

4/3/84 Maud managing a little better on the crutches after adjusting them on the advice of a one-legged man resident in the hotel, who was full of goodnatured banter. He was one of the long stay resident with whom we spent Sunday morning in the lounge; he asked Maud to come down for football practice at four o'clock and took it in good part when I said she could be on his team. Took it easy all day except for a dip in the rooftop pool.

5/3/84 Set off for Rustenburg. The western Transvaal has been hard hit by the drought; we passed parched mealie fields and were told at one of the roadside fruit stalls that the citrus crops for which the Rustenburg area is famous had been poor. However when we arrived at the Ananda in the Kloof it's grounds were looking pleasantly green - saved no doubt by the canopy of mature trees; there was still bougainvillea and other blossom. Reception was able to offer us one of the thatched bedrooms on the same level as the main building and not too far from it so we booked in for the night knowing that Maud could manage alright. If anything the hotel has improved but is still but R25 DBB. Had a restful afternoon and evening.

6/3/84 On to Zeerust to arrange cash from Standard Bank and check the account; still funds available! Beer and sandwiches at the Groot Marico Hotel, then headed north to Gaborone. The tarred road makes the 120kms a mundane trip, but there is still the sense of entering a different world at the border crossing; perhaps it is the all black immigration and customs staff with their deceptively casual air, or the fact that now white skin gives no privilege and indeed has to be specially circumspect in attending to the formalities; these latter now include a declaration of currency notes and travellers cheques - similar to that long demanded by Zimbabwe; however the official turned not a hair when he saw my statement that I had far more rand currency than I was supposed to have brought out of SA (though I had not realised this at the time); and why should he - it would help Botswana's balance of payments if I spent it! Having been told by Ray that there was a nice Motel on the road from the border at Flokweng we pulled in when we saw the sign for the Morning Star (why morning we never discovered - most travellers would be arriving in the evening) and having been shown a very well furnished bedroom on ground level (important) we booked in, finding out only later that this was not the motel Ray had meant - there is another one - the Oasis (how appropriate on the edge of the Kalahari!) nearer to Gaborone. Anyway having settled in at the Morning Star we decided to check the Holiday Inn, saw the Oasis on the way (P59 compared with our P35), called at the village and bumped (almost) into Ray in his Landrover, also checking PO Box 10114. They have finished their tour and will depart for Capetown as soon as the Landrover is sold. Arranged to meet. The Holiday Inn now charges P71 for double room so decided to stay put. Actually the only disadvantage of the Morning Star is that the bedrooms are not very far from the main lounge and restaurant and in the usual way of the blacks these can be noisy and whether resident or not they wander the whole grounds; some even appropriated our little patio, though they did depart, apologising, when they discovered we were in residence! Had our evening meal in the Chinese restaurant at the Oasis.

7/3/84 Insisted in seeing the manager at Barclays to clear up some confusion about a deposit regarding which I had had a fruitless correspondence; it took him only 5 minutes to confirm that I was right!

Tiring for Maud on crutches in the Mall so went to the Holiday Inn for a drink (we were recognised by two or three members of staff), called to look at the Golf Club, then returned to rest at the Morning Star. Later had a swim at the Gabs Club; only one pool filled and that not too clear; George Hassock still at his usual place at the bar gave a hearty welcome; also spoke to the railway man who says that David Adams, having retired from British Rail, is out again helping to organise the transfer of lines from Zimbabwe to Botswana. The Club grounds looked seedy and dry; most of the grass has gone except on the bowling green. No sign of David the caretaker; a new man is on the gate. Back in the hotel TV had Liverpool in an international match but the commentary was drowned by the hubbub.

8/3/84 Called at Finance but Da Silva not there; saw Joe Shannon who retires soon to his native Northern Ireland at Portstewart - gave him the names of Jack Sloane and Jack Erskine to contact. At Education met Pax's wife; also ascertained that teachers are still being recruited through ODA and British Council, but if single it would be for outside Gaborone; local contracts are also offered at about P12000 (say £7000) with 25% end of contract gratuity. Botswana Polytechnic is staffed through Personnel and is now completely localised. Had lunch with Ray and Elisabeth at the Oasis Chinese. They have a problem about selling the Land Rover because the buyer has rands but no pula and this creates an exchange control difficulty. However subject to this they hope to motor the man's Volvo to Capetown as part of the deal, this weekend. Our Kruger Park utensils, which we passed on to them last year, travelled 10000kms on their grand tour through Botswana, Transvaal, Swazi, Natal, Transkei, Cape, and SWA. Sadly they have been given to someone else so we'll have to buy more if we return to Kruger on the 12th, as planned. Rather late finishing lunch after exchanging all the news, and fairly tired, so took it easy the rest of the day.

9/3/84 Called again at Finance and saw Moroka Tshipinane who was sent from Taxes to understudy da Silva; he gave me all the news of Taxes; Ret and Dennis are back and are Commissioner and Deputy. Evans Hudspeth and Gibson are still there but Glassborough goes this month and Brady has already gone. Sandy, the local Collector, was killed recently, being knocked down by a car. Once trained, local Inspectors are being tempted out of the Department by better conditions in the private sector. Consequently with the complete ban on ex-pat recruitment in Gaborone because of the water and housing shortage the prospects are not very good for Taxes. Next called at Agriculture to see Khaliso Phokedi with whom I had had correspondence about bees; proved to be a local woman, in charge of animal production, but also very knowledgeable of bees; the Department is doing its best to encourage rural beekeeping in simple hives but she admits that it is a sideline to the main responsibilities, and the Rural Training Centres do not always give it much attention. The drought has of course caused problems though not so much in the west of Botswana eg Ghanzi, where rain, though not plentiful, is regular. Raiding of hives is common, probably following the tradition of harvesting wild swarms. One of the Ministry beekeepers, Dimeku, came with us to the apiary on Tlokweg road, below the village, set among the eucalyptus plantation (now sadly wilted). Some six stocks are kept in top-bar hives, the one which Dimeku opened being constructed of cowdung. The only fixed dimension seems to be the width of the top-bar 50mm to ensure

correct spacing of the combs. The hive was plagued by the same large black beetles which had entered my own stock in the village, plus some smaller ones which Dimeku said were attracted by the cow dung. The bees were on twelve frames (the hive accommodates up to twentyfour) and on these twelve the bees had drawn out the comb roughly, but not entirely, to the rectangular shape of the box; that is they had not kept to the semi-oval which is their natural nest. We looked at about six of the frames, wearing only soft safari hats as protection, and relying on the smoking of the frames with cow-dung smoke to keep the bees peaceful-which it did. Not that the bees seemed any way aggressive in the first place; Dimeku claimed that with proper handling they were always placid, though from my own experience I found this hard to believe. There is one clear advantage in the top-bar hive from this aspect ie that the brood nest is exposed only to the extent that one removes the bars; so that if before reaching the occupied combs one takes out only one bar, then in working towards the brood only one frame space at a time is exposed; all the others are still undisturbed because the top-bars are solid and have no cut-away bee-ways as in the commercial hives. This arrangement is only possible of course because there are no supers for honey storage; any surplus honey is in the outside frames of the main chamber. Without a queen excluder there is the risk of mixed brood and honey, but for the circumstances in which being promoted the system has to be accepted. But the idea of the brood nest never being fully exposed is very attractive, and would improve bee management if it could be adapted to European hives; probably it would mean doing away with supers-but are they really indispensable? Having said all this the stock opened was not in good shape, there being little surplus honey and brood not extensive. The hive legs are stood in cans of engine oil to prevent ants and insects; alternatively the hive is slung by wires from branches and the wires greased. Returned to the office and extended my thanks; it appears that Botswana will be represented at the International Conference on Beekeeping. By this time we were due to meet Ray and Elis abeth for lunch at the Cattle Post-the President Hotel's name for it's Grill room. They have completed their deal for the Land Rover and are departing Botswana tomorrow, so we had a celebration drink and promised to keep in touch in the UK; couldn't get them committed to visit NI! In the evening called at Andie and Jackie's-they are returning to the UK this year and intend to start a retail business; we had heard that Andy's job has been localised though he didn't say this; alternatively the cut back in housing in Gaborone may have reduced the Housing Corp'n staff. Anyway they are going and will be glad to have the family at hand for Adele's sake; she is coming on well. Still find them hard to understand. Harold Chase had a heart attack and is back in the UK. Went for a meal to the Chinese and were immediately greeted by John and Betu (pregnant); they had visited the UK but had lost our address so didn't get in touch. Both looked well though Betu's modern Afro style was a bit too much! Also saw the couple who bought our deck-chairs, one of which was stolen from them; they are doing well and intend to stay on as long as possible; the wife is running some sort of Import business. A dance at the Morning Star kept us up till 2am.; a riot of activity; certainly the odd drunken scuffle, to say the least!

10/3/84 The Morning Star dining room, which had been the venue for last night's dance was completely dis-organised this morning. On request we got a table cloth for our sticky table top and somehow the kitchen produced bacon and eggs and tea, but no toast—they had run out of bread! Still, in spite of the obviously amateur status of the young black staff, we rather liked the place and were sorry in a way that because they were booked out for Saturday night for a conference, we had to move up the road to the Oasis Motel for our last night; more style and a good swimming pool. After installing our luggage we went to the African Mall and found Lucas's new dry cleaning business. Both Lucas and Lesika were there and were delighted to see us and proud to show us round the premises. The extensive equipment took time and money to install, and it is a great credit to them that starting from scratch they have mastered the plant and the trade. Lucas gave his wife most of the credit because he is still working full time at the Prisons so she has the day to day running of the place, with assistance from the daughters, mainly Dorothy. To finance the business Lucas had to sell cattle from his post at Serule, but this was a blessing in disguise in that the drought would have enforced their slaughter later on. Arranged to meet for a meal in the evening. In the main Mall saw Lulu from Taxes, who sings in the Anglican Church. Why hadn't I called to see them at the office? Gave my apologies and asked her to pass on my regards. Had a drink on the President terrace, where Barry Eustace, who returns to UK soon, offered Maud a race (he is still on crutches from a car accident). Sunbathed and swam in the afternoon then on to David and Meg Evans for sundowners. David expects to retire this year and if Meg gets her way they will gravitate to Seattle; the only snag is that John is working in Gaborone so this is quite a pull; the eldest boy is in Manila on a more or less permanent posting with British Airways and that is not a suitable place for retirement! David looks frail but then he never had great physique; says he has recovered from the neck trouble. Discussed African Politics and found we had similar views; in particular there is no simple anti-apartheid solution. Bob McCullough has written to David enquiring whether there was any chance of Bob filling Sandy's vacant post. David says there is no possibility—the post is localised and in any case there is a complete ban on ex-pat recruitment in Gabs. It transpired that de Silva has been in Johannesburg but returned today. At the Oasis Chinese we kept our appointment with Lucas and Lesika and had a nice meal and chat. Their son Thebe is studying law and has to attend Edinburgh University where he can get the Roman-Dutch law which is the basis in Botswana; he goes in September; we said we would be glad to see him if he could get to NI on vacation. Lucas has had to go to Johannesburg for medical attention—they say he has a stomach growth but not sure what kind; he is getting treatment and feels a little better; although thinner he looks fit. After they had gone we watched the dancing—live bands both inside and round the pool; late to bed.

11/3/84 Visited de Silva at plot 5322 and met his wife; they are both Sri-Lankan but of the two different races so it makes it difficult for them to return while the trouble continues. Also he seems to be Anglican while she is RC! This didn't prevent Lloyd being quite scathing about the inflexibility of the RC church; dogmatism, he said, was an understatement! Regarding Taxes he was even more forthright;

Ret and Dennis don't have the drive, even if they had the ability; it needs someone to guide them independently of Evans, Gibson and Hudspeth; in any case the latter two do not have sufficient technical background. Apparently George was lucky to get a renewal of contract because of his persistent womanising including within the office; however he had worked a fast one by getting it passed at Personnel without Finance being told; George had done it through one of his "chicks"! De Silva is critical of Tony Keelin who seems loath to take firm action to collect tax from business friends. He wondered how he had managed to continue secondment from UK so long. One of de Silva's ideas is to introduce field audits as in the States but he can get no support in the Dept.- possibly because no-one has any experience thereof. He apologised that he had not written to me but explained that it was difficult to get funding, not to mention the special problems caused by the drought. Had a swim at the Oasis then packed our bags and set off for Rustenburg where we checked in at the Ananda. Retired early, asking for a 6.30 call in the morning.

12/3/84 Began the long trek of about 500kms to Kruger, taking the Pretoria road via Hartbeestport Dam. Found a roadside stall where we got supplies for the Park; potatoes, onions, melons, avocados, tomatoes (a box), grapefruit, and beans - all for R10 - oh, and a cucumber too. Didn't stop again till we reached Middleburg, shopped, and had a ~~toast~~ sandwich at the Midway Hotel. Then on past the turning for Belfast (!) and down from the highveld to Nelspruit, where we turned north for Whiteriver and refreshed ourselves at the colonial style hotel. That ~~was~~ was the last call before entering the Park by the Numbi gate; reached Pretoriousskop with only twenty minutes to spare before reception closed; tired and weary!

13/3/84 to 16/3/84 inc. Four whole days relaxing at Pretoriousskop, which is unique in Kruger in that it has a very nice swimming pool constructed on rocks; unfortunately the first two days were somewhat overcast so we didn't sit much round the pool, but the second two days were lovely. Did only short game drives outside the camp and saw kudu, baboon, buffalo, impala, warthog, duiker, tortoise and large lizard, and something not too common - the sable antelope. Also nearly ran over what we took to be a green mamba.

17/3/84 Marked St. Patrick's day by motoring over 200kms up to Letaba camp via Skukuza, Tshowane and Satara. Passed a dead giraffe killed by a lioness, of which latter no sign, but plenty of vultures. A troop of baboon sported on the road at one point, paying no heed to us. As we got further north the vegetation changed and we began to see zebra, wildebeest, and giraffe, and a greater variety of birds, including the beautiful rollers - there is no more breath-taking sight than the flash of the lilac breasted roller in flight. Which reminds me that at Pretoriousskop we had seen a bird resembling a lourie, but scarlet ~~feathers~~ wing feathers in flight; later we found this to be the purple crested lourie as opposed to the rather dull grey lourie. Back to our journey; we had a pleasant lunch stop at Satara camp, very glad of the shady restaurant terrace for the day, which had started cool and grey ~~when~~ when we set out at 6.30, was now very hot and sunny; the sort of day when only the hippos which we saw immersed up to their eyes in the dams seemed to have any sense!

Satara is a pleasant camp and along with Skukuza provides wild life film shows in the evening. Bought some Marula jelly—we had seen them collecting the marula fruit at Pretoriuskop for this purpose. Elephants are supposed to get drunk on the fruit in season; I tasted one ripe from the ground and enjoyed the refreshing flavour; there must be a lot of pectin in the fruit for the jelly sets well. Also we had bought buffalo meat in tins; good for stews and quite tender. Both these are Kruger Park products. It was a toil of a pleasure motoring in the heat of the afternoon from Satara to Letaba, mainly through Mopane bush except in the Olifants river basin, and any game obviously taking cover. In particular we saw no elephant, which was surprising. However we were glad to settle in at Letaba in a "hut" facing the river bed and almost immediately from the stoep we saw elephant watering itself; the first of many. We had booked three nights at Letaba and after the long drive here were content to stay around. Being a stone's throw from the camp boundary fence (protected by an electric wire) we could sit and survey nearly a kilometre of river and all the activity that this engenders. Hippo were in a pool just below, elephant came down from the bush for drink and ablutions (sometimes this was a mud bath!), waterbuck made it their regular habitat, shy kudu could graze in safety (we saw four with the magnificent male antlers), the odd buffalo browsed, impala came down in their abundant herds, warthog appeared, giraffe, and a lonesome bushbuck. A fish eagle kept watch. At first light in the morning I saw three spotted hyena traversing the sand banks and after dark one of these did a patrol ~~of~~ of our fence looking for scraps; the hyena is an unlovely creature though as a scavenger he performs a useful function; this one we saw at close quarters in the headlights of our neighbours' car and were just glad that the boundary fence was good and strong; he has a broad head with powerful jaws and at least the build of an ~~alsation~~ alsation.

18/3/84 and 19/3/84 At Letaba: the enforced rest in the Park has benefited Maud's ankle and for the first time she has been able to fit a sandal on; still some swelling but at least she can bear weight on it. The great virtue of the Park from this point of view is that outside the camp area one must be in the car, on pain of a fine. Another development is that since entering the Park on the 12th I have omitted to shave! The first day it was sheer laziness but then I thought why not grow a beard—one meets few people and only Maud can really complain (which of course she did!). So here I am now ~~with~~ with a week's growth and looking like convict 99. To be fair to the Parks staff they don't turn a hair when I visit the camp stores; perhaps they are used to this aberration on the part of visitors and in any case dare not offend overseas tourists! It is noticeable that most of the staff in the Park, and most of the visitors, are Afrikaners, and it irks us a little to have to listen to so much of the language, which sounds harsh and ungainly. However this is the Transvaal, which was the original Boer republic, so it's to be expected; it's probably the fact that we can't understand what is being said that annoys us.

20/3/84 An early start along the river past Engelhart dam and round to Oliphants camp, where we booked in for two nights. Oliphants is one of the prestige camps overlooking the Oliphants river and we would like to have stayed longer but from here we need two days to reach

Johannesburg comfortably, where we would like to arrive Friday. So we plan to have a stop Thursday night at Lydenburg or Belfast. By 10am we were installed in hut 23 at Oliphants, overlooking the river (for which they charge an extra R2 per night). Still it was worth it to be able to sit on the stoep and watch the animal movements over a wide area along the river, which lived up to its name by sporting herds of up to twenty elephants which we could watch quite clearly through the binoculars. There are also hippo, buffalo, waterbuck, zebra, giraffe and impala, but not lion, which we had seen on the river last year; though an American couple said they had seen lion only 3kms from the camp. In our own short trips from the camp we saw nothing unusual except two hippos "fighting" in the river, and a pair of duiker (subject to check). On our first night we had a braai of T bone steak; the black boy lit the fire but the rest was up to me; actually the meat was very good but the onion and potatoes didn't roast too well; left one potato on the fire and at suppertime it was gorgeous with salt-just like Halloween. This was our second braai-we had had one at Pretoriuskop grilling tenderised steak bought outside the Park, and it was-the right word-succulent. Enough of my culinary prowess; this morning I dropped three boiled eggs on the dirt road between the kitchen and the hut! We ate them though! Both Tuesday and Wednesday here have been extremely hot and we would hardly have survived without the air-conditioning in the hut during the afternoons.

21/3/84 A storm threatened in the late afternoon, but the lightning must have been about 10kms away and we got no rain; wish we had for even at 8pm walking out of the cool hut to the darkness outside was like entering an oven. Our evening meal was tinned buffalo meat and curried vegetables which warmed us even more! We retired to bed about 9pm and our sleep was broken sometime later by the storm which had now reached Oliphants; high winds, thunder and lightning continued most of the night, and with them heavy rain.

22/3/84 Temperature down greatly. Yesterday afternoon we had noticed that the animals seemed to have departed from Oliphants, and in particular the numerous elephants, and this morning they are again absent; had they some premonition of the storm and gone for refuge? Packed our bags and left for Letaba and Palaborwa; looked hard for lion but had no luck, although they had been reported near the camp yesterday. The Oliphants river has much more water this morning, similarly the Letaba river; stopped at the latter camp and got some atrocious coffee-partly due to the tainted water there. Not much game on the road though baboon did entertain us, and we saw a fish eagle and brown eagle and six sable antelope. Turned noon before we left Kruger Park. News on the car radio, says that quite a lot of rain has fallen in parts of SA and in Natal some bridges across the Umfolozi have been washed away! Reminds me that about two weeks ago there was a miniature tornado at Howick dam which lifted yachts from the water and dropped them on the shore. Just illustrates the violent nature of the climate. Reached Lydenburg for afternoon tea, then climbed the high veld towards Belfast, and surprise(!) it was raining hard when we arrived at the Belfast Hotel and checked in. Nothing special to recommend this typical Afrikan town except we had done enough motoring for one day and it was nice to say we had stayed here. The evening is positively cold and wet, just like NI! Had trout (for which the area is famous) for evening meal. Forgot to record that De Silva had told us that Chris and Roji had settled in Akron, Chris having a job.

23/3 Hokee Jasvanda

25/3 Plane to Copenhagen.

