

SA- 19/1/85 - 22/3/85

Norman + Maud

Schafiqul

given to their daughter Ann

The preparations for this trip were fraught with uncertainties. On the 7th Jan I went to the City for a scan because of the pain I had in the gall bladder region in December; I was given a clearance. Then Maud developed some sort of flouter and flashes in her right eye and here again Dr Finlay insisted on a visit to hospital but the RVH eye clinic (in the persons of Geraldine and Dr Logan) said there was nothing to worry about; that was on the 14th. Also he sent her for blood test and grouping at the Centre in Durham Street. The weather also turned cold with snow, both in NI and in England so that it was only on Friday 18th that there seemed a reasonable chance that Aldergrove and Heathrow would be open. We left home by taxi on Sat 19th via the Hannahstown road and although snow was still lying the road was good - no problem compared with the time we once took Jill to the airport and found ourselves (in the car) skating helplessly down a side road at the V junction. So we got the 10.30am BA shuttle having phoned Cathrin from Aldergrove so she could meet us at Terminal 1, where we also met Len & Rona Stroud (Botswana friends) with whom we had previously arranged to have lunch (at their flat in Uxbridge). Then after a pleasant chat over lunch (prepared mainly by Ruth - one of their adopted Chinese daughters) Len drove us back to Terminal 3 where we had an hour or so more with Cathrin before checking in for the Zambia Airways flight to Lusaka which left more or less on time at 7PM. Flight and food quite good - better than we had expected; but the DC 10 had not enough toilets to cope! Putting our watches two hours forward for local time it was about 6.30 am at Lusaka and even at this early hour warm moist air met us on our walk to the Airport building. We decide not to risk the trip into the city even though our onward flight to J'burg was not till 2.40pm so spent the morning resting in the departure lounge, which luckily was not busy - we even laid down for a nap. Contrary to our expectations about Zambia the food and drink was not too dear - perhaps the exchange rate for the Kwacha favoured us. So on to J'burg by SAA flight, arriving at Jan Smuts about 4.50 pm. Only problem was one Globetrotter suitcase badly dented (they had to try hard to achieve that!), but they have promised to replace it). Arrived pretty tired at the Jacaranda, which seems like a second home; still mostly the same staff and residents, including our friend from anodesia who lost a leg when working on the railways there. But the place is not so busy - ascribed by the receptionist Gail to the general recession. However Mr Harford at Leisure Mobile, from whom we hired a Toyota Corolla (as agent for Budget Rent a Car) said that tourism was still good; it was the import trade that was in difficulties because of the low value of the rand (now about 2.50 to the pound); (of course this suits us as internal prices in SA do not seem to have risen too much - brandy R7.50 a bottle and petrol R2.86 a gallon, but some clothing is dear). Monday 21st was a busy day fixing up the bank and the car, visiting the Tourist office and shopping in the Carlton Centre and Woolworths, not to mention Solly Kramers.

The newspapers here are analysing the effect of Senator Edward Kennedy's visit. There may be little respect for him personally but it is recognised that he is symptomatic of a widening of influence of the anti-apartheid lobby in America which could ensure the enactment of trade bans with S A very soon. Kennedy took care to see all the aspects which make good publicity for the anti-apartheid lobby and one naturally wonders whether he was really interested in seeing the other side of the coin; if not it bodes ill for S A in particular and southern Africa in general if the USA is able to contemplate the dire effects of weakening S A economically and politically without concern for the wider consequences. No one in the western world seems to think it necessary, and certainly not desirable, to spell out the political arguments on which apartheid policies are based, much less to examine what there may be by way of a viable alternative in the present complicated racial and cultural traditions in the area. Do they really want the country to sink into the autocratic/chaotic type of administration so prevalent in Africa? Not surely, unless they are hoping for a power vacuum which they can fill; but the communist bloc would love this situation too? On the conservation front S A is very concerned that it still manufactures a chemical allied to DDE and which is being used (illegally) by farmers, causing river pollution, especially in Natal. Then there is the not uncommon report of yet another shark incident on the Durban coast—an 18 year old youth had his right calf and foot savaged by a Great White shark while surfing off the unprotected Umbogintwini beach. Heavy rains round Johannesburg, causing flooding, were another headline; apparently it has been a good rainy season, generally speaking, and I heard that Botswana had also benefited.

On Tuesday 22nd we were ready to ~~MI/NI~~ leave J'burg by the MI/NI towards the Orange Free State (how about that for an independent Ulster?). We thought we had done well to find the right exit from the City and there was no problem until we realised that the dual carriageway had finished and we were on the ordinary road to Vereeniging—we suspect that the signs had got mixed up at some road works. Any way instead of sailing on ^{to} Parys and Kroonstad we got horribly tied up with Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark—heavy industry. A friendly motor-cyclist led us back onto the straight and narrow and we had a nice coffee at Loch Vaal to celebrate. Parys is a beautiful town—broad avenues with flower beds, graceful churches both ancient and modern, and stylish bungalows on large gardens. So many of the country towns have this spacious layout—presumably because land was never a problem. We reached the Willem Pretorius Reserve on the Allemanskraal Dam mid-afternoon and were allocated an excellent rondavel with all facilities overlooking the lake. The camp is actually a pleasure resort with swimming pool, tennis courts, bowling green, water sports etc, and very nicely kept too. As the warden of the Bloemfontein administration slyly said 'it was better than a National Park!

At R22 a night for the rondavel, which would have slept four, we thought it good value. (the Jacaranda had been R34 for the two of us DBB and we were quoted a weekly rate of R160—also quite reasonable). There was thunder and some rain overnight and on Wednesday morning it was overcast. We travelled through the Pretius game reserve for about two hours to the eastern gate and in that time saw a good proportion of the available wild life—Black Wildebeest, Eland, Blesbok, Springbok, Zebra, Mountain Reedbuck, Impala, Ostrich, White rhino, Steenbok, Mongoose, and Baboons. There were also Hawks and Francolin. The White Rhino family—Ma and Pa and baby were impressive and slightly menacing but as usual the baboons stole the show: they are just naturally amusing and completely unselfconscious. One large male was serving a wife as we approached and then sat on the roadside, legs akimbo, displaying himself without concern or embarrassment: but then, as far as we know, the baboon never stood naked and ashamed in the Garden of Eden. Maybe he was lucky! The drive passed the morning and by lunchtime we had reached Senekal and before picnicing we had a drink in the hotel, where the pregnant receptionist was full of enthusiasm for the scenery going south-east along the Lesotho border, so instead of heading west to Winburg as we had intended we took the road to Marquard, Clocokan and Ladybrand, where I made an enquiry of the Toyota dealer about front wheel drive Corollas: he said they were only introduced here last October so I really have no complaint that my hire car is rear wheel drive, much as I would have preferred FWD for any untarred roads. Then we turned west towards Bloemfontein, thinking to spend the night at Thaba Nchu, partly because that was as far as we wanted to motor, but mainly because of the name! We should have known better: like Umzimkulu, in Transkei, which once drew us, Thaba Nchu was the epitome of a one horse town, all dirt roads and tatty buildings: it transpired that it is in fact in one of the scattered areas of Bophutatswana but has missed out in any development: no advert for the homelands! Kennedy should have been here! Population almost entirely black otherwise it would have served as a film set for a western. We checked the hotel but dismissed the idea of staying without inspecting the bedroom; instead we kept on the Bloemfontein road in spite of the late hour and luckily we hit the Mazelpoort Dam Resort after exceeding the 100kph speed limit for about 90kms. This resort is run from Bloemfontein on the same lines as Pretorius and is in beautiful grounds on the bank of the Modder river. We got a comfortable self catering cottage for R16.50. The swimming pool was at least 50 metres long, and I sampled it before the evening meal and again before breakfast. After travelling 327 kms in the heat it was just the thing! (the previous day we had done 334 kms). These distances are not great by SA reckoning—one seldom goes through built up areas and in between there are vast horizons of country with few dwellings to be seen. Farms are on a large and where there is water or irrigation they are very productive.

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On Thursday 24th we were in Bloemfontein before 10am, shopping at Checkers for food, and filling up with petrol—quite a surprise to find it had gone up overnight from 63 cents to 89 cents a litre, but it still works out at less than £1.60 a gallon. Then on 177 kms to Kimberley, where Maud wanted to see whether De Beers' shop at the 'Big Hole' had any cheap gems: unfortunately not, but we had a nice lunch in their cafe and enjoyed seeing again some of the relics and buildings from the old prospecting days; also an exhibition of diamonds including the first ever found in SA (at Hopetown) and known as Eureka, beautifully cut and nearly 1/2 inch across. We needed to put on some more mileage so left Kimberley on the road west to Campbell and Griquatown (another 160 kms). Campbell is only a hamlet yet the only habitation in the 110 kms from Kimberley; the space in between is all rough bushland given over largely to merino and karakul sheep, or goats, and even these animals were not apparent in great numbers. The historical reason for Campbell existing at all is that it was found to have good spring water and was chosen as a site for a mission by the Dissenting Missionary Society (later the London Missionary Society) shortly after the Society began its African ventures around 1810. The first mission north of the Orange river was at Griquatown (previously called Clearwater because it also had good water supply) 50 kms west of Campbell; it was here that Mary Moffat, daughter of Robert Moffat, was born in 1821, later to marry David Livingstone. The original mission building is now a museum. Neither Campbell nor Griquatown seem to have developed much since those early days; true, Campbell has its Livingstone bottle store (immediately in front of the old mission church), a Dutch Reformed Church, and a few modern bungalows, but the Showgrounds would contain the whole of it. Griquatown is larger, being in the centre of an asbestos mining area, and has a tiger's eye factory (this gemstone is actually a silicified asbestos); more importantly for us it has one hotel—Hotel Louis—where we had to stay the night although the establishment had nothing to recommend it. Some bedrooms were under reconstruction and to reach no 14 from the rear car park we had to negotiate piles of old timber and passages only partly floored. The black porter was very amiable but when he found that the bed lights did not work he tinkered with a Heath Robinson collection of loose wires and promptly fused everything. So on to no 15 where we had one bed light working but not the toilet (they rectified this later!). Fortunately we did not need an evening meal as we had picniced on the way; the bar was the old style no women, walls covered with posters and some of them (by SA standards) quite risqué; its swing and louvered half-doors to the street could have opened to Clint Eastwood anytime. The three men drinking at the bar were talking in Afrikaans and the hotel manager, who was also acting as bartender, clearly was ill at ease trying to talk with us in English. It merely emphasised what we had noticed throughout

trip in Orange Free State and Northern Cape i.e. that Africans is the common language; few of the Boers find it easy to converse in English and the blacks know only Afrikaans; which is very disconcerting seeing that it is the blacks who do most of the 'front work' in garages hotels etc. In Griquatown we found it especially sad that the efforts of Moffat and Livingstone had merely preceded a takeover by Boers; only in Kimberley apparently is there still an English speaking influence. Breakfast in the hotel was all that we expected; an indifferent fry; Maud's included a sausage she would not eat. So we were glad to leave (after paying R35 for the privilege) to visit the Moffat Museum which has interesting letters and documents from the early days. There are white sands (or roaring sands) west of Griquatown but none of the maps etc identified exactly where to reach them; they are white because they are entirely of quartz and any wind causes them to 'roar'. We spent nearly an hour on dirt road locating them and even then we could only view them from a distance. The search also cost us about 75 kms of uncomfortable gravel and dirt motoring before we rejoined the main road to Groblershoop, where we had a very welcome Lion beer in the hotel. Now we are on the track of the Orange river, which we again cross at Upington, where we were glad to spend the night at the municipal pleasure resort known as the Island-bungalow with kitchen toilet shower etc and with a nice swimming pool in the grounds bordering the river. (Day's run 325 kms) On Sat 26th on to Keimoes and Kakamas through vineyard country irrigated by the river water from the Orange, which is now flowing westwards to its mouth on the Atlantic in S W A. The contrast between the fertile irrigations and the surrounding semi-desert is remarkable. Besides grapes for wine and raisins the farms grow lucerne (which yields quite a good honey) and this crop is very profitable because it matures every six weeks. It is dried and baled for animal feed. There is also some cotton grown. It being Saturday most of the blacks are off work and are thronging round the shopping centres, all dressed up and in the case of the women this often means something quite stylish; they are fond of wearing berets at an attractive angle. Generally we found the faces, not to say the figures, of these Griquas, Hottentots or Bushmen, a little curious; heads are comparatively small and the profile almost concave, mouth nose and eyes compressed together, thin lipped and slits of eyes. Quite a lot also had the two middle upper front teeth missing, which added to the rather disconcerting appearance. None of them were unpleasant to us but there seemed a fair number who might have mental or physical disability. Generally not so attractive in appearance or manner as the Tswana people. After 150 kms we reached Augrabies National Park, situated on the Orange river at a stretch where the water has cut a deep and impressive gorge below the Augrabies Falls. As a game reserve it is poor - we saw only Klipspringer (a delightful small deer), rock rabbit, springbok and Meercat (like a very large squirrel with very bushy tail and grey and white banded pelt), but having seen the terrain this is not surprising; it is like a moonscape, with

only sparse vegetation growing on the arid sand and gravel in the few areas not covered by boulders and rock slabs; one such is termed the 'Moon Rock'. Although the reserve is no more than 15 kms long, motoring round it was like doing an assault course! We enjoyed the one night we stayed at the camp- I excelled myself at pork chops on the brai, but did not think it worth staying longer, so left on Sunday morning the 27th. By the way our neighbour at the hut was a Greek, a psychiatrist working in private practice in Capetown; he came sometimes, he said, to recharge his own batteries, but really he seemed very fit and alert. I offered him the use of my brai fire but he declined because he was fasting: I don't think he meant it as an implied rebuke on the size of my tummy! The staff at the camp office had done their best to persuade us to travel to Gemsbok National Park on the border with Botswana and S W A, and where we had reservations but we could not be convinced that about 350 kms driving on dirt road to Tsee Riverien would be good for us in the present heat; at the most optimistic estimate it meant six or seven hours solid driving, watching the surface all the way (when booking we had not quite appreciated this); so we deferred the matter by returning to Upington, from where there might be a better route. It being Sunday the road back to Upington was quiet and near Keimoes there was thundery rain; we stopped at a roadside stall where I bought a jar of lucerne honey and a bag of golden sultanas- both local produce of course- and both excellent. Then at the hotel we were served with Lion beer (against the regulations because we were not having food) as companions of the proprietor's mother who chatted and told us a lot of local information; in spite of living here all her life she is still not used to the heat- why she asked had we come to this area in their summer, which was notorious for some of the highest temperatures in S A- 50C could be recorded? We had no answer but ignorance, and counted ourselves lucky that although hot, it was not desperately so. So back to the Island camp, thronged with Sunday visitors, where we had a bath before our evening meal; fortunately we were not braising for by now the storm had gathered round Upington and soon it was raining heavens hard- we enjoyed seeing it for a change! But not so keen on the lightning. A young South African from a neighbouring bungalow came for a chat; he worked for the local Afrikaans newspaper 'Gemsbok' and did tour work for the Tourist Board as well; leading parties to Namaqualand to see the Spring 'daisies' and to the Gemsbok Reserve; his advice to us was that rather than do the long trek to Gemsbok ourselves we should visit the local Upington reserve, which has the unusual Gemsbok deer within a small area; this confirmed my inclination not to do the extra 500 kms on dirt road so we decided to stay at Upington another night. He was also rather radical about apartheid- he said the policy was beginning to react even on the Afrikaners- foreign antipathy was beginning to have effect. He thought Kennedy's visit had been a good thing in highlighting the poor hostel conditions provided by the administration for blacks who came to the urban centres in search of work.

However by this time of the evening he had a fair amount of drink taken so we took his chatter with some reservation. When we asked why in spite of pioneering this area in the 19th century there were so few English descendants he made some comment that they had been kept down, but he did not elaborate; we later heard a little more about this at Kuruman. On Monday morning visited a Mr Coetzee who sells gemstone jewelry from his residence; says he makes it all himself though we doubted this; however prices were reasonable so got a blue lace agate bracelet, a tiger eye pendant and a similar one in the deep 'bull's eye'. Bought six bottles of local semi-sweet white wine at the winery at about 50p a bottle. After lunch toured the game reserve seeing Gemsbok, Red Hartebeest, Eland, the Gemsbok being by far the most handsome. Brai in the evening-roast potatoes and steak. Tuesday 29th to Olifantshoek, seeing the bush get steadily more fertile, passing the iron and manganese mines at Sishen, and arriving at the Kuruman Moffat Mission Church for a picnic lunch. This mission has a fascinating history-a stone church built 1838 and seating 1000 people, work on the site at Seodin having started in 1824 because of the plentiful supply of spring water channeled to it from the Kuruman Eye-a fountain welling up from underground and producing 18 million litres of clear water a day. Had an interesting chat with the two women of Yorkshire origin in the museum and shop now in what was Moffat's manse, and with Father Alan Butler-an Anglican clergyman who at one time was in Gaborone and who knew Revd Albert Locke, Derek Jones and Ken Smith. I put to him the question I had raised in Upington-why the English speaking influence had declined in what was our exploration and development. Butler's explanation was that from the time of Verwoed as Prime Minister there had been a strong pro-Afrikaans line, coupled of course with the apartheid policy; as a consequence trading, which had been largely in English hands, became monopolised by the Africaaners. Butler had no sympathy for apartheid-said it was disastrous for the country, but did not spell out what alternative political development he thought viable. Left Kuruman with regret to get accommodation for the night at Swartfontein Resort near Vryburg. Nice rondavel and swimming pool. 428 kms run today but somehow not too tiring-temperature not so high. Wednesday 30th our modest aim was to reach Zeerust via Mafikeng (the Bophutatswana spelling of Mafeking). However when we got to the said Mafikeng the museum with its many relics of the Boer War held our attention so it was too late to go on to Zeerust in time to catch the bank and attend to some business (the account still runs there from our Botswana days). So after a little dithering we decided to really treat ourselves by staying overnight at the Mmabatho Sun hotel just outside Mafikeng. It has an opulent air which after travelling we did not quite match, but by producing the Visa card they let us in (at a price) and we spent the rest of the day relaxing in luxury. We wandered round the casino losing small coins steadily on the one armed bandits and I sampled one of the risqué films in hotel private cinema. For starter at the evening meal I had Cape calamari-a large helping, and the rest of our meal was equally enjoyable.

Back in the casino we were fascinated by the addiction of both whites and blacks to gambling, whether on the machines or on the tables. Stayed up till midnight. Breakfast was on the poolside terrace and even at 8.30am it was pleasantly warm. Reached Zeerust mid-morning, saw the bank, picniced on the hill overlooking the town on the road to Gaborone, and got through the border formalities at the Tlokweng gate by 3.30pm. A detailed account of currency is now required on the Botswana side. Discovered at Gaborone that the hotels were practically all full (we had no booking) so had to settle for the rather dowdy Morning Star motel, hoping that there would be room at the Oasis tomorrow. Anyway we have a bed!

Took a quick look round the village and the Holiday Inn (now the Gaborone Sun - it must have changed hands) but were not impressed - any changes seem to be for the worst. Had a Chinese meal at the cafe near the Oasis and met Derek Jones and wife - to whom we passed on messages from Len and Rona and from Alan Butler. Yesterday's and today's mileages 177kms and 211kms.

3/2/85

Dan, Pam + Ken, Neil + Sue + Stephen.

Having the weekend in Gaborone seeing quite a few friends, then in to Louisa Park. Temperatures are fairly high, but we are snowing! Maud stumbled in a ditch here but did not strain her ankle! Hope all is well at home and the winter nearly over. Could you let Stephen see this please? By the way our car registration number is JXD 290T.

Love

Mum + Dad

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Thursday evening 31st Jan we ate at the Chinese restaurant at the Oasis where we met Derek Jones and wife to whom we passed on regards from Len & Rona and Alan Butler. Friday morning called on Jacqui Richardson to check the post- there has been nothing for some time. She is glad of the facility of the box because there is a waiting list for them; she will try to transfer it into their name when it is due for renewal. By chance we saw Barry Eustace at the President, still on crutches because of a car accident and likely to remain so. However he has turned his disability to account by doing a sponsored walk for charity from Francistown to Lobatse, and is presently organising a similar walk from Alexandria to Johannesburg; then he thinks he will resettle in England with the two children; his divorced Botswana wife Georgina is now operating a restaurant of that name in their former home opposite Camp Hyperstore in the village. At noon we checked in at the Oasis Motel and later returned to town to call on Agriculture and Finance. At the former the beekeeping officer was on leave but at the latter I met de Silva who invited us to his house over the weekend; the veto on ex-pat recruitment still exists because of the drought and consequent housing embargo. An ex Customs man is now Commissioner while Evans Hudspeth and Gibson are the main team. While I was speaking to de Silva Maud, who I thought was chatting to Priscilla the ex Taxes typist, went for a visit to Frasers store and lost her way; a policeman offered her help but this proved to be an ordeal because he took her to the local depot across the railway line where the attitude was that she might be under the influence of drink or drugs! So she refused their further 'help' and got a lift in a taxi with a black girl we had brought into town; in this way we met while I was cruising around looking for her. Back to the Oasis exhausted! Saturday morning we did the usual circuit of the Mall and met several acquaintances- Wendy Hodgson, Bunny Adams etc and heard news of others. In the African Mall called at the Dry cleaning shop but Lucas and Lesika were not there- the daughter Dorothy said they were up at the cattle station but would be back Monday. In the evening had an Indian curry with the Richardsons- he is a Quantity Surveyor doing five years in Botswana on sabbatical leave from the UK civil service- principally it seems so that their children can be paid for at Merchant Taylors public school. Sunday we took it easy so far as a charity pop group at the swimming pool would allow and went round to de Silva's for drinks before eating in the evening. Monday managed to catch Phokedi at Agriculture and heard about the Nairobi conference organised by IBRA. Some women had been taken from Botswana because it is hoped that they, rather than the men, will take an interest. It is hoped to restart a beekeeping project at Kanye but there is a problem in getting a VSO or IVS volunteer while housing is still vetoed. Drought is still the main hindrance to honey production here. Later saw Lesika- her family are all well and Lucas is now retired from the prison service. Thebe is at Edinburgh and will not be returning home during vacations, but staying with friends- he may get in touch.

The subject of apartheid cropped up at de Silva's; he is dead against it and argued that a unified country with universal suffrage was workable because no single black tribe—even the large Zulu block—could monopolise the parliament. But he did not say how the minority white, Indian, and coloured groups could expect to fare under black domination. The precedent of Zimbabwe is not encouraging; many whites who wish to leave just can't get their money out of the country—de Silva's answer is that Britain should have provided the funds to allow them to do so; but in any case white South Africans would have no such safety net. Perhaps however much one dislikes the general attitude of the Afrikaaners and their reluctance to dismantle even the minor social irritations of separation-toilets, beaches and bottle stores, for instance—they are at least keeping a stable and relatively prosperous society for all groups in spite of trading antipathy from abroad; the Zulu chief Bhutolezi recently told the Americans that their idea of a trading boycott would be of absolutely no help to the blacks—they would be the first to suffer in any set-back in the SA economy. Judging by the newspaper opinion here the pressure for change is likely to come mainly from within. For instance two corner stones of apartheid policy—the Mixed Marriages Act and Section 16 of the Immorality Act (forbidding sex across the colour bar) are already being flouted; but the Government has again jibbed at revoking these provisions because of the complications that would arise in working the Group Areas Act etc. To come back to Botswana; at the Oasis I met Solly Essack, who seems to have some sort of control of the Motel (although de Silva says it is owned from SA). Solly remembered me from our encounters in Taxes, and bore no illwill. He and his two younger brothers pioneered grocery stores in Botswana and it was always a bit of a mystery how they financed everything; when we left they had the Camp Hyperstore in the village (the name is a bit exaggerated—it is a modest supermarket). Anyway Solly said that 'they' were on the point of opening a new motel at Kasane near Chobe and if we were interested in going up (as we were) he would make sure that there were rooms furnished, even if the rest of the facilities were not completed. However we never took him up on this because time did not seem to allow us to get up there and reach Kruger in time for our bookings; a pity because we like the Chobe river. A side light of this is that the Indians (of whom the Essacks are an example) seem to do for developing Africa what the Jews have done elsewhere in the world i.e. provide the trading initiative by living on a shoestring. Not that Solly now needs to worry about that—he drives a Mercedes. There were no storms while we were in Botswana but a report from Zimbabwe said that over one hundred people had died there this season from lightning. Farther two men had been killed somewhere in SA on the word of a witch doctor who said they were responsible for lightning striking and killing people in a hut. The primitive is still not far away!

We left Botswana on Tuesday morning and after visiting Sun City and deciding it was not for us we spent the night at the Ananda near Rustenburg (an old favourite)

With GST. the Anabada is now R55 double B&B, which is enough considering that the bungalows are now old fashioned and do not have air-conditioning, but the superb position in the Rustenburg Kloof, and swimming pool, make up for a lot. Besides, the alternatives at Sun City, even the cheapest cabanas, are not attractive because everything is so artificial; the things which are the draw at Sun City—the casino, the uncensored cabaret, and the similar films, must steadily be losing their attraction. So we spent a quiet night at the Ananda, with morning tea brought to the bungalow at 6.45am, followed by a swim, then breakfast. After morning shopping in Rustenburg we headed for Thabazimbi to the north: like other places which have attracted because of their names Thabazimbi was disappointing: it exists because ore is being extracted from the surrounding hills, resulting in vast tips where the hills should have been. Still, the vegetation was becoming steadily more lush, and this continued as we turned eastwards to Warmbaths. Here we stayed the night at the pleasure resort based on the local mineral springs. It should have been very pleasant but wasn't, mainly because the rather extensive grounds were not charted for the stranger, so we spent quite a bit of time finding our chalet, and our way around. The hot mineral spa facilities were closed by the time we found them (4.45pm) but we got a swim in the hot mineral water pool: all very relaxing but not invigorating for a swim. Did our first Brai of the tour: quite passable. On Thursday the 7th went north through Nylstroom, Naboomspruit, Potgietersrus and Pietersburg to Tzaneen and Duwelskloof, in northern Transvaal, where we stayed the night at the pleasure resort, not the best of its kind, but adequate; it suffered a little from the fact that the heavy rains which had inundated southern Transvaal had now arrived in the north so the luxuriant mountainous scenery was not at its best; still we had passed tea plantations and other crops and had bought fruit quite cheaply at the roadside stalls. Duwelskloof was surprisingly busy with heavy traffic, some of it from the forestry plantations, and on the hills above the town were luxury housing developments at Panorama and Waterfall. The prosperity of the area was in contrast to the portion of the Venda homeland which we passed through on the way from Pietersburg to Tzaneen: not that this was not potentially as rich in agriculture and forestry—it just has not been developed. On Friday the 8th we returned to the NI at Louis Trichard amid gathering clouds and leaving that town through the pass at Wylies Poort we ran into rain, which became very heavy as we approached Tshipise, where we were to spend two nights at the Mineral Spa resort. Checking in here we experienced the same unsmiling curtness as we had felt at Warmbaths and which seems typical of the Transvaal Afrikaaner; I am not saying they cannot be kind, but bonhomie is not their strong point. In fact at Tshipise we thought that there was some indifference on the part of the staff when we discovered that with plenty of rondavels available we had been allocated one in which the fridge was defective: when we complained on the Saturday morning and asked to move the first response was that there were no other huts free but as this was patently incorrect we were moved from B6 to B7—and B6 was never relet!

Apart from this the place was very pleasant, lovely grounds, hot and cold pools, shopping facilities, hotel and bar—all in the hills miles from other habitation. On Saturday visited Messina—the last town before the border crossing to Zimbabwe at Beit Bridge: also saw a baobab tree (known here more usually as the Cream of Tartar tree) which is said to be 4500 years old. These trees are scattered round the countryside, and the older ones are usually protected. Speaking to a resident at Tshipise he said he would not travel to Zimbabwe, had no time for Mugabe, and thought the 'kaffir' would as soon kill you as speak to you. Maud had a reminder of this comment when we were motoring out of Tshipise for one of a group of black girls at the roadside grimaced and drew her finger across her throat! Any way on Sunday the 10th back to Louis Tichard en route to Kruger at the Punda Maria gate. From Louis Trichard on it turned to rain, the low cloud and mist obscuring the hills; nevertheless the countryside was luxuriant around Levubu, with babana mango avocado and other fruit plantations. Soon we entered Venda and there was a change in the landscape—not so well tended and cultivated. We tried for morning coffee at a rather rough looking 'Resting Motel' but this was beyond their scope, so we motored on and finding roadside fruit stalls we bought five mango for R 1 (50p), a dozen good sized tomatoes for the same amount, and similarly 14 bananas; we thought that with the pocket of oranges we already had we were well set for Kruger Park; the only problem was keeping them cool so they didn't ripen too fast. Eventually we did get morning coffee at Sibasa, the rather unkempt and only partly developed Venda capital; still it had the Venda Sun hotel which was a welcome haven in the rain, and with the usual comforts of the chain hotels. Like all these big hotels in the black provinces (where none of the restrictive S A laws operate) the Venda Sun caters for gambling and sex in the shape of a casino and uncensored cinema (or perhaps one should say a more liberal censorship). Most of the hotel staff were black and very smart too. However like all the homelands the immediate problem appears to be over-population in the present state of development. When we got to Punda Maria the heavens opened and although we had a short run into the area of the camp we were glad to have a simple meal and settle down; however in the rain we did see a pack of wild dogs (our first) and quite handsome in appearance if not in character; they were at the roadside but fortunately took no notice of us. On Monday 11th headed north to Pafuri, on the border with Zimbabwe and Mozambique but as the road was closed we could not get right to the famous Limpopo river: its tributary, the Levubu was in full flood. The Punda Maria rondavel had the usual camp regulations pinned behind the door. These contain the cryptic message "In the unlikely event of armed emergency, stay calm(!), switch off lights, lie flat on the ground in a safe place, and await further instructions over the public address system. Your safety is in the hands of trained personnel". One wonders what they have in mind—perhaps insurgents from Zimbabwe or Mozambique or just an affray with poachers!

From Pafuri one must perforce turn south, passing Baobab hill which in the 1890's was an outspanning point for the wagon trains recruiting labour from Mozambique for the J'burg gold mines. Didn't see much game on the way down to Shingwedzi camp, where we were given one of the larger bungalows for no extra cost because it is the slack season. Unfortunately this placed us next to two families with young children who joined forces for a meal in the evening and created bedlam with their loud discussins and crying infants. We think they were Afrikaans though the language could also have been Dutch or German. Maud, in her usual fashion, told them off. Happily the trouble was not repeated the next two nights because they were moving on. Shingwedzi is a pleasant camp on the banks of the river of the same name, not far from where it flows across the border into Mozambique; it has a swimming pool—a blessing in the heat which had now returned after the rains; and the rondavel area is frequented by glossy starings and squirrels. On Tuesday 12th we had quite a good morning's stour along the river on the S51 dirt road as far as Dibene, where the river crosses the border. Entertained by a large family of baboons, and another of vervet monkeys. Saw our first elephant of this visit, also red hartebeest, warthog, impala, kudu and waterbuck. Lion had been reported not far from the camp but though we tried the likely area in the late afternoon we had no luck. Wednesday we saw little further game and in fact spent most of the afternoon at the pool. Late in the evening there were two magnificent Kudu bulls near the camp, but the light was too poor for photos; however round Shingwedzi I have taken quite a bit of cine on Billy's camera; let's hope my technique is adequate! Because of the heavy rains many of the dirt roads have been closed in the Park generally, but round Shingwedzi the only one we found impassable was the S52 loop; this not because of bad surface but because in the usual practice of these secondary roads they never bridge the streams and rivers but rely on fords, which is alright in dry weather but hopeless when they are in flood. One such ford made myself and another driver, who was there at the same time, chicken out—if the car hadn't held it's ground we would have gone over a small waterfall. But we made three or four other crossings without mishap. Thursday the 14th we were due at Olifants camp for two nights so made an early start—8.15am. Picnicked at Mooiplass site where a couple told us there were hippo in a dam further south, also lion on the roadside. Saw the hippo but not the lion. On to Letaba camp for lunhh: no elephant on the Letaba river, which seemed unusual, but one large croc. Got to Olifants by 2pm; camp much improved since we were here last; the panorama over the Olifants river still magnificent and the surrounding bush looking far greener than we can ever remember; but no olifants! Plenty of hippo and baboon and one solitary buffalo; perhaps the latter are all in the tins of buffalo meat which are on sale in the camp store! Friday morning the 15th we managed, for the first time this trip, to be out of the camp gates immediately they opened at 5.30 am. to a rather cloudy dawn, joined by others who are persuaded that this is the

real time to see game, especially the predators. At first it seemed that the animals had not followed our example of getting out of bed early (wise creatures) then in the half light we made out impala zebra and hartebeest but no sign of the lion we were hoping for. In spite of the camp notice about dirt roads being closed we decided, after reaching the main Olifants river bridge, to turn onto the S91 and had hardly reached that when an approaching jeep flagged us down and two fellows told us that there were lions only about two kms along it. They were right - shortly a pride of two males, two females and two cubs came towards us along the dirt road and not heeding us, passed on to a small pool of water, where they drank their fill. The two cubs were not quite so indifferent, and eyed us suspiciously when accidentally I leaned on the car horn (a blooming nuisance on the face of the steering wheel), but eventually bounced off to join the adults. Got, I hope some good cine and transparency shots of the group, although the light was still not first class. By the time we left them the pride was disappearing into the bush. But our day was made! - and it was still only about 7am. Returned to the same spot before lunch but no sign of the lions: again in the evening, and this time in the company of other cars (the news had got around!) we saw the pride still at their daytime rest under the shade of thorn trees; they didn't appreciate all the disturbance and shifted position; next morning when I again searched for them at 6am they were gone. Still I did see elephant and giraffe before returning to Maud, who I had left sleeping but who was now preparing breakfast. Thereafter we struck camp, a little reluctantly because Olifants is such a pleasant spot; even though apart from the lion there had not been so much game: elephant, for which it is famed, were quite absent from the river below the camp. On that river we saw only Hippo, both in the water and grazing, some baboon, who made a great noise in what seemed to be a family argument one evening, and a solitary buffalo. So on Saturday the 16th, a very hot day, we made the long trip (220kms) to Pretoriuskop where we were to spend three nights. We started on the short cut on the dirt road via Balule, where the caravan site is at present out of action because the concrete causeway approach across the river is over run by the flood water; fortunately we didn't need the crossing! Our journey along the dirt road was rewarded by a lone elephant, drinking at a small stream which crossed the road, and we had to wait patiently while he had his fill; the water he poured into his mouth with his trunk was then matched by another stream with which he somewhat impolitely flooded the road: we wouldn't have minded that, but when he re-imbibed the said pool we thought it a bit much! At Satara camp had morning coffee, at Thokwane a pot of tea, and at Skukuza a snack in the restaurant, having seen some game on the way but only ostrich that was new. At Skukuza the camp office had two items of post for us - a letter from Winnie and Peter confirming their travel arrangements to SA, and a card from Ann from America. Very pleased to get these, but any others will have to wait till Monday, when the Skukuza P O reopens. Then on to Pretoriuskop, seeing two lionesses on the way: a swim in the camp pool was a great pleasure after the long journey (made with the Park speed limit of 50 kms/hr.

In the evening the camp put on the wildlife film-The Peace Game-which we had seen before, but which is still interesting. Sunday 17th back to Skukuza camp for coffee and Sunday papers (this camp is the closest to civilisation!). Main headline "Zola sabotaged". Skukuza very busy and we are glad we didn't arrange to stay at the camp. Returned via the Malelane dirt road and in all saw hyena, elephant, duiker, tortoise, and chameleon (ignoring the common impala and zebra). Monday again to Skukuza to check for mail from home: none; but were rewarded by some useful shots of baboon. Spent the afternoon by the swimming pool and the heat persuaded even Maud to have a dip. Quite a few north country voices heard: some working here and others visiting relatives; as one young fellow said the north of England, rather than the south, is a place to get away from at present. At Olifants we had met a steel worker from Oldham who is now at Witbank steelworks and who likes SA but said the only trouble was that there were too many blacks around! Because of damage to the dirt roads in the south of Kruger the exit through Crocodile Bridge was closed so we changed our route on Tuesday to the Malelane gate, calling at Berg en Val camp (a new one and not in our view attractive) for lunch, then out to Knapmunden and on to Barberton through lovely mountain scenery. Spent the night at a holiday cottage in the municipal Fitzpatrick Park-very pleasant and only R17.60. Bought the first daily paper since entering Kruger Park! Discovered that Barberton started in 1884 as a gold mining centre ie before J'burg and there are still mines around the area; the town has some of the old buildings still in use eg the Impala Hotel where we went for a drink in the evening. The man in charge of Fitzpatrick Park was very talkative, ranging from the cause of cancer, to apartheid. His views on the latter he put forward with great sincerity but equally great dogmatism: he quoted authorities at length to show that there was "man and under man" (the latter being the blacks) and that the superiority of man should not be imperilled by intermingling with under man; they would bring man down to their level! Hitler would have rejoiced! To do him justice he qualified this by saying that the skin colour was not the determining factor in separating the sheep from the goats, it was merely that as a matter of history most whites had had the benefit of food (largely he said the vitamin E of wheat) which had been denied the blacks, and which promoted greater intelligence. European civilisation flourished, he argued, from the time that wheat became the staple crop. He was so fervent in this, yet so learned in his approach, that it was hard to dislike him: one almost felt there might be a grain of truth in what he said. Mind you our impressions of the Boers while travelling for a month in their heartland areas of OFS and Transvaal did not give us the idea that they are the height of culture and wit or even courtesy. But they do keep their towns immaculate-garden cities is the term-and are usually efficient. On Wednesday morning we were advised that the road from Barberton to Figg's Peak which is partly dirt and mountainous was impassable for ordinary cars, so once again we had to change our route to go into Swaziland via Basutias.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the 76 kms to Badplaas were over the mountains with extensive views over fertile countryside and plantations. Badplaas is a mineral spa, round which there is a leisure complex; had coffee and spent a frustrating time trying to phone Natal Parks Board at Pietermaritzburg to check the accessibility of the camps we had booked there; after much ado we established that Ndumu and Mkuze were both closed and all they could offer for 23rd and 24th was Fannies Island, which we reluctantly accepted. So on to Oshoek border post into Swazi. Depressingly unkept round the post, but reaching Mbabane we lighted on the Highland View Hotel (recently changed to the Mountain Inn) where the vista to the Ezulweni valley is superb. Settled here for two nights and were not disappointed: the place is being run by John Angel who was previously at the Bend Inn when we stayed there. Has a small private cinema which at present shows films which can only be described as porn. The rooms, food, and swimming pool all good. Swazi tv in the bar is mainly in English and even transmits the ITV London news; so we had the unexpected pleasure of hearing at first hand that the coal strike was still unsettled! Unfortunately on Wednesday evening Maud hurt her side and on Thursday morning we visited the doctor who thought she had twisted a muscle or cartilage, rather than damaged the ribs. So painkillers and ointment were prescribed; and eased the soreness. Swazi handicrafts are still of a high standard both in design and execution; however we bought only two stone eggs and a dish for them; a large carved mask was a temptation to me but there was no way we could transport it; in art and craft achievement it would have been worth a fortune elsewhere. Swazi exists as a separate kingdom because in the 19th century the Swazis asked for British protection from Zulu incursion, and the British influence has remained strong, English being one of the two official languages, and most of the ex-pat voices one heard being English. Swazi tribal tradition remains predominant; kingship is hereditary, the successor to King Subuza being the child of his senior wife; it is custom that a man can take more than one wife provided that he pays lobola - the bride price - for each, being fifteen cattle or cash of E100 per beast ie E1500 per wife. Two girls at the bar said that they were sisters but it transpired that they had only the common father, who had six wives! Robert, one of the waiters, said he was one of a family of ten, reared on land which provided all their essential food. Population growth must surely be excessive. The cinema manager, idle because of lack of custom, complained that the hotel had been doing very little business (confirmed also by Angel). Heavily dependent on trade from SA, Swazi has suffered from the general recession there. Also it used to be that many Swazis earned good money in the SA gold mines but could not now get employment there. Swazi's own mines were only asbestos and coal - there used to be iron ore but this is finished. Friday 22nd, Jill's birthday, we left Mbabane for Manzini and Big Bend, having been assured that the bridge at the latter was now repaired and the road to Natal open; lunch at the George at Manzini.

On the road down from Manzini to Big Bend we crossed two rivers by fairly high bridges, the parapets of which were bent sideways by previous flooding: so as soon as we reached Big Bend we checked the river crossing. The high level concrete bridge over the Great Usutu river was completely demolished: its pillars and sections had been scattered like matchboxes over the broad river bed by the flood waters of the hurricane Demoina last year. In its place the road was diverted to a dirt and concrete causeway which was now only about three feet above the water level; it was this causeway which had been put out of action last week and which was only repaired on Wednesday; we just hoped there would be no more flooding before we wanted to cross tomorrow morning! So to the hotel—the Bend Inn, at which we had once spent a pleasant weekend. Under new management it was, sad to say, disappointing. The door from the bedroom to the garden was ununlockable, the garden was unkempt, the swimming pool was empty, there was no TV, and the T-bone steak and barracuda steak which we chose for evening meal were poor—in fact Maud refused her meat. However we did have a chat with local fellows at the outdoor bar, who told us that during the five days of rain of Demoina the river level at the bridge had risen 65 feet; nothing could have withstood the impact. There are hippo in the waters round Big Bend; one had killed a man. I enquired whether it was possible to cross into SA via the road to Ingwavuma but apparently this is a restricted area for security reasons and so banned: it would have been no short cut to the Ndumu reserve. Saturday 23rd February we crossed the Usutu with no trouble and travelled the seventy-odd kms to Lavumisa border post, the last 30 on dirt; bought some of the new Swazi issue of stamps at the post office before going through Customs, and on to Mkuzi, where we had to stock up with food etc for the Reserve (no supplies sold therein); also bought pineapple, avocado and banana on the roadside stalls—all cheap. Arrived at Fannies Island, which is on Lake St. Lucia, thirteen kms from anywhere along a dirt road, about 2pm and were glad to shower and relax after the heat of driving. Lovely spot on a small hillock with a breeze from the lake. As an alternative to the Mkuzi reserve, which it is confirmed is still closed, we can't really complain. Our evening meal was mock schnitzel, onions and chips, cooked excellently by the black boy kitchen. Hippo and crocs are the animal life here; walking along the lakeside on Sunday morning a crocodile plunged into the water only ten yards ahead of us, before we could get a good look; perhaps just as well! A small dark snake about a foot long was found in the grass near the huts; at first said to be a deadly black mamba but it was trapped in a plastic bag by the Warden and later thought to be a "slug eater" and not venomous. People said hippo had been on the jetty road early in the morning and during the day I saw a big warthog blocking the same road; being on foot I didn't go near enough to provoke it. Fishing is a great attraction, but the flooding which occurred last year and this has meant that the lake is virtually fresh water in these upper reaches, so the sea fish do not come up. One man had caught only barbel, which although edible, are not greatly valued.

Before leaving Fannies Island on Monday 25th I had a walk out along the lakeside about 5.45 am but saw only monkey and klipspringer. Bought provisions at Mtubatuba and arrived in Umfolozi Reserve, up in the Zukukand hills, about 11 am. We were looking forward to Umfolozi because it was our first visit, a previous attempt being thwarted by floods: also it has had publicity from the Wilderness Foundation and Laurens van der Post: indeed it is one of the few reserves in which one can go on a wilderness trail on foot—one area of the reserve is set aside for this and has no roads. We were a bit dismayed therefore when the black keeper at the entrance gate told us that the camp into which we were booked—Mpila—was inaccessible because the Black Umfolozi river, which flows through the reserve, was in flood and was over the bridge. We were annoyed that during our enquiries of the Parks Board no one had ever mentioned the possibility of Mpila being closed, though to be fair it transpired that the river had only risen this very morning because of heavy rain overnight up in the Vryheid area. The keeper, whose English was not good, seemed to suggest that it might be late afternoon before the river subsided; the thought crossed our mind that supposing we got in, what was to stop another flood preventing us getting out? As we were now anxious to arrive in Margate by the date agreed with Winnie and Peter we didn't relish any delay. However we followed the instruction to proceed along the dirt road to the bridge—about 14 kms—to await further guidance. When almost at the bridge two cars approached from the other direction and one of the drivers said the way was clear, but when we arrived and saw the water still swirling over the causeway we disbelieved him and waited—sooner chicken than fish! Fairly soon two Parks Board vehicles crossed from the other side, and although the water seemed to be up to axle level they had no problem; so on their advice we tried and succeeded. We were booked at Mpila camp for three nights but as the weather seemed uncertain, with quite a lot of cloud, we told the warden that if the bridge was passable in the morning we play safe and move on to Umlalazi; he made the necessary booking for us. Apart from the river problem in the Park itself there was also the fact that the temporary causeway across the Umfolozi on the N2 at Mtubatuba had been severed recently by flooding, and might be again; so the sooner we got further south the better. In any case, although we did see a rhino, we got the impression from the warden and his wife (Botha), that the animal stocks had been depleted by the long drought and had not yet recovered. However it was hoped that they were now starting the 'seven fat tears'. The warthog seem to be natural survivors; two families roamed the camp grounds looking very fit and frisky. Rain started in the evening, and in the morning the camp and surrounding hills were blanketed in mist; bought some buffalo shoes at the camp shop and assured that the bridge was alright, we departed; the river had in fact lost height and the causeway was visible. Coffee at the Forest Inn, noting that practically all the coast lands on the journey down from Mtubatuba to Richards Bay were devoted to forest; vast stands of eucalyptus and fir. Then the sugar plantations start to take over. Reached Mtunzini and the Umlalazi Nature Reserve by lunchtime and occupied

a Swiss-type log chalet, fully equipped, for R13 each. The reserve lies between the estuary of the Umlalazi river and the Indian ocean. On the river there are facilities for fishing (some commercial fishing is done from here offshore in power boats—using only rods and lines a black crew of six or seven expect to land 100 kilo of slinger, rock cod, tunny, and others, in a day's fishing. On the ocean side there is a magnificent beach backed by dunes, stretching for at least five kms. When I enquired at the office about sea-bathing the warden was careful to point out that although they had not had any shark attacks there were no shark nets and it was advisable not to swim when the water was not clear as this was when they came inshore. However I was not long in getting my first dip in salt water since our holiday started, but didn't venture beyond the first breakers. As we have decided to stay three nights here we have time to relax and gather our wits. One thing we have remarked upon since entering Natal from Swazi is that in contrast to Transvaal, Natal is largely English speaking, often with almost standard BBG accent. We find a sense of relief in not having to cope with the Afrikaaner. The Zulus are not so easy to obtain a smile from as other blacks: indeed the appearance of many, both men and women, is quite fierce and unresponsive: not prepossessing either in face or figure. Yet we found the black staff in the Natal Parks quite trustworthy, and their cooking was excellent. Perhaps because their homeland is fairly isolated from white influence they remain a little unsure in their relations with them. And the Zulu wars must still be fresh in tribal memory. Mtunzini village, near the reserve seems to be a fairly modern 'garden city' development complete with country club, hotel, golf course, Anglican church. The layout, on the slopes down to the sea, is very attractive and spacious; and it is English speaking! We have enjoyed the three nights just idling the time away on the beach or at the jetty or drinking coffee at the Tradewinds Hotel in the village. Our motoring has been confined to the two or three kilometres going up there. The only wildlife has been monkeys clambering over the cabin roof and in the nearby trees; sometimes their chatter was quite raucous, matched only by the calls of the Hadeda Ibis birds roosting quite close. Tomorrow 1st March we have a long run—about 260 kms—down the coast via Durban to Margate, but it is a good road with (we hope) no problems.

Writing on the 8th March; no—the run down from Umlalazi to Durban was fast—setting off at 8.15 am we were in Durban at the Lonsdale Hotel by 10am—140 kms. But for the idea of seeing Durban again we could have by-passed it on the motorway and gone straight on to the south coast and saved ourselves parking etc problems! However we managed alright and had the pleasure of seeing Durban's smaller scale replica of Belfast's City Hall. Then down the coast road to Port Shepstone, with only the temporary causeway at Scottburgh (built because the main bridge had been swept away by recent floods) as a slight delay. Arrived at Port Shepstone shortly after noon and were lucky to stop at the Bedford Inn, which has excellent bar food, for a fish lunch. A further 15 kms to Margate, where we had only just settled into the CDS holiday flats when there was a knock at the door by Winnie and Peter, who

had travelled down from the Drakensburgs a day early because it had been raining up there. Noel Watterson and his wife remembered us from last year and gave Winnie and Peter the option of a separate flat(only R4 extra a night),which they took. (The charge for a flat is now a minimum of R18,or R8 per person if more than two). So we had the comfort of a flat each,but apart from breakfast we usually dined together in ours. After travelling so long it is really home from home,with the bonus that one walks straight from the gardens onto the Margate beach, a ten minute stroll along the beach from a seawater rock pool one way, and the municipal freshwater pool(25 mts by 50 mts) the other way. Winnie and Peter stayed five nights and it took us all that time to catch up with their news and travels from Capetown;but most important was that they had heard from Jill that she and Martin were expecting to move into a four-bedroomed place of their own at the end of March. We did some nice trips with W & P-on Sunday to Oribi Gorge,in the hills-on Monday to Port Edward-and on Tuesday to Ramsgate. Also on Monday evening,because it was Peter's birthday(4th March),we had an evening meal at the Inn on the Sea at Ramsgate-excellent food and a nice setting overlooking the lagoon and beach. It all passed pleasantly,but very quickly,and we were sorry to see them go on Wednesday morning,but they had to do this if they were to complete their tour to Kruger;so we arranged to meet up again at the Jacaranda in J'burg, on the 15th. Maud and I spent another five nights at Margate,doing nothing in particular except take in the sun(fortunately there were cloudy spells otherwise we would have had too much). I did regular swimming but Maud refrained because she thought it was not good for her sore ribs. The sea bathing here is really a tussle with the breakers,as W & Pfound one day to their surprise! Even the rock pool,at high tides,gets an overflow from them. The air on the coast is very relaxing-as one local man put it when he was sleepy during the day 'he was suffering from Natal sickness'. We are getting bits of news from the UK;the miner's strike is over;nine police have been killed at Newry;the economy and the £ are still shaky. In SA there is the interminable discussion in the papers about apartheid in it's various aspects:apparently in the UN some reference was made to apartheid as racial genocide(of the blacks),but as one commentator wrote it is singularly inept if this is it's aim because the black population has increased more than double in recent years: at the moment none of them starve,but the resources on the country,particularly the water supplies,could not cope with the same continued rate of growth. Apartheid or no, this is going to be the critical factor in the future. Meanwhile there are moves to abolish some of the minor' discriminations like separate amenities eg segregated beaches,though along the south Natal coast we saw no evidence of this except,as an exception, two fat black women in the sea at St. Michaels. Otherwise the resorts are very much a white,almost Victorian,preserve;there are of course bikinis,and modern flats being built,but the general air is of many decades ago,with retired elderly people to match(we should talk).Behind the beaches,on the hills there are beautiful developments of stylish house and bungalows,always with good gardens.

There are churches in abundance—Anglican Methodist and Baptist, plus the occasional Dutch Reformed and Roman Catholic; Mrs Watterson is Anglican and her husband R C. Golf, Tennis, and Bowls are well provided for, and there are plenty of social gatherings and bridge clubs. Sheltered flats etc are being provided for elderly people on the coast but, as Mrs Watterson said, inflation is making their cost to buy very high—she instanced R50 or R60 thousand, although by UK levels these are not too bad; however one has to remember that pension arrangements in SA are not as good or as inflation proofed as at home. We have been quite avid readers of the local papers, partly to glean interesting sidelights on our surroundings, but also in the hope that there might be some UK news—there seldom is! No English papers are sold in these parts and the radio usually confines international news to that with an impact on SA; for instance the strength of the dollar, and the effect of the end of the miners strike on SA coal prices. One lengthy newspaper article dealt with the colonial share out of Africa by the European powers, particularly after the defeat of Germany in the first world war and pointed out that the boundaries were often quite arbitrary and paid no attention to tribal or natural divisions. Much of Africa is now still being governed on these same divisions, with consequent political differences within each state, even after independence. Nigeria, S W A, and Zimbabwe are examples. Of course the theme leads up to the argument that within South Africa itself there is justification for a measure of separate development for the various tribal groups, in other words apartheid for the blacks as well as for the whites. The sad thing is, he says, is that once black leaders obtain power they are loath to alter the original national boundaries, for instance in Zimbabwe the Mashonas under Mugabe insist in ruling the Matabeles in the south of the country, notwithstanding the desire of the latter to have some control over their own affairs. On Monday the 10th we said goodbye to the Wattersons and travelled via Port Shepstone, up past Oribi Gorge to Hardigg, passing through tribal lands in the hills, with thatched rondavels, and the road thronging with natives, all apparently well fed and clothed. Then approaching Harding forestry takes over. Morning coffee at the Southern Cross Hotel there, and on into the northern section of Transkei without having to go through any Customs, and on to Umzimkulu. The wide sweep of hills and valleys on this road is impressive, broken only by one or two roadside villages, the main native settlements of thatched huts being dotted over the slopes of the landscape, uncluttered by fences or hedges; the Drakensburgs rise in the west. Umzimkulu Hotel, where we were once glad to stay for the night, is now run down and seedy; I had a beer in the public bar but was happy to leave half of it to the locals, noisily tippling, even at that hour. The Transkei customs collected RI from us for visa on the way out; the SA customs didn't ask for the usual entry form because of the residence permit stamp in our passports. On to Ixopo, then up through the hills, in country largely similar to Transkei, to Bulwer, where we were very pleased to get hake and chips for lunch at the hotel, sitting on the verandah, and feeding the hotel cat. Not satisfied with our contribution of fish it demolished and ate a praying mantis (or something similar in front of our eyes! Another good scenic run from Bulwer to Midmar Dam.

In all we had covered 330 kms. ~~much of it in Transkei~~ What struck us most was that the land in Transkei seems under utilised compared with that in SA, although it must be equally fertile. Given the inclination (which may be absent), and the necessary capital, Transkei seems potentially rich in agriculture livestock and forestry. By the time we reached Midmar about three pm the sky had clouded and the rain set in for the rest of the day and being in the hills it was much cooler than at the coast. Also the chalet seemed austere after the luxury of Margate. So our first impression was disappointing. But on Tuesday morning the sun shone and the lake and its setting were beautiful. Had a look at the historical museum near the camp - rather similar in conception to the Cultra Folk museum, but not as good, though still interesting. Had hoped to hire a sailing boat later but none available so took a short trip in the Parks Board truck through the game area around the dam - White Rhino, black Wildebeest, and blesbok the main stock. In the evening had a successful wood brai - potatoes and onions roasted in their jackets, pork chops and sausages. Wednesday; had to make an early start to Ladysmith, Harrismith, Kestell, Clarens and Golden Gate National Park - a rather long 375 kms, with only the Ladysmith connection with the Boer War of much interest. The road was a series of steep climbs up to the highveld, notably the Van Reenen Pass. Rather tired when we reached Golden Gate; incidentally Maud still has twinges of pain from another fall at some steps near the Margate Municipal pool, particularly her left shoulder. Otherwise we are looking pretty sunburnt and fit. Golden Gate is in the Maluté range next to the Drakensburgs and the temperature was noticeably lower than at Midmar; also as evening came so did the rain; but I managed a brai - lamb chops and sausage. Our original booking here was for three nights at Glen Reenen camp, in a rondavel, but as we could only stay one night before moving on to meet Winnie and Peter we used up our booking deposit by transferring to one of the chalets, complete with radio, TV and telephone, in the Brandwag conference centre. TV was nothing great but at least I saw the highlights of the rugby international between Wales and Scotland. There was a thunder storm during the night (so Maud told me!) and in the morning the hills were shrouded in cloud and mist; so we did not see the rather unusual rock cliffs of the Maluti's at their best; however in a short run up a dirt road when we first arrived we had seen black wildebeest and besbok on the hill slopes and a predator which might have been a lynx. The rain reminds us that for the first time since the bad drought the Midmar Dam is now 100% full and overflowing down to the Albert Falls Dam, which has also filled; every cloud has a silver lining! Left Brandwag in rain on Thursday 14th March and made the best of it through the mountain scenery via Clarens, Fouriesburg, Ficksburg, to Senekal where we had lunch at the hotel (only steakburger and hamburger but very enjoyable). Although the skies had cleared a little it was still unsettled so we decided to keep motoring in the direction of J'burg via Bethlehem(!), Reitz and Frankfort to Villiers, where we spent the night at the Municipal Resort.

This is pleasantly situated on the banks of the Vaal River (a muddy colour!), but is not modern; however the prices take account of this and the first offer by the manager was a hut at R6 (with no facilities): finally we settled for one with stove, fridge and toilet, but no hot water, which cost R11 plus hire of bedding making it up to R15. The accommodation was spartan and it turned out that there was only one pair of sheets left, so I had to make do with only blankets: nevertheless we had a comfortable night. To get a hot bath or wash we had to go to the ablution block; in the evening Maud decided to go to wash her hair, while I sat outside the rondavel smoking my pipe. After a little while I noticed this lady walking over to the huts some distance away and in the fading light I thought (casually) that she was blonde; then after a few more moments, as the figure disappeared behind trees, the penny dropped that it was wearing Maud's Botswana skirt! Not for the first time Maud had lost her sense of direction! The towel round her head had given the impression of blond hair. A loud hail brought her back! On 1st March we had an easy run of 120kms into J'burg and were at the President Holiday Inn having coffee by 10 am. By the time we had also called at the Bank and got up to the Jacaranda Winnie & Peter had already arrived, having spent the night at Middleburg. From the time we met until they checked in at Jan Smuts for their flight about 3.30pm Saturday we hardly stopped talking going over what had happened since leaving Margate etc. But we did manage a visit to the Carlton Centre, including the 50th floor, and the Oriental Plaza, and to the Wilds and Sunnyside Park Hotel on the Saturday morning. Very pleasant. Maud and Winnie had themselves, and a few others, in stitches, by appearing for dinner on Friday evening in very similar outfits of white with black spots; quite by chance! When we parked the car in the underground park at the Carlton Centre we didn't take note of the bay number with the result that we had to wander round trying to locate the car. In the process Maud stumbled on a broken piece of path and once again hurt her ankle and grazed her knee. On Sunday we missed Winnie and Peter and decided we would put in some time searching for Billy Dalzell's cousin Eric. Actually it took us all day; in the morning we found two ninth avenues in different parts of the city but they weren't the right ones; then at morning coffee in the Jacaranda a man kindly got his detailed map and identified one at Parktown North. Armed with his directions we set off after lunch and found the bungalow without much trouble, only to see that it was in process of reconstruction and unoccupied. A black maid who was passing was able to tell us that Eric had died but didn't know anything about the family except that Rebecca (a daughter?) lives at Roodeport. So we called at number 7a, next door, and were kindly invited in by the Van Rensburgs, who were able to tell us that Eric had suffered from hardening of the arteries for over two years before his death in a nursing home about eight months ago; he had become confused in his mind and at times incoherent. The son Patrick is in a town house at Montgomery Park where we later called, but he was not in. While talking in Rensburgs there was quite a heavy thunder and hailstorm.

Monday 4th March we called on Harford at Leisuremobile and arranged to keep JXD290T until our flight on Friday and paid a further R102 for the extra four days, also reconfirmed our return flight with Zambian Airways (a curious ritual seeing that they would refuse to carry you on any flight other than that stated on the ticket! - but if you did not reconfirm they claim the right to reallocate your seat, leaving you stranded!). Did some shopping at the Carlton Centre. Tuesday wasn't much of a day for us: SAA told us that they could not obtain a Globetrotter replacement for the damaged suitcase - they would offer an inferior type, or R20 in cash with return of our own case. We decided to take the latter option. Wednesday visited the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens at Emmarentia - hard to find because the area is off the usual tourist maps, and there is very little publicity of them; a pity because they in a lovely setting beside a lake, on which two fellows were tiring themselves out canoeing. Went on to find the Holiday Inn at Sandton for lunch, but finished at the Sandton Sun instead and were very glad of it, because it has a commanding site and the terrace restaurant looks ~~out~~ out over miles of country; and has good a la carte dishes at prices which are reasonable considering the amenities. The hotel building has a massive central area rising the full height of the structure with the decor in brass and other metallic tones - similar in idea to the Sun at Plettenburg Bay and at Bophutatswana, but to my mind far more impressive. From the restaurant floor one leaves the hotel proper to a shopping complex as luxurious as the hotel, with most of the shop prices to match, though to be fair one can go to a lower level and find the more mundane chain stores. Thursday, after completing some purchases at Carlton Centre, we again had the frustrating experience of not being able to find the car in the underground park. After an initial circuit of what we thought ~~was~~ was the right level I let Maud return to a cafe upstairs to rest (she had hurt her ~~ankle~~ ankle at some steps at Hillbrow Post Office), and returned to search myself; after concluding that it just was not on floor B, where we thought we'd left it I started again at floor A, came down the shoots, and finally decided that we must have descended to floor C, and lo and behold, there it was - about an hour's search! I returned to the cafe to collect Maud, all pleased, and could not understand why she burst out laughing - the situation was not all that funny! However she asked had I seen my ~~face~~ face - she said it looked as though I had come up from a coal mine! when I looked at my left hand it was covered with black soot or something and obviously I had rubbed my face and transferred some there. Fortunately it contained no oil so I was able to wipe off most of it. How many people had seen me before that I do not care to redollect! After a bath at the hotel we went up to Sandton again to have lunch and restore our morale - very successfully. Looking at the wider front, the rand has been recovering some of its fall against the dollar and sterling (the latter now buys about R2.18 against over R2.50 when we started the holiday. Also gold has perked up to over

300 dollars:from Monday next the GST goes up from 10% to 12%:the budget has raised state pensions from R166 pm for whites to R180:coloureds and blacks get lower pensions- the blacks now about R100 and the coloureds in between. The Rand Daily Mail is to close,removing one of the main English language critics of government policy and action-lack of customers is given as the reason. There have been several instances of black unrest in various parts of SA:recently at Lange near Port Elizabeth,where police have fired on an advancing crowd and have killed teens of people. The crowd tactics to provoke the police and give them bad publicity are exactly as employed in Belfast. Elderly people or children are in the firing line. American TV has staged confrontations between South African personalities eg Pic Botha and Bishop Tutu. Botha argued that outside attempts to influence change in S A were dangerous and could impede progress in the ongoing talks between the SA government and black leaders. Then big business,in the person of Harry Oppenheimer,also said that disinvestment could only make life worse for the blacks,and therefor promote violent,rather than peaceful,change. When one looks at the manifest achievements of private white enterprise in South Africa one can only dread any violent change in the political set-up. There was a sad reminder of what could happen when I spoke to a young white(English descent)Rhodesian mother at the rooftop pool at the Jacaranda. She had been born in Rhodesia of immigrants from UK and had been quite keen to remain in Zimbabwe after independence,but she and her husband had reluctantly to decide that education for their children would be inadequate because black teachers were replacing white,with a rapid decline in standards. Her parents,who had "emigrated" to Scotland,were unable to get their capital out of Zimbabwe. Such is the wind of change blowing over the southern part of Africa. The South African Government has done a great deal for the homeland areas of the blacks,the crux is what it can achieve for the so-called "urban" blacks. In Johannesburg there are many blacks of obvious affluence and style:I would sooner trust the white man rather than the black to tend to the needs of the poorer blacks. I would like to have seen any progress which has been made in Soweto since our last visit but we did not get the chance:only one thing is certain,that violence is still prevalent,as is unemployment. Looking at the country since it's development by the white man in the comparatively short space of one hundred years one can only ask the question to what extent the expanding black population is entitled to benefit from the initiative of the whites:certainly they have and still do provide most of the heavy manual labour required for development,but withdraw the white contribution and chaos could result,as in other African states. There is the conundrum. Anyway we go home tomorrow and it will become academic for the moment.

In all we have travelled 8707 kms.