunday (31 March 1974), Aggrey left the house when I was scarcely awake. I was told the next morning by Jackson that a friend of his had seen him boarding the OTC bus for Nairobi at Wundanyi – though he had told us nothing of this. The Mgalu student service was at 09:45 (or thereabouts). Mr and Mrs M, the Headmaster of Aggrey High School and his wife, came to preach. Slowly the room filled with worshippers. At the scheduled time for starting there were four, desperately trying to fill the room with their spirited chorus singing. However by 10:15 there were 20 or 30, and with the other students drifting in throughout the service at a rate of about 10 per hymn, everyone seemed to be present by the time Mr M got up to give the address. He preached for a whole hour, managing to hold everyone's attention for as long. His terrific use of humour, combined with his theatrical touches, helped to bring the message

across. It was a successful (if that's the right word) service in many ways. The singing was up to standard, and the lessons and prayers were well read by students. Afterwards I invited Mr and Mrs M in for refreshments – luckily I had made some scones the night before.

In the afternoon I attended Communion – in English – at Werugha, at which Andrew was ministering. In case it sounds like overdoing it, going to two services in one day, Holy Communion services are few and far between as it is (whether in Swahili or ki-Dabida); however, opportunities for taking Holy Communion in English are too rare to be missed. Also it's a long time since I'd been up Werugha way – looking as lovely as ever, now that the rains have come. The service started an hour late (it's not only at Mgalu!) and was not well attended. The Willastons [not their real name], a very nice Indian family with a small boy Robins, invited us in after the service. We chatted about various things like education in India, Uganda, Kenya and the UK, over strong tea and exotic Asian delicacies. After working in Uganda, the Willastons came here about a year ago, and until this January when they were transferred to Kituri by the Bishop, they were teaching at Mwangeka.

We played 'tenni-quoist' over the goal posts on the school's football pitch – as the light failed and the mists rolled in. Just at the finish of the third game, Catharine returned with the car on her way back from Murray High School, so she picked us up and took us back to Mbale– and then went to collect Peter, Grace and the W's children, who had been walking down from Wundanyi. We all had dinner together, and then followed a long, fascinating conversation with Andrew about the differences between Africans and Europeans – family relationships, attitudes to life and death, intellectual approach, simplicity of understanding and acceptance, fear, anxiety, psychological stability, leadership, sense of responsibility, enterprise...

CHAPTER 8: EASTER IN THE TAITA HILLS, MOMBASA AND NAIROBI

April 1974

April fool's day

Monday 1 April 1974 – The beginning of Week 12, Term 1, 1974. Peter announced that we would be closing on April 10th – which meant that we planned to forge steadily ahead, if necessary starting new work. A week's worth of letters arrived in the morning, as the Kireti bus was, at last, back from Mombasa, and managed to bring the post from Voi over the weekend. Particularly exciting was a letter from Elaine H from Luanshya, Zambia. She wrote they were really hoping I would pay a 'flying visit' – perhaps at the end of the coming holidays, early in May. She also said that the expense of flying could be arranged at their end – which was tremendous news. I hoped very much to be able to accept her invitation, making plans for the rest of the holidays accordingly. Teaching time was occupied with giving back exams papers and going through questions. Except – towards the end of the double Maths Form 1A – I was summoned to the door by Winnie T (Form III), who gave me this message:

Excuse me, Mr Hall,

May I see you right now? I am in the office please. There is an urgent matter for you.

By Miss Grace.

I rushed down to the office, explained myself to 'Miss Grace', and handed her the message. She had never written it – it was all a hoax... APRIL FOOL'S DAY!

Tuesday 2 April 1974 – Giving back exam papers – a hot, heavy, headache-y day. I relaxed (or was it 'collapsed') in the afternoon. Christian Union with Catharine, who spoke on 'Christian behaviour in boy/girl relationships', following a theme suggested by one of the Committee Members. Rain fell as the meeting was in progress, and this relieved our feelings considerably. Slides were taken and a tape made, for the W's to send to one of their 'link parishes' in the UK. Afterwards Andrew interviewed the Chairman, Francis M, a CU member, Willingstone M, and myself as staff sponsor. "And on my left... Willingstone, I wonder if you could tell us..." Proceedings were delayed by loud thunder claps, and the roar of rain on the roof!

Wednesday 3 April 1974 – My patience gave way, owing to heat and tiredness. I talked to Don about this, who was very helpful, as he also had experienced the same problem.

End of exams and holiday plans

Excerpts from a letter to my parents, written from Mbale, Wednesday 3 April 1974:

At the moment I'm beginning to feel the effects of 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 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 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 are 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. We close on April 10th, the 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 duplicator...

After I'd finished *all* marking on Saturday afternoon, I set out on *safari* into the hills, equipped with raincoat and umbrella, because storm clouds were rising in the east. An ominous silent heaviness – coinciding, very appropriately, with similar conditions in 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...

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' Conference at Limuru, near Nairobi – where we can discuss further holiday plans... All love, Adrian.

PS Plenty of rain. Terrific. About to make some supper of muesli, scrambled eggs, rolls and tea.

Mombasa fellowship

Based on my diary notes:

Thursday 4 April 1974 – Chromatography on coloured inks and leaf juices with Form IA.

Friday 4 April 1974 – after Assembly I went up the hill to Form III to (attempt to) teach them Mathematics. The class was not ready for use, as it had not been swept the night before. I turned to go, and returned home feeling suddenly very sick – similar to last November. I spent the day in bed, rising only for lunch and afternoon lessons, but having to withdraw before they began as I was still not in a fit state to be up, let alone teach. Jackson expressed his sympathy, adding, as his comment, "*Hapana mzuri... mbaya sana!*" [Not good... very bad!] My hopes for the Mombasa trip the next day disappeared. But in the evening Peter came round, and he asked whether we could pray about it. As we were praying, it seemed that I was suddenly made well, and by 9 o' clock (some two hours later) I was suffering from nothing more than a healthy, end-of-day sleepiness! So I decided I was able to go to Mombasa after all.

Saturday 6 April 1974 – I was up at a quarter to five, feeling fine, 'just like a fiddle'! I left the house at a quarter to six, with a glow in the west as the moon began to set behind the hills, and a brightening in the east as the stars began to fade, and the silhouette of Rong'e became stronger with the sun rising from behind. It was an uneventful OTC journey to Mwembe Tayari (Mombasa bus station), where I alighted and made for CITC in the midday heat, covering the distance in 20 minutes, with much loss of moisture. My clothes were soaked, and after greeting Chris, who was cooking sausages, I had a shower and

changed into cooler clothes. We swam at Nyali Beach, where the sea was cool and rough. The sun was behind a bank of cloud, so that the colours were not as impressive as the time before. Nevertheless it was exhilarating to splash around in the foaming water and seaweed, as the rollers broke upon the shelving sand.

The Saturday Christian fellowship meeting was at 8 pm at the O's house, at CITC. It was Trevor and Vivian H's last Saturday before they returned to the UK (they had been working at Missions to Seamen, Kilindini) – so we celebrated Holy Communion. It was midnight by the time we had finished chatting and saying farewell after the meeting was over. As we crossed the compound, the moon was full and vertically overhead, shining down upon the waters of Mombasa Creek, evoking memories of my first Saturday in Africa, now nearly 7 months ago.

[I remember clearly that we prayed for Trevor and Vivian as they faced 'choppy seas' on their return to England, and I remember listening to the haunting harmonies of an unaccompanied choir singing, 'Jesus I love you, Jesus I love you, Jesus I love you, Take my life. Life is your gift, I give my heart; kneel and adore you, and I know that Jesus I love you...']

Sunday 7 April 1974 – A gentle start to the day because of the heat. I went with Lyn S, Anne and Iain to the English service at Mombasa Cathedral. It was Palm Sunday, and Ken F preached. I saw Desmond G [the Provost] after the service to make some arrangements, as he had very kindly invited me to stay with him in two weeks' time; Don, Lyn and the children were going to be staying too, as Lyn would be in hospital to have her baby (Caesarean operation).

Final lunch with Chris, and then goodbye to the O's, F's and S's. I caught the bus in good time, which was just as well as it was very full. As we steamed westwards over the coastal plains I was aware of a line of deep blue in the distance ahead, contrasting with the white sky above. At first I thought it was just clear blue sky, but as we drew closer the darkness deepened and I realized we were entering a storm. Rain squalls seemed to be moving across the plains to our left, and though we ourselves did not run into heavy rain, the roads were wet. The bush looked strange soaked with rain, as I was used to seeing it so hot and dry. The centre of the storm appeared to be over the Sagalla Hills, and as we passed through, it was possible to see the Taita Hills, clear of cloud, on the other side. Beautiful the clouds looked, on the edge of the storm, as they curved with graceful commotion and many different colours – some deep grey, others white and sunlit – the kind of sky you might see in a Turner painting. On reaching Voi, I discovered, as I had feared, that there was still no Kireti bus [which goes up to Wundanyi via Mbale], so I decided to stay on board the OTC, which was due to arrive at Wundanyi around 7 pm, and risk walking down to Mbale in the dark.

The last part of the journey was accompanied by some beautiful singing by members of the Shigaro Church, which I had visited on Christmas Day – [I still remember a particular hymn they sang, to this day, more than 40 years later, a beautiful, haunting melody]. We reached town at dusk, just as the last sun was striking the Sagalla Hills with a faint evening glow. I set out down the hill at a good pace as the darkness began to close in. I met a *mlevi* [drunk man] after walking about 500 yards, who let out a torrent of indignation in Swahili, some of which I could understand – "*Hapana ubaya*" [nothing evil] – as I overtook him. He urged me to walk slower, but I went on – faster! Presently I became aware of a car creeping up behind me, with both its engine and headlights off. It turned out to be the Headmaster of Figinyi Primary School, and he kindly gave me a lift the rest of the way, saying as we sped silently down the road that he wished to conserve petrol, as it had gone up to over 9/- a gallon! [This was due to the April 1974 Middle East fuel crisis and global price hike.]

Excerpt from Desmond G's Newsletter, April 1974

If this were England one would wish all readers a very happy and warm Easter, but my wish, which will fit in with that even of the East African Safari drivers, is that we all enjoy a nice wet one, which may also be cooler than our present weather. The EA Safari

drivers nearly all seem to prefer wet conditions, though the photographs of the muddy roads experienced in past years are alarmingly like those we remember a few years back, when few drivers cared to go out in the wet season without chains. I remember once driving in the Taita Hills after heavy rains with chains on all four wheels.

Anyway, may God bless us all and make it a really happy Easter. Very recently I have been reading with Form IV in St Luke's gospel of the surprise and joy of the disciples when Jesus really came back on Easter Sunday. It is rather lovely to try to recapture the delight (not too strong a word) of those men and women who longed to believe in the resurrection but could not do so until they saw Him with their own eyes...

Yours in our Lord's Service, Desmond P G (PROVOST).

The fever of life is over...

On Monday (8 April 1974) I had a long chat and coffee with Don in the morning, as I had finished all my marking and almost completed the reports. When I got home I had to do some of Aggrey's marking as he *still* had not returned. I taught afternoon lessons in English Form IV, and then finished the day furiously writing reports and marking post-exam curricular work.

On Tuesday we had a furious 'set-to' with reports, hoping that we would all be finished by the evening, when we could then close the school. In the afternoon I was supervising the various activities that comprised 'cleaning up the school' – that is, sweeping classrooms and hostels, washing the kitchens, and cutting vegetation with *pangas*. Then at 2:30 pm Peter called the school together, and allotted the students their various tasks, promising that the school would close if all were finished satisfactorily. Thereafter, for close on 10 whole minutes – I could hardly believe my eyes – the whole school was a hive of intense activity: the swish of brooms in the classrooms, and students hacking away at grass and bushes like an army in battle! And then, in true African style, the 'activity graph' fell steeply – till after about half an hour I could safely report: 'The fever of life is over, and the busy world is hushed...' It was an effort to get the students to finish off their work properly!

After reports had been put into envelopes, the school assembled at 4:30 pm. The Form IV classroom was packed with students – which shows that the average morning attendance is not very good! Hymns were sung, a general report on the term was given, prizes were awarded to the top students in exams, and miniature silver cups were presented to the winning houses at football (shared by Chala and Magadi – in other words, *not* Nakuru!) Grace and Philicia gave their farewell speeches, as they would not be with us next term. Then Peter dismissed the school after the hymn: 'Lord dismiss us with thy blessing'. This was followed immediately by a special meeting for those going to the KSCF Christian Union Camp at Murray High School later in the month. Peter and I helped students in financial difficulties by doing some sponsoring. This evening marked the end of Term 2. The joys of the holidays lay ahead!

The 'Real Africa' – Part 2

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

One day, in the course of conversation, Catharine suggested, "I see... you mean, you will be judged not so much on what you've done, as on how well you've related to other people?" Learning to relate to one another in love – this is the lesson of the Body of Christ, which is the living fellowship of all true believers. In this New Year [1974] we began to learn something of the importance of the Body – commitment to the Lord, and to one another in the fellowship of the gospel. In Mombasa I was able to take part in a fellowship group that was more experienced in corporate ministry. It was there, in the meetings I attended, that I could really see the power of God at work, as we ministered to one another with the gifts of

the Spirit; as we taught and admonished one another, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God. It was exciting to see prayers answered, and to experience something of the power of prophecy – and to see those who were sick healed and encouraged.

But still more exciting was the creation and development of our own ‘home-grown’ fellowship group in the Taita Hills. Comprised mostly of missionaries and local teachers (the W’s, the S’s, Peter M) we began to meet at Terienyi House [the W’s home], Mbale, and later on at Wundanyi, where our fellowship was extended and we were joined by others in the district (Miss Kate C, Ambrose M, Harold M). Here again music – hymns and choruses – formed an essential part of our worship, and as a generally smaller group we were able to share our personal problems and joys – and to bring them all before the Lord in prayer. We discovered the value of fasting together, as we prayed and prepared for evangelism and outreach through the local churches and schools. Above all, we found it was important to be completely open to the Spirit – for Him to guide and direct us – and lead us on to new things. How important it is to be sensitive and listen to what God is saying: “Behold, I am doing a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43 v 19)

But more often it was outside the weekly fellowship meetings, in everyday living and working together, that the concept of the Body of Christ really came into its own – greeting each other as we met (“*Bwana asifiwe!* Praise the Lord!”), praying together spontaneously, and speaking the truth to each other in love...

Safari to the top of Yale

On Wednesday I was up at half past five and out the door before 7 for a full day’s *safari*. Early sunshine promised a day of heat, but on reaching Wundanyi the clouds lay thick, covering the tops of Wesu and Yale. I entered mist as I climbed up to Wesu Hospital, and began to ascend towards the saddle. I managed to keep to the correct path as the familiar shape of Yale rock loomed out of the mists. A swift passage through the cool, green upper forests brought me on to the ridge, from which it was a short steep sprint to the summit. I lay down exhausted, taking the water and rolls I had made for lunch (even though it was only half past nine) – and peered into the mist. I was rewarded at length by superb, though interrupted, views as the clouds cleared at intervals. It was possible to see, at different times, the full spread of the Taita Hills, now green and fresh because of the rain – which in places seemed even then to be falling. Vuria, the highest mountain in the Taita Hills, was constantly in cloud, but at times there were views over the plains to the Chulyu Ranges in the north. Immediately below me, the rock of Wesu stood clear and occasionally sunlit; farms, roads, and homesteads rising to the very edge of the cliffs – until, suddenly, the nearby trees became vague shadows, the third peak of Yale pushed its way into the rising mists, and a screen of cloud swept across like a drawn curtain.

I began the descent, making my way down to Werugha and thence to Kituri High School, just as heavy rain began to move in. I sheltered under the eaves of the Willastons’ house, as they were not yet back from closing the school. Presently they returned home and were very pleased to see me, kindly inviting me in to a delicious lunch of *chapattis*, tomatoes, eggs and onions. Robbins returned from the Primary School, having come third in his class. I then made the last part of the journey home in just over an hour, running into some rain between Kituri and Mwanguvi. I reached home feeling very weary, and slept like *kuni* [wood].

Maundy Thursday was a fairly relaxed day. There was a meeting concerning the upcoming KSCF camp at Murray High School, at Terienyi house in the evening.

Good Friday to Easter Sunday

Good Friday began with Mattins at Maynard Church, and then I joined the W's on a moss-collecting expedition to Susu. We had a picnic lunch just beyond the Farmers Training Centre, with views over to the Sagalla Hills. We then climbed up to Susu forest as columns of rain swept across the plains below – a delicate composition of soft greens, blues and greys, looking back across the Taita Hills which rose to the Wesu-Yale massif. There was dismay on reaching the forest, as we found that there had been some tree-felling, with logs systematically sawn up into timber planks – in places the devastation was heart-breaking, particularly for the W's, who had known the forest's former magic. Some of its beauty still remained, however, conveyed in the deep silent carpet of moss, the tall trunks, and the restful hush of wind in the branches high above. Finally we came out on to a spur of rock which formed the head of the mountain. At the foot of the cliff face, which fell away before us, the wind swept over a forest of trees, causing them to sway in harmony like the waves of a turbulent sea. Beyond this lay a ridge that fell steeply on either side, towards Wusi, Murray and Dembwa on our left, and further down into the Bura valley on our right. The latter, a vivid green, rose swiftly on the other side towards the Vuria massif, and beyond it lay the vast expanse of the Tsavo plains – a sea of golden-brown dappled with the blue-grey shadows of clouds. We came down, collecting moss, orchids and ferns for the Easter garden. We then called in at Murray High School and had tea with Aunty Kate, watching the rain sweeping in, once again setting red poinsettias off against a soft grey background.

Easter Saturday saw another attempt at my doing some entertaining, inviting the W's to lunch. It was mostly successful, apart from some minor hitches – the yellow jelly having set hours ahead of the red, which obstinately retained its liquid state; and the coffee having the unmistakable flavour of burnt milk! However, the roast itself was delicious: the best beef I have tasted in Africa, a solid chunk of lean meat weighing nearly 2 kg, purchased for Ksh 8/80 (= 50 to 60p). After lunch, Catharine gave me a much needed haircut.

Easter Sunday 14 April 1974: "*Bwana amefufuka! Amefufuka kweli!*" [The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!] Holy Communion began at 10.30 am, though the Eucharist itself took place nearer 12.30 pm. This was particularly meaningful, because with a three-hour time difference, I could guess that my family in England would be taking Communion at Legbourne Church (in Lincolnshire) at around the same time! The hymns we sang, though in ki-Dabida, were also the same as the Easter Hymns at Legbourne, and often to the same tunes: "Jesus lives! Thy terrors now can no more, O death appal us... Hallelujah!" Easter lunch of *jogoo* [roast cock] – Peter joined us. Susanna, John and Margaret had made an Easter garden – a green hill of moss on which stood three wooden crosses; a moss-covered tomb of stones surrounded by trees of various descriptions; purple flowers and thorns in front of the hill, to symbolise Christ's passion and suffering; pure white flowers beside the tomb to represent His resurrection. Though the tomb itself had been closed yesterday, the stone was now 'rolled away', and a linen cloth could be seen rolled up on the floor beside. A candle burned at the entrance, to draw attention to the empty tomb and to the miracle that had surely taken place...

East African Safari Rally

Easter Day (continued) – with the afternoon came news of the East African Safari Rally – the third stage, which takes cars through the Taita Hills to Malindi and Mombasa, had started, with cars leaving Nairobi at 1 o'clock. There were now only 20 cars left, out of over 100 starters – such had been the test of the first two stages, in which, for example, many competitors had literally got stuck in the mud near Meru, Mount Kenya. The route from Nairobi would bring cars through Kitui, Kibwezi and into the Taita Hills, via Mbale and Bura. Presently we heard the distant sound of the press / radio aeroplane, herald of the cars themselves. The first car was then sighted at the far end of the Mbale valley, as

Susanna, John and I made our way up to Espy's Corner, one of the toughest hairpin bends of the entire rally. Ten minutes later and the first car was through, skidding around the corners, picking up rapidly on the straight, accelerating towards Espy's Corner – brakes full on, slithering round, tyres ploughing into the road – a momentary pause to allow the back of the car to swing fully round without quite hitting the far bank – gear change down, revs up, and then on up the hill to Wundanyi! Next through was Joginder Singh, the famous 'flying Sikh', in his Mitsubishi Colt Lancer. A dozen or so cars came through over the next hour, after which the activity became less intense, subsequent 'stragglers' limping along with rather less flair. Then it was time for high tea with Easter cake; afterwards I went down to my house and packed for tomorrow's *safari*.

Easter Monday (15 April 1974) – I left the house between half past five and quarter to six, and started walking up the hill to Wundanyi in the dark, and then through a spectacular sunrise. Mwanguvi bridge – "An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!". Bus down through Mwatate to Voi, arriving at half past eight, before the Safari Rally had returned to the Taita Hills for its final homeward stretch. At nine o' clock, standing on the Nairobi / Mombasa / Voi / Taveta crossroads, I was picked up by a lone Englishman in a red MG sports car. We 'took off', and the speedometer needle quickly swung round to over 160 kph (= 100 mph!). We sped through Ndi, just before the Safari cars were due to emerge from the Taita Hills once again. Crowds were waiting, lining the sides of the roads and at the checkpoints, as on we flew, with press / radio planes circling overhead. Suddenly and without warning, just as we were cruising at over 100 mph between Emali and Sultan Hamud, there were flashing lights behind, and, horns blaring, the two leading Safari cars swept past and streaked on ahead (they must have been doing at least 130 mph!). Again we overtook them as they detoured north to Machakos; and as we approached the City of Nairobi we were still just ahead – the waiting crowds were prepared to cheer us through, some even taking ciné films of us, thinking that we must be one of the Safari cars! By half past eleven, after a hair-raising last stretch, I had got out and was standing on Uhuru Highway among the crowds waiting to cheer the winning Safari cars as they came in to finish the race!

Later that day I booked my rail ticket to Mombasa for Friday. I called in at the CMS Office, which was closed, but had lunch with the R's, where half a dozen other YSAs were gathered. I reached the C's house in the evening. It was good to see them again after nearly five months – the children had grown in leaps and bounds! I enjoyed a relaxed evening, listening to Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, and went to bed early, after a long and eventful day.

YSA get together at Limuru

The following morning I left fairly early and helped Mike F and Steve L get various vehicles either started or mended. There were frustrations at Central Bank trying to obtain permission to buy traveller's cheques, and I managed to get myself into a fair muddle. I met the other YSAs at the Hilton Foyer, and then took a country bus to the Limuru Girls' School for the YSA 'Get Together', arriving just before five pm. It was good to see some 'old' friends again – Ian K, Peter H, Jo and Jackie, Chris L, Laetitia B – and to make some 'new' friends, YSAs who had come out in January: Justin Welby, an old Etonian [destined to become the Archbishop of Canterbury], and Beth and Julia, two very talented musicians who were 'singing the gospel' around the Nakuru Diocese. Dinner was followed by 'Travellers' Tales', an opportunity to show our holiday slides (including Central Province, Turi, Taita Hills and Lake Rudolph). But the session did not last as long as programmed; and as a result we were temporarily at a loose end, and the evening never really 'gelled'.

[In 2014 I sent an email to some CMS friends: "Our (relatively) new Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby was a YSA in Kenya in 1974 – the same year as me, but joining us in January after sitting the Oxbridge exams (from Eton, gaining a

place at Trinity College, Cambridge). I do remember meeting him on one or two occasions at YSA get-togethers, particularly at Limuru in April 1974, at our post-Easter Conference. I remember he struck me as having a 'spiritual awareness' of the things going on around us in Kenya, because in conversation, when we both agreed we were 'really tired' he remarked, 'Yes, and it's also a tiredness that is *not* of this world', i.e. recognising the spiritual dimension to our trials... Interesting!"]

On Wednesday morning we attended a Bible study on Jonah led by Chris C, followed by discussions in groups, and a time of sharing experiences and problems as YSAs. We spent the afternoon singing and listening to songs in the open air, with Chris, Laetitia, Beth and Julia. One song that Chris L sang, I recall, was Adrian Snell's song responding to the popular musical Jesus Christ Superstar; the lyrics went: 'Jesus was no superman, he cried like you and me; and when he died upon the cross, he died in agony'. We then had a short swim in the open-air unheated swimming pool – the surroundings were very English, temperature included! The evening concluded with a CMS film on Kenya: 'Mission Incomplete'.

On Thursday I was a member of the panel for 'Any Questions' Brains Trust, together with Peter H, Rosemary C and Liz D. The questions varied enormously – some simple to answer, others controversial, subjects gravitating around YSA suggestions, Christian ethics and Africa. I remember one of the questions was on which Christian book, apart from the Bible had helped us most. I answered David Wilkerson: 'The Cross and the Switchblade'; but on reflection afterwards, I probably should have answered 'How to Pray' by RA Torrey. The afternoon was spent swimming and in preparation for the evening concert, singing bass in 'And the glory of the Lord...' (from Messiah). The evening entertainment combined some hilarious sketches with some more serious music.

On Friday morning the conference ended with Holy Communion. During the journey back to Nairobi, we discussed holiday plans. Some folk were heading for the coast, with Lamu as their objective; four YSAs were flying to Mombasa by private plane. Others were bound for the west – Kisumu and Eldoret (for a music and drama training festival), and six were making for the Victoria Falls, Zambia, starting with a bus to Dar-es-Salaam. I left my rucksack at the CMS office and rushed down to the Central Bank to try and obtain permission to buy ex-East African travellers cheques. The venture was not wholly successful, as 'they' had retained relevant documents for consideration. Pam (the CMS secretary) said it was just a case of their being difficult, and what I am doing, though unusual, is perfectly legal. I met Peter W in Uhuru Park, as he was taking the R's children for a walk. We treated them to ice creams and rowing around the lakes – which was very reminiscent of Greenwich and London's Regent's Park!

Train from Nairobi to Mombasa

Later that evening I arrived at Nairobi Railway Station in good time, discovering that John P (headmaster of a Harambee school) and Andrew S were also travelling, together with Howard, Laetitia, Anne and Sally. There was a spectacular lightning display over the Ngong Hills as we pulled out of Nairobi at dusk, and it was wonderful to feel the 'rumble of the rails' once again. I had dinner with John and Andrew, and then retired to my compartment at the other end of the train, shared with some American students doing a round-the-world trip, and suffering from 'cultural shock'. The restful, rhythmical movements of the train along the rails soon put me to sleep...

Next morning I awoke as it grew light. It was not quite the same as winding through the Cairngorms in Scotland, as we were very definitely in the middle of the African bush! The sun rising out of the plains on our left was very beautiful, taking me back to that memorable first morning over Kenya as we came into land. Breakfast was announced by a waiter walking up and down the corridors striking chimes on a xylophone! I treated myself to a light breakfast in the dining car – the food was plentiful and the service

excellent. Then there were palm trees, we crossed the causeway, and rolled into the station signed “MOMBASA 54 feet” (indicating the altitude of the station above mean sea level) – the very beginning of the trans-East African railway.

Mombasa and back to Nairobi

We were met by Betty O, who was not expecting a tribe of YSAs! The forenoon was spent in Chris’ house – making plans, catching up on rest and sleep, and getting used to the heat. We walked through the Old Arab Town and ‘did’ Fort Jesus – sadly ‘restored’ in such a way that, from the inside, its romantic charm was lost. Still, the old parts of the fort were very beautiful, and unusual to one used to English architecture. Portuguese in origin, it was used to protect the Town of Mombasa against Arab invasion from the sea. Certainly it commands a fine position, and one can well imagine its having been virtually impregnable from both land and sea (it was not, in fact).

The Saturday evening Christian fellowship meeting was at ‘Pa’ L’s house at Likoni – ‘Pa’, as he was affectionately called, was the former Headmaster of St Andrews School, Turi. This meant we had to cross over from the island by ferry. There I met the two VSOs [Voluntary Service Overseas, a UK Government sponsored organisation] that Chris was telling me about: Paul, teaching at Rabai Secondary School, near Kaloleni, and Ray, working at Mombasa, the Choir Master at the Cathedral. They are both very keen Christians and full of life.

On the Sunday morning I woke up at 09:15, which must be my record for a sleep-in, but I really needed it – the heat fairly knocks you down unless you have a good amount of sleep! We went as a group through the Old Town, seeing the Old Harbour where several *dhow*s were berthed (some YSAs were planning to travel up to Lamu by *dhow*). I am told that with canals instead of streets, the Old Town would be a bit like Venice, though on a less elaborate scale. Certainly it is impressive, though the decay, the crumbling paint and stonework gives one the sad sensation of splendour that has long passed. We had a picnic lunch of bread, garlic sausage, mango and paw-paw in front of Fort Jesus.

In the afternoon we managed to hire taxis to take us to Nyali beach, where we swam in gloriously rough sea with a high and incoming tide. Surfing the waves as they broke was sometimes alarming, as you were likely to be knocked right over by their force, propelled helplessly through the churning waters and thrown on to the shore! It was thus necessary not merely to avoid waves too small to do any good, but also waves big enough to cause possible harm! With this philosophy firmly in mind, we spent a thoroughly enjoyable and exhilarating afternoon.

The day ended with the evening service at the Cathedral, in English. Ian K and I arrived late, having walked all the way – as plans to be collected and driven there had gone curiously astray. It was Evensong, and the Cathedral was much fuller than I had seen it during the morning services. Afterwards we all came together at the O’s to sing and share, over toasted cheese sandwiches, chocolate cookies and iced orange juice.

On Monday morning I made my way to Desmond G’s house, next door to the Catharine Bibby Hospital. Don S and the children were also staying, as Lyn had just had her baby, a boy named Mark, born on 17 April. Desmond decided to take me ‘goggling’ at Nyali, as it was his day off. We spent a fabulous morning taking a rubber dinghy through the shallows, out towards the reef, until we found underwater rock and coral. Then we put on masks and glided under the sunlit waters, over rock formations with outgrowths of coral, which sheltered shoals of brightly coloured tropical fish. For the next hour or two I was transported into a completely different world, and it was difficult to escape from its fascinations – gliding over beds of green weed, through the warmer shallows, and on to the shore again.

We had lunch with the Deputy British High Commissioner at his luxurious house just above the beach. Among those also present were the Chairman of the British Council (Mombasa) and the Liaison Officer for the Royal Navy. It was interesting to be in this kind of society, having also stayed in the homes of rural Africans. A comparison of the two 'societies' enabled me to see them both in a completely different light. In the late afternoon we returned to Mombasa and I swam in the Mombasa Club pool, which I had seen previously from the top of Fort Jesus – palm trees; stone walls mellowed by evening sunshine; deepening sky above; innumerable birds spiralling upwards into the dusk. In the evening we went to Nyali once again, this time to a Gramophone Record Society evening at the aforementioned British Council Chairman's house. The musical program included some Elgar, Bruch's Violin Concerto, and Beethoven's 'The Eroica' Overture.

The next morning I said 'thank you' and goodbye, and took a bus off the island to Changamwe, where I waited for over an hour for a lift to Voi. Eventually the Kaloleni Hospital van took me to the turning, where I waited until the Mombasa to Wundanyi bus came along. Beyond Voi, ascending into the hills the 'back way' (via Mbale), we were suddenly confronted by a stretch of road rendered impassable by a combination of heavy rain and roadworks. The bus stopped and the driver was unable to start the engine again. So he let the bus free-wheel backwards, downhill, until it was stopped by more earthworks, whereupon we all bailed out, and with cries of "*Harambee!*" (in the most literal sense of the word), we all pushed together – uphill! Eventually, after repeated attempts, failures and consequent frustration, we got a roadworks vehicle to give us a tow until the engine could be restarted. Another perilous two hours twisting and turning through the Hills (almost becoming stranded on several occasions) brought me home.

The following day, Wednesday, it was back to Nairobi again, this time in the 'Pink Panther' with the W's, as we were all going to a Conference with Trinity Fellowship (except Susanna and John, who had to go back to school). It was a fast and uneventful journey to Nairobi, and the W's dropped me off in the city centre, after visiting the A's (at Westlands), where the W's were staying. The C's welcomed me warmly when I arrived, after an arduous trek with a heavy rucksack – even though I arrived the day before I had arranged, having got all the dates into a complete muddle! We spent a very enjoyable evening together, shared also with Jess H, the Travelling Secretary for Scripture Union for the whole of Africa. He had visited no less than 46 African countries – a fact that gave rise to much interesting, if mainly political, conversation.

Teaching on the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life...

From a letter to my parents, written from Nairobi, Wednesday 24 April 1974:

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 Convention ends on May 1st, after which I'll probably have to return to Taita to collect mail – I have still had no reply from the H's at Lusaka, so that at the moment Zambia is uncertain...

Thursday – a third day of *shauri* with Central Bank. They assured me that permission to obtain non-East African travellers cheques had been granted, and they had sent all relevant documents to the CMS address. I bought a *kitengi* shirt, and had lunch with John C [son of the Bishop of Grimsby] at the Grosvenor Hotel. He brought news from home. He was about to return to Britain to get married. He drove me to Lenana School on Ngong Road, some way out of Nairobi, for the 'Charismatics at Work Convention'. The Convention was opened by Godfrey D, son of the Chairman and founder of Trinity Fellowship (and who had given me a lift in the Taita Hills during my first month in Africa). There was a feeling of slight apprehension that first evening, not really knowing what we were in for, and it was very, very cold at night!

Charismatics at Work Convention, Lenana High School, Nairobi

As recorded in my diary:

Friday 26 April to Wednesday 1 May 1974 – Lenana High School is set in a beautiful forest, looking out on to brilliant flowers and green fields. The temperatures are decidedly low, with nights accompanied by rain, so that they do not differ very much from English April evenings! Those attending the Convention included several missionaries and volunteers (*wazungu*): American, Canadian and English (VSOs). One VSO, John M has just finished Engineering at Cambridge and attends St Matthews Church! There was only one other YSA, Kay T from Kisumu, who arrived on Saturday. There were some missionary families, including of course the W's, and the Convention was run by Trinity Fellowship, an inter-denominational, evangelistic organization, staffed mainly by Africans. Those who spoke at the teaching sessions included David A, an English missionary from Dar-es-Salaam, Bob M, on tour from America (New York), Godfrey D, Nelson M (also from Trinity Fellowship), Miss Sylvia S (Headmistress of a Secondary School in Western Province), Ted K and George N (from Nairobi), Elijah A and Dr David G (from Kenyatta Hospital)...

I recall that John and Brenda F, missionaries from Nakuru, were also there, since they were the ones who recorded the prophecy given to me later on during the Conference. There was also a Swedish missionary couple working in Dar-es-Salaam, and a single Canadian lady.

The aim of the talks was to instruct as well as to inspire – and this was definitely achieved. It was certainly good to hear uncompromising and clearly reasoned teaching on subjects such as dedication, the Church as the Body of Christ, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, sacrifice, growing in the Christian Faith and suffering. The talks were well related, both to the Scriptures and to present-day Christian experience.

We all came away having benefitted a great deal – refreshed spiritually, and better equipped to continue as Christians in our various places of service. Particularly exciting were the times of corporate worship, highlighted at the Sunday Communion itself, in which it seemed that all barriers of denomination, nationality and colour were completely broken down. This I felt was the much desired 'Ecumenical Movement' – not preached in theory, but actually experienced.

My notebook records many of the talks given during the Conference:

The theme of the Conference, as it turned out, was really on 'Knowing Jesus'. A chorus we sang frequently went: "More about Jesus would I know..."

*More about Jesus I would know,
More of His grace to others show;
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me.*

*Chorus: More, more about Jesus,
More, more about Jesus;*

*More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me...*

Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things... in order that I may gain Christ... *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings...* (Philippians 3 v 8, 10)

that I may know Him...

Our faith becomes firm when we find Jesus to be real. The promises of God find their fulfilment in Him:

Jesus Christ... was not Yes and No; but in Him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why we utter the Amen through Him, to the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 1 v 19)

In Revelation 3 v 14, Jesus is described as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness”. We need to know in our hearts by experience that He is utterly trustworthy, so that through Him we can say with conviction, “Yes, the promises of God are true for me today; Jesus Christ is real to me”.

Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise thee. So I will bless thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on thy name. (Psalm 63 v 3, 4)

And we sang:

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord among gods?

Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness?

Fearful in praises, doing wonders, who is like unto Thee?

and the power of His resurrection...

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you see and hear. (Acts 2 v 32, 33)

And in one day a new nation was born – the community of new believers – a new people who could satisfy God, a people who had a heart for God, through whom he could communicate his manifold personality... Bob M went on to describe some of the characteristics of the New Community – brought into being by the power of the Resurrection – the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed... (1 Corinthians 12 v 1)

We talked about the life of the early Church, and the blueprint of the New Community:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2 v 42)

and may share His sufferings...

There was a talk on Moses, the man who made right choices:

He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. (Hebrews 11 v 26)

The challenge:

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate... Therefore let us go forth to Him *outside the camp*, bearing abuse for Him. (Hebrews 13 v 12, 13)

Are we willing to pass through the gates – of security, popularity, respect – to bear the reproach that comes from obeying God? In the midst of rejection, loneliness, despair, we can ask, “Is this how *you* feel, Jesus?” And he will reply, “Yes, and I’m so glad to have you to share it with me.” We are seated with Him in the heavenly places, to share His sufferings, and for Him to share in our sufferings.

For we are His workmanship (Ephesians 2 v 10) – Greek *ποίημα* = literally ‘poem’ or beautiful created work of art. God is working meticulously in each one of us, so that we become conformed to the image of His Son. He looks not at ourselves as we are now, but at our fulfilment in His Son. As a potter perfects a piece of clay because he sees in it a beautiful vase, so – as the Father works in us – He keeps His eye on His Son, until He sees in us a perfect replica of Him...

that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3 v 10)

Nairobi prophecy

One morning, towards the end of the Conference, we came together before the Lord and waited upon Him. Bob felt he could not give the talk he had prepared – he wanted to see what the Lord would do. There was an air of expectation, of anticipation, as we watched and prayed... and then the Lord ministered to us in the power of His Spirit. Those needing special ministry came forward, and as Bob prayed for each person in turn, words of prophesy were given.

When my turn came, the Lord spoke to me [actual words, as recorded on tape, and later transcribed on to a sheet of paper, handwritten in pencil, and given to me – and I still have that piece of paper]:

My son, the Lord would say to thee that thou shalt stand firm and shalt not waver. Thou hast been easily influenced to go here, to go there, to do this and to do that, and I have not always led you. You have always thought that I have led you, but I have not always led you.

The Lord would say to thee that I am bringing a fresh stability into thy life and I will truly lead you by My Spirit, and there shall be a strength imparted to thee that shall be a wonder to those around you, and they shall see what I have done in thy life; they shall see the breaking, and the melting, and the softness and the gentleness that I am bringing about in thy life, and rejoice, and that also I will lead thee in such a way that they shall not be able to influence thee, but thou shalt influence them – even the people you work with shall be influenced by that which I am doing in thy life, and they shall be drawn to Me as they see the strength and stability in thy life which I am doing, says the Lord.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations to follow Chapter 5



Left: Mount Kenya peaks at dawn – 1 January 1974



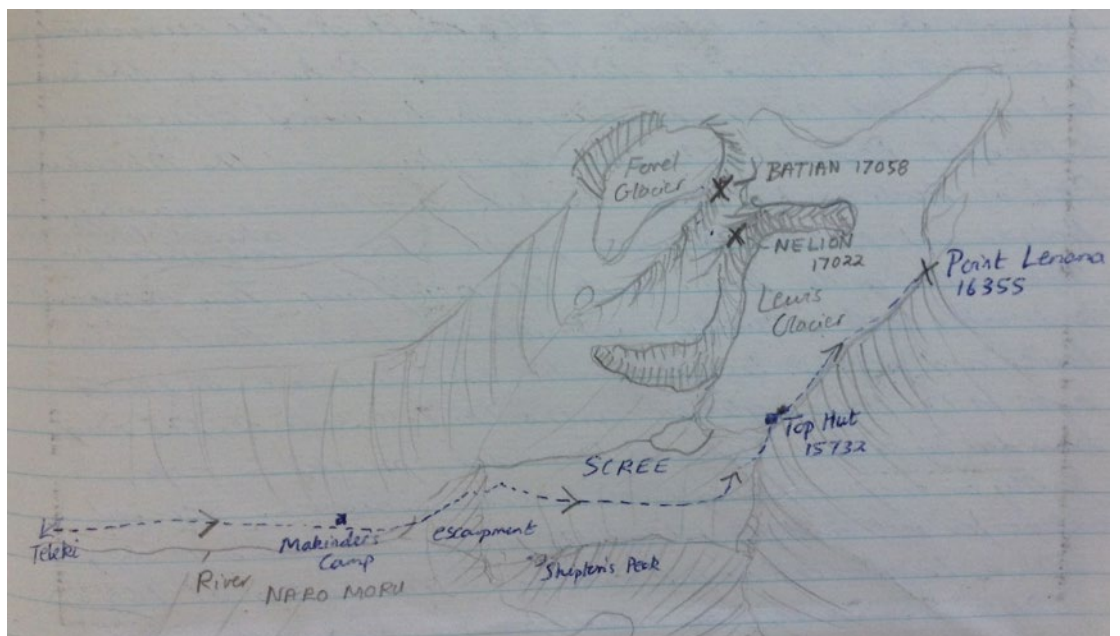
Right: Point John rock spire at dawn

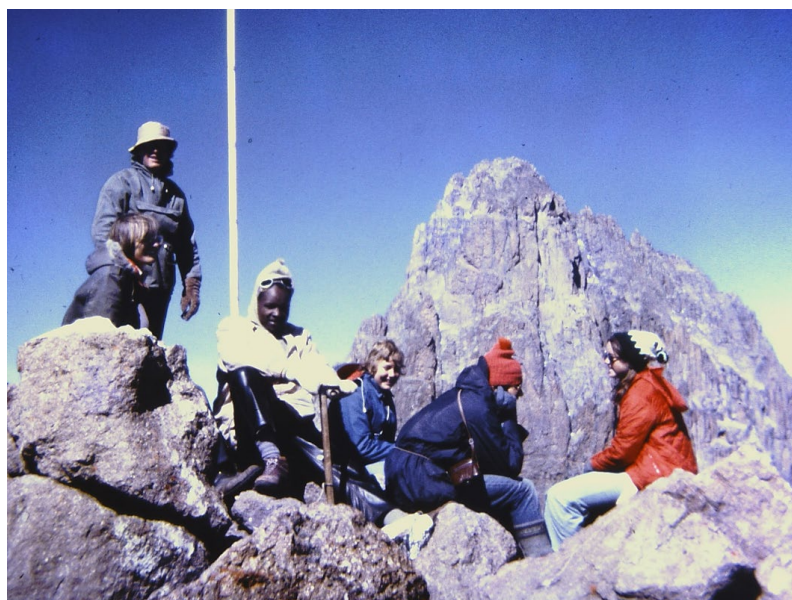


Teleki Valley, Aberdares in distance



Near Top Hut and Austrian Hut





Point Lenana summit – 1 January 1974

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

Left: Point Lenana in the distance



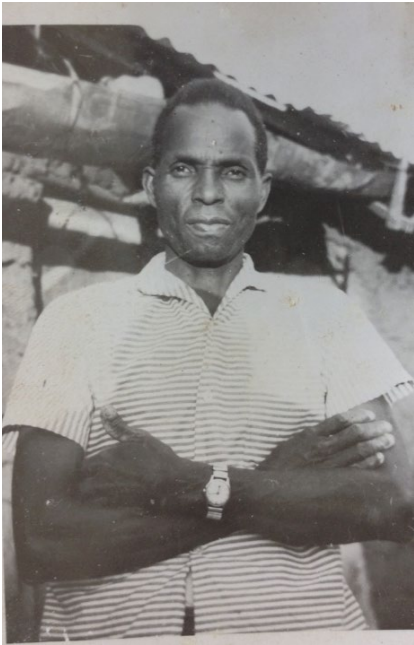
Ice caves on the way to Point Lenana



Sketch of view from the Ms' house, towards neighbouring houses at Riata Kitobo - Mount Kilimanjaro in the background
8 January 1974



Front of house of Thomas M, Kitobo Riata, Kenya (Taveta)
8 January 1974



Thomas M's father, Meshack M –
photograph kindly given to me during
my stay with Thomas' family in Taveta



Sketch of the North Pare mountains, Tanzania, from Riata Kitobo
9 January 1974

View over Lake Chala, Mawenzi in the
background
10 January 1974



View over Lake Chala
10 Jan 1974

Illustrations to follow Chapter 6



Mgalu High School – main school building from the foot of the valley close to my house

On the way to morning Assembly

February 1974



Form I students after Assembly filing out of the Form IV classroom. Students in higher forms have uniforms (far left of right picture)



The road to Figinyi, showing the village of Iriwa in the middle distance

Prayer Mount in the far distance

(3 February 1974)



"give thanks in all circumstances..."

A flamboyant tree



"Down into the dark steep sides of a valley, with the sun ahead cresting the tops of trees..."

(9 February 1974)



Mgalu High School – main school building, on the way to morning Assembly, on a sunny morning...



Left: lunch at the boy's Boarding Hostel



Right: Aggrey (centre) and two other teachers!



Lunch at the girls' Boarding Hostel...



Left: Nyali Beach, Mombasa

Below: shipping – modern (left) and traditional dhow (right)



Chris at Nyali Beach...



Illustrations to follow Chapters 7 and 8



Photographs of North-west Scotland –

Top left: Cul Mhor

Top right: Suilven

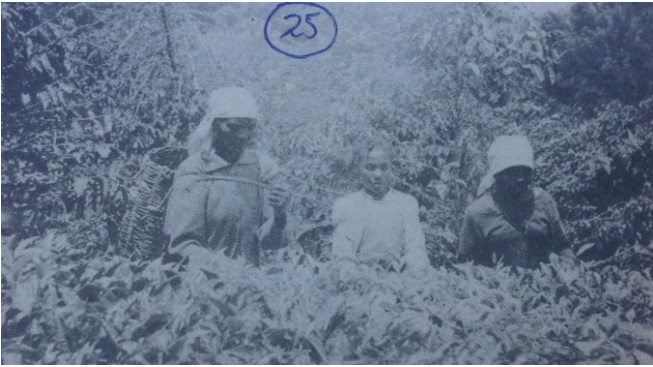
Bottom left: Inverpolly Lodge (near Lochinver)

Bottom right: waves breaking



My desk, and the black-and-white photographs of Scotland that inspired and encouraged me as I worked...

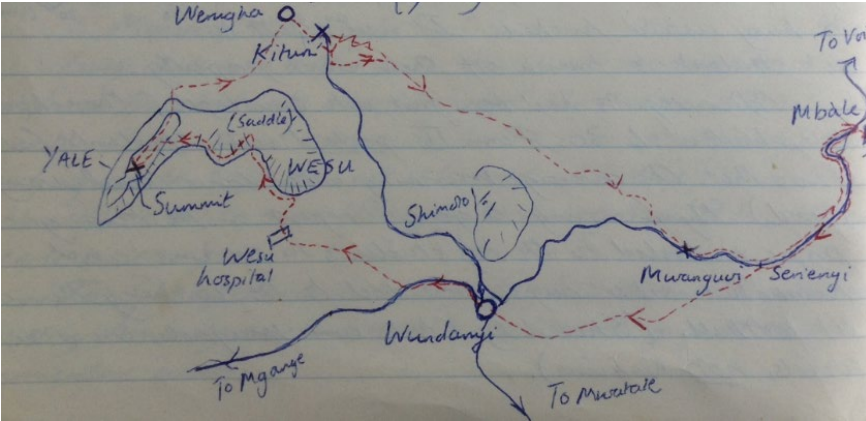
(some of the photographs are shown above)



Left:
Delirious tea-
pickers



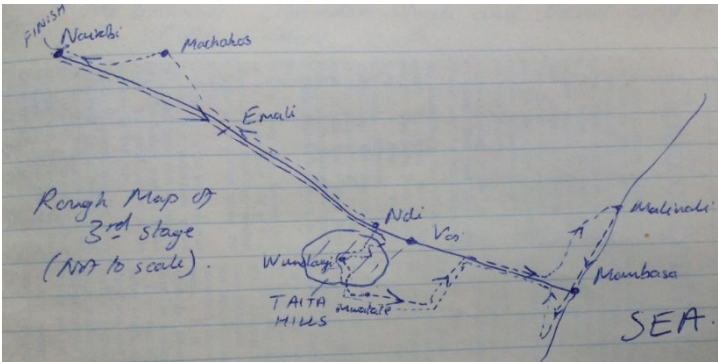
Right:
Maggie
Smith seated
demurely on
a donkey



Map showing safari to the top of Yale and back
(10 April 1974)



Good Friday (12 April 1974, top of Mount Susu: W family (left to right), Margaret, Susanna, Andrew, John, Catharine



The route of Stage 3 of the East African Safari Rally



Joginder Singh ('the flying Sikh') negotiating Espy's Corner



Approaching Espy's Corner



Joginder Singh arriving in Nairobi

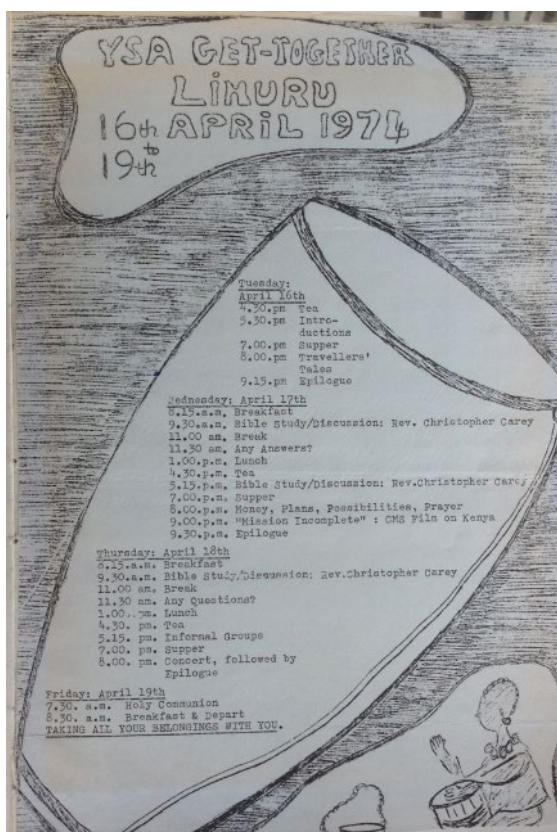


Arrival in Nairobi



Above: Our Nairobi to Mombasa overnight train was like this (Source: Google images)

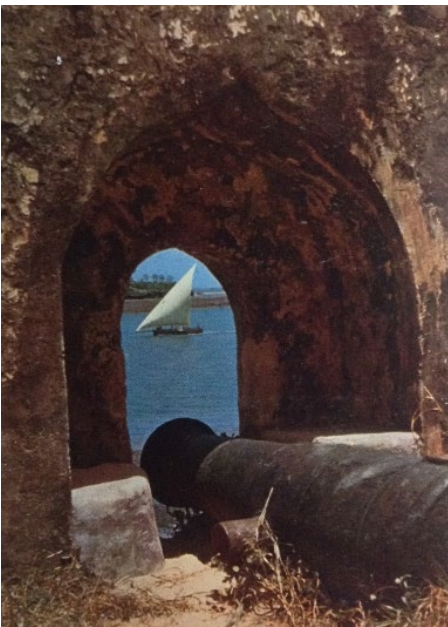
Right: Invitation and programme for YSA Conference at Limuru



Some YSAs after the YSA Limuru Conference: second and third from left are Beth and Julia, who were singing the gospel round Kenya; Chris in the centre; Laetitia and Richard on far right



Nyalali Beach, Mombasa



Fort Jesus, Mombasa



Fort Jesus, Mombasa

