

# H O K O Y O

Silent Spoons & Parting Blades

Dear Anna  
Thank you for what you have taught  
us all about skins - my utmost  
respect Best wishes.

Julie Anne Margaret Edwards

Julie Anne M. Edwards  
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Elephant reflection - photographer, Julie Anne Edwards

Land mine sign provided by Ian Dixon

Black Rhino & Calf in Ngorongoro Crater provided by IUCN - photographer,  
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Back cover pictures:

George Adamson standing over poached elephant in Kora - photographer,

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Author with 'Grey' - Eco Focus photo library

Author on bicycle - Ride for Rhino photo library

Elephant on termite mound - photographer, Julie Anne Edwards.

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By the same author

"Extinction is Forever, the Inspiration behind the rhino girls story"

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*"Africa without its wildlife  
would be a very dull and  
different place"*

**George Adamson**

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*fortune to interest any who may read it, they can rest assured that whatever accrues from this tale will go to aid my friends the lions". According to 'Korokoro' the lion's roar when translated into English goes: WHO IS LORD OF THIS LAND? ... Who is Lord of this land? ... I Am! ... I am! ... I am! (Source: George Adamson, 'Bwana Game' 1968)*

In my childhood, I was fascinated like most youngsters, by the work of the Adamson's who protected and released "Elsa the lion" back into the wild. An event made famous through Joy Adamson's book, 'Born Free'. I had also grown up in Rhodesia and introduced to wildlife by my parents who believed that animals should be free. My father did not approve of sport hunting or keeping animal in cages and was a keen wildlife enthusiast. There are those sceptics that believe rearing and releasing wild animals back into the bush is futile and therefore controversial. There are many opinions in this regard; however, those issues are not reflected here. The truth is, there was a man called George Adamson, who loved lions, could communicate with them, and in his quiet ways, his efforts to help them captured the world's attention.

Perhaps it is this true freedom of spirit, and the wildness of the lions roar, that enters our innermost sanctums, urging 'all those who dare', to help, protect and save wildlife and their habitats from extinction. I hope that youngsters reading this story will also be inspired, and have compassion in their souls to help and continue with 'Bwana Simba's' (Father of the Lions) legacy.

*A website dedicated to the memory and honouring the conservationist, George Adamson, and his Lion family. Go to: [www.FatherOfLions.org](http://www.FatherOfLions.org)*

*"The object of creating the 'Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary' was simply to try to keep some rhinos safe so that they could breed. It was, and is, an exercise in security and management, not a scientific experiment."*

*Anna Merz*

### **Chapter 3** **Sanctuary for the Rhino** *'Rhino at the Brink of Extinction'*

Following the desert crossing, and arrival into Kenya, logistical preparations had to be completed for the East Africa section of the Ride for the Rhino Campaign. From 1970 to 1988 the rhino population in Kenya plunged from an estimated 20 000 to approximately 400, reaching catastrophic proportions. By the early 1980's it was uncertain whether any Black Rhino would continue to survive in Kenya and conservationists were taking serious action to save the species by creating electrically fenced and armed patrolled sanctuaries. This seemed to be the only way to save the diminishing population.

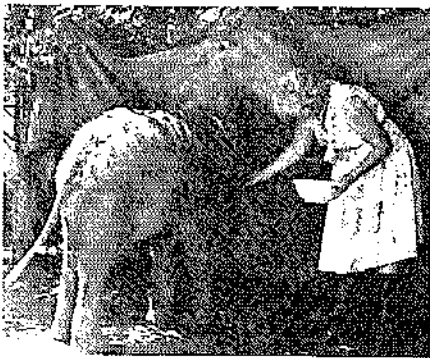
Our arrival into Kenya was also highlighted by the privilege of meeting a number of world renowned rhino and elephant conservationists including Dr Dame Daphne Sheldrick, Founder of the 'The David Sheldrick Trust' (DSWT). *'This was one of the first organisations to draw the world's attention to the plight of the Black Rhino in Kenya, formulating the concept of electrically fenced enclosures within the Protected Areas so that outlying survivors of the species could be concentrated for breeding purposes'*. Dr Sheldrick invited us to visit one of the Trusts' projects, a wildlife orphanage, in Nairobi National Park and in 1988, the focal point of the visit was meeting the orphaned animals that had been saved, after their mothers had

been poached. We were introduced to 2 Black Rhino orphans, 'Amboseli', born in 1987, orphaned at 6 months old, when her mother was victim of a brutal Masai spearing on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1987. For five days 'Amboseli' gallantly protected the body of her mother from vultures and predators. Eventually she was captured, sedated, and brought to safety. Sam, the other orphaned rhino we met at the centre, was born in July 1987 near Governors camp, in the Mara. He had been severely mauled by lions when his mother left him. He couldn't swim across the river and was saved by wildlife department rangers who were camped nearby. Sam was then airlifted to the orphanage. The 'DSWT' pioneered the successful reintegration of orphaned Black Rhino into an already established rhino community. 'Amboseli' being the last remaining rhino from the once famous population of Amboseli National Park, renowned for horn length, and one of the first to be free released back into Tsavo East.'

(Source: David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust) Dr Sheldrick directed us to meet with Ken Khule, Chairman and Founder of Rhino Ark, established in 1988. 'In response to the threat of extinction of the Aberdares Black Rhino population, Rhino Ark was established to assist The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), in the



Julie Anne walking with Daphne Sheldrick's orphans.



Dr Daphne Sheldrick caring for one of her orphans (Source: Ride for Rhino Photo library copyright© 1988)

financing of a fence to be built along the Eastern Salient of the Aberdare National Park, at the point where it bordered directly onto farmland. This physical barrier was identified as a necessity for the Aberdare Conservation Area (ACA) to prevent movement of wildlife out of the ACA therefore reducing human/wildlife conflict, and additionally protect the significantly important habitats, species, overall biodiversity, and conserve the indigenous forest habitat.' (Source: "Rhino Ark")

"The Aberdare Sanctuary, besides containing a myriad of wildlife and birds which include the endangered Rhino and Elephant also incorporates one of Kenya's largest rain forests which supplies millions of Kenyans, including Nairobi, with their vital water supply. The Fence we are erecting around the Aberdare National Park and its perimeter rain forest has proven that it is arresting the conflict from man to the forest, as well as arresting the conflict between wildlife and man's crops and livestock." Ken Kuhle

Fence on the Rhino Ark Salient



Black Rhino in the protected sanctuary (Source: www.rhinoark.org)



Many areas in Kenya had become overpopulated with human beings and rhino sanctuaries had become essential for the survival of the species, encompassed by eight-foot-high electrified, alarm fences, and 24 hourly patrols by armed guards. Peter Jenkins MBE, formerly a game park warden active and influential in wildlife conservation, pioneered the rhino sanctuary design and at the time of our meeting with him was the rhino co-ordinator

for Kenya, responsible for the development of sanctuaries including the Aberdares Salient project. His consultation later on assisted the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary, founded by Anna Merz and the Craig family on Lewa Downs, extending to incorporate a Wildlife Conservancy.

The rhino sanctuaries would primarily be the focus of attention for the Ride for the Rhino through Kenya, and it was decided that we would raise funds for the Rhino Ark's Salient in the Aberdares National Park. The poaching of rhino and elephant continued to escalate and the bordering farming communities were demoralised by the constant raiding of their land by animals.

Finally, after much planning and fundraising efforts, the proposed date of our ride was agreed upon, and we set off from Mombasa to Nairobi. Avis provided a Suzuki support vehicle as the Land Rovers had still not arrived from Egypt. Terri Donovan assisted as backup for this section of the route.

### Diary Excerpts

9<sup>th</sup> May 1988 Mombasa to Nairobi, Total distance – 530km

Route: Mombasa to Voi – 156km

Mtito Andei to Emali – 204km

Emali to Nairobi – 170km

We departed from the south of Mombasa and cycled up the Kwali road, it was hot and humid, and we only got as far as 'Shumba Hills Reserve'. *'This is a fairly small park coastal rainforest reserve, and an important area for plant diversity – over 50% of the 159 rare plants in Kenya are found in the Shumba Hills, including some endangered species of cycad and orchids. It is also a nationally important site for birds, butterflies and the forest elephant inhabit the forested areas.'*

(Source: Wikipedia "Shumba Hills National Reserve")

This is the only place in Kenya to see Sable Antelope, with a population of approx. 100. We spent the night in one of the National Parks tourist huts. As we travelled through East Africa I was determined to visit and learn about the game reserves and national parks en route. Each area had its own specific habitat and wildlife which was of special interest to me.

10<sup>th</sup> May 1988

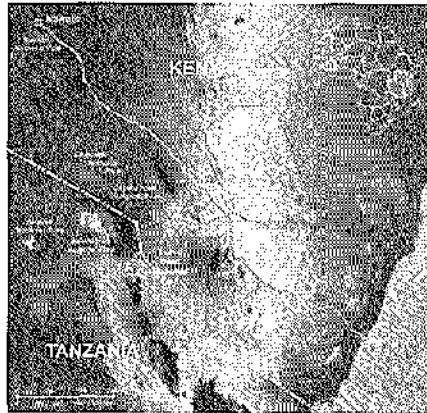
Cycling out of the Shumba Hills area we soon hit the boundary fences, the reserve ended abruptly and the degraded bush land, with cattle and sheep roaming all over the place was noticeable. We stopped for lunch by the roadside, amongst some thorn trees, and rested until it got cooler then continued on until sunset. The evening fell upon us swiftly so we pitched camp on the banks of a dry river bed.

11<sup>th</sup> May 1988

After cycling on dirt roads for some time, we finally reached the main tar road to Nairobi, and made our way to Voi. That night we camped at Tsavo East, setting up our tent in the overgrown area surrounded by a couple of thatched cottages one of which was the scene for the movie "An Elephant called Slowly", starring 'Eleanor' the famous Tsavo elephant, Bill Travers and Virginia McKenna. It's hard to think anyone was ever here, it feels like a ghost camp from the past, as it's all derelict and rundown and now overgrown with long grass and thorn trees. I reflected for a moment on the old film I had watched as a youngster as Charlie and I sat having a sundowner watching the last of the setting sun. It was especially beautiful, the warm glow of the African light at sunset. Just as the sun disappeared behind the horizon, hearing a roar of a lion, we decided it would be a good idea to stoke up

the fire! It was special to finally be in the real dry bush of Tsavo, I identified with this area and felt quite at home as much of it reminded me of my home country. The red soils, acacias and baobabs, endless landscapes, far horizons and distant hills, were all too beautiful. I prefer a drier area having grown up in arid zones of Matabeleland in Rhodesia. There is time for reflection and contemplation. It is difficult to comprehend why people annihilate a species, what drives human beings to completely destroy the wildlife? I thought about the many years' dedicated people like the Sheldricks had endured the poaching horrors.

*'Tsavo East National Park is one of the oldest and largest parks in Kenya at 11,747 square kilometers. Named for the Tsavo River, which flows west to east through the national park, it borders the - Chyulu Hills National Park, and the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania. Most of the park consists of semi-arid grasslands and savannah. It is considered one of the*



Route from Mombasa to Nairobi includes Tsavo West and East National Parks (Source: "Tsavo Map" Wikipedia)

*world's biodiversity strongholds. The slightly larger Tsavo East is generally flat, with dry plains across which the Galana River flows. Tsavo was continually crossed by caravans of Arab slavers and their captives. Many of the victims dropped dead by the wayside and were eaten by lions. In this manner, some lions of Tsavo acquired a taste for human flesh. The British put an end to the slave trade in the 19th century. 'The Man-eaters of Tsavo' written by John Henry Patterson in 1907*

*- describes attacks on the railway workers by man-eating lions on the builders of the Uganda Railway in Tsavo, Kenya in 1898 and how the lions were eventually killed by Patterson. It was remarkable as nearly 140 people were killed by the man eaters in less than a year before Patterson managed to kill them, (although this number is contested)' (Source: Wikipedia "Tsavo National Park")*

*'David Leslie William Sheldrick MBE, was the founder warden of Tsavo East National Park in Kenya, where he served from its inception in 1948 until his retirement in 1976, to head the Planning Unit of the newly created Wildlife Conservation & Management Department. David died 6 months later but his legacy of excellence and the systems he installed for the management of Tsavo and wildlife generally in Kenya, particularly in the sphere of wildlife husbandry and ethics, lives on. The David Sheldrick Wildlife a small, flexible charity, established in 1977 was formed to honour the memory of a famous naturalist. The Trust's conservation ethics have played an extremely significant role in Kenya's conservation effort since it was founded in 1977. Speaking out when necessary on controversial issues and stepping in unobtrusively and rapidly to bridge a gap or meet a shortfall that jeopardizes wildlife during time of government economic constraints. Because, in life, David Sheldrick strongly censured the extravagance of exorbitant overheads, the Trust places great emphasis on minimal expenditure in this respect, thereby ensuring that donations given in support of wildlife reach their target in full in the most practical and positive manner. The reputation of the Trust is a proud one, as was the record of the man whose name it bears, thanks to the dedication and energy of a competent staff committed to the example of David Sheldrick as their role model.' (Source: 'DSWT').*

The following day we met Dr Sheldrick's oldest elephant orphans, 29 year old 'Eleanor'. It was an extraordinary moment to meet a matriarch of two worlds, the tame and wild, she towered over us! This magnificent elephant was the youngest baby elephant to be hand reared by Daphne, who successfully raised many orphan animals including elephant and rhino. According to the 'DSWT', *'Eleanor was found at 18 months wandering on her own, but there was the carcass of a dead elephant nearby, presumably that of her mother, as no other elephants were in Samburu at the time.'*



The "Rhino girls meet Eleanor  
(Source: Ride for Rhino. Photo library  
copyright © 1988)

12<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Greg Neale from London's Daily Telegraph caught up with us enroute in Tsavo West National Park where we met with Bill Woodley, Head Warden of the area where a rhino sanctuary had been established within the Park. Bill kindly chatted with us briefly, mentioning that *"when I arrived in Kenya 40 years ago, local tribes killed rhino for food using bows and arrows. Today, poachers kill rhino armed with Kalashnikov AK47 automatic weapons. If a poacher is caught he might be fined 400 Kenyan shillings (about 13 Pounds). If he gets away with the Rhino horn, he stands to make more than 10 times that amount."*

*'At one time Tsavo East alone harboured a population of 8,000 Black Rhino, but these were all but eliminated during the 70's and 80's as they were in other Parks during the period they*

*were under direct Government control. Uncontrolled poaching and rampant in-house corruption characterised this far from happy era in the history of Kenya's wildlife conservation.'*  
(Source: "The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust")

The Tsavo Sanctuary initially began with 3 rhino cows, captured in September 1985 in the Kibwezi area. The Sanctuary fencing is rigged with 5300 volts running off solar power units, and is to be extended. There are 5 rangers who patrol the park twice a day. The 7 resident rhino are now relatively free from the threat of poaching, as a result of this protection. We spent part of the day in Tsavo. At lunchtime having a picnic, we almost walked into a lion sitting behind a small bush. The young lion ran one direction, and we ran the other, the picnic ending up on the ground, we leapt through the truck's window, locking Terri our backup support crew member out! Gosh it was funny, when I remember her disagreeable look! In the evening, we camped at the site by the Mtito Andei gate; as usual we seemed to be the only people around for miles!

*'Tsavo West National Park covers an area of 7,065 square kilometres. The A109 road Nairobi - Mombasa and a railway divide the park into east and west. The western part is a more popular destination on account of its magnificent scenery, Mzima Springs, rich and varied wildlife, good road system, rhino reserve, rock climbing potential and guided walks along the Tsavo River. The park is operated by Kenya Wildlife Services.'* (Source: Wikipedia, "Tsavo West National Park")

13<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Back on the road, we cycled flat out, 104km, to Sultan Hammed. The light was beginning to fade so decided to approach an African farmer asking him if we could pitch our tent on his land. He told



us about a huge snake he had just found in the garden, a python about 4 metres long. I think he was just trying to scare us. Well it didn't work, we persisted as it was nearing sunset and we needed a safe place to rest for the night. The farmer's family invited us to share their 'ugali' (mealie pap), and 'nyama' (meat) with them.

14<sup>th</sup> May 1988

The road to Nairobi from Mombasa was all up hill; fortunately at one of the steepest rises we managed to hold onto the side of a huge lorry, which was also struggling up the incline, for about 200m. An Aardwolf appeared from nowhere and ran along side us in the open savannah. When it barked at us - our pedals turned even faster! Later in the day we bumped into Ken Khul, he was on his way to Mombasa, he was very surprised to find us cycling in the middle of nowhere! I think he must have thought we were quite mad! He was a great support, always kind and helpful. Another hard ride of about 100km, we reached Nairobi.

17<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Nairobi around Mt Kenya approx 500km.

The circuitous trip around Mt Kenya started outside the Intercontinental Hotel in Nairobi. We cycled 100 km to a small holding of 'shamva' about 40 km short of Embu, where we asked a Kikuyu family if we could pitch camp on their land for the night. Around our campfire we were joined by the landowner's children, who entertained us with their songs.

18<sup>th</sup> May 1988



"Rhino Girls" enroute round Mt Kenya (Source: Ride for Rhino Photo library copyright© 1988)

A crisp and bright morning, having eaten 'ugali' and drunk 'chai' (tea), we set off pedalling along towards Chuka. The people along side the road were friendly, always clapping us on, with 'picannins' running after us shouting "Musungu Musungu" (White people). Another 100km, we found a YMCA outside Chuka just as the sun was disappearing. The caretaker kindly let us camp on his front lawn too!

19<sup>th</sup> May 1988

The following morning we were excited - we were to reach Lewa Downs and would see our first private-owned rhino sanctuary. At breakfast we ate as much energy food as possible, before setting off for our destination. The terrain was continuously hilly. Very tired, we reached Lewa where we met the owners, David and Delia Craig. A bed and hot bath was a welcome treat! Many folk on this journey were expecting large 'Big Berthas' to arrive on their doorstep, the Craig's were surprised to see two petite women riding bicycles. We were certainly an unexpected duo!



Anna Merz in Zimbabwe

20<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Today we drove into the 5000sq km rhino sanctuary, home to 14 black rhino, and one poor lonely white rhino. Lewa Downs was the first place we had heard of whilst



Anna Merz looking for the rhino in the Ngare Seroi Rhino Sanctuary

cycling in Europe, where a rhino sanctuary was located. This was through the correspondence of the original founder and funder of the sanctuary, Mrs Anna Mertz. Anna ranks as one of the world's foremost champions of the Black Rhino. Not only by virtue of her public profile, but also because of her hands-on approach, has contributed enormously to the survival of Kenya's Black Rhino. As Anna mentions in her book "Rhino, at the Brink of Extinction" published in 1991, "For most animals, I suspect that the 'thought' process is different from ours, but I am convinced that animals do think, even if for most of them it is a world where scent and sound predominate and where sight is of less importance. I also believe that when the human species developed the ability to speak and then, much later, invented the technique of writing, we became so totally adapted to these forms of communication and so obsessed by their possibilities, that we forgot there were other, older ways of exchanging information and possibly, thoughts. But animals still use such methods and find them adequate to hold their social structures together."

In 1982 Anna persuaded the Craig family, who own Lewa, to set aside some 5,000 acres of it as a rhino sanctuary. This was then named the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary. In 1984 the sanctuary received its first White Rhino male called Mukora. By 1988 the sanctuary had 16 rhino, five of which were born here. In that same year the size of the sanctuary doubled to more than 10,000 acres within Lewa Downs. Not only was Anna Merz the driving force behind the establishment of the sanctuary, (with the full support of the Craig family) she personally financed the project. Unfortunately at the time we visited, Anna was away, but the Sanctuary Manager Fuz Dyer, spent the whole day showing us around. It was fantastic, and we were impressed not only with the organisation but also the security of the place, with its solar

powered 4 000 volt fence. We struggled to find any of the 14 rhino spread over the 5000 sq km area, however, with the help of the armed security men patrolling the area we eventually managed to see 6 of the 14.

*The Lewa Conservancy, formerly known as the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary, has continued to expand, and have an important breeding nucleus of rhino, which is well established. Anna Merz continues to be involved with Lewa Downs Conservancy, a 'UNEP Laureate and a voice for the rhino throughout the world. The movement is now a global one. By 1994 the whole of Lewa Downs as well as the government-owned Ngare Ndare Forest Reserve had been enclosed within a 2.5 meter-high electric fence, creating a 61,000 acre rhino sanctuary. For three and a half years Anna hand-reared a female Black Rhino calf that had been abandoned at birth by its mother, and then successfully reintroduced her into the wild. The rhino, called Samia, subsequently mated with a wild rhino and had a calf, named Samuel. Tragically, both mother and calf plunged to their deaths over a steep cliff in 1995.*

*The other conservation focus at Lewa is on the Grevy's Zebra. This animal is confined to northern Kenya and parts of Ethiopia. Its numbers have greatly declined in unprotected areas, and it is now globally threatened. In 1977, the Grevy population was 81 residing on Lewa. Today there are about 800, representing about 25% of the world's population – one of only three groups in protected areas, and the only one managed privately. Lewa has been an important refuge for elephant. During the 1980's, elephant flooded into Lewa seeking safety from the heavy poaching further north. As security in the north has improved, elephant have returned to their former range, but there are always some on Lewa - usually between 100*

*and 200 at any one time.'* (Source: "Lewa.org")

21<sup>st</sup> May 1988

As this had been a day off from cycling, we crammed in as much as possible, viewing wildlife, riding on horseback in the sanctuary. Delia also took us out for a drive in her old green Land Cruiser and chatted about the wide variety of acacia trees of Africa, I enjoyed listening to what she had to share. A lunch party was laid on for us by the Craigs, and we met the neighbouring farmers. A farming consultant elaborated about the tree situation with wood being used for fires etc. He told us about the introduction of solar power ovens to assist the community with fuel wood, which only cost 300 Kenyan shillings (the equivalent to two goats!)

22<sup>nd</sup> May 1988

We bade farewell to Lewa and cycled up to the hillsides of Mt Kenya to spend the night at the homestead of a wheat farmer, Martin Dyer. When we arrived Martin was playing polo, and we were just in time for lunch! Afterwards, Martin took us for a walk to the highest point on his farm. It was 10 000 feet high on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. We were super fit and reached the pivotal spot on the farm quickly. It was a magnificent view!

23<sup>rd</sup> May 1988

We cycled towards the Aberdares National Park Headquarters dodging huge potholes. The dirt road was quiet and pleasant, with wildlife seen on either side. In the afternoon we arrived at the National Park HQ, welcomed by Peter and Sarah Jenkins, whom by prior arrangement had invited us to stay at their home. Peter served as a technical Consultant Officer in charge of the Kenya Rhino Rescue Project. The evening was spent discussing and learning about the National Parks and rhino situation in Kenya. Peter told us how as a youngster he entered a school

competition to design the National Parks badge. To his surprise he won it receiving the sum of 100 pounds, which in those days was a fortune. *"The badge represented a Black Rhino with Mt Kenya in the background, which became the cap badge and logo for the Kenya National Parks. The National Parks later became the Royal National Parks, so they attached a crown to the badge. After Kenya became independent in 1976, the Director of Parks asked me to redesign the badge. I duly did, making it just the profile of a Black Rhino with Kenya National Parks underneath. The National Parks in Kenya began in 1946. Nairobi Park was the first, followed by the Aberdares. This consisted at the time of only moorland for the 11 foot contour line, and then Mt Kenya, also consisting of just moorlands. In 1984, the Tsavo National Park was opened, and soon the 8 main parks were formed: Tsavo, Nairobi, Mt Kenya, Mt Elgon, Amboseli, Shimba Hills and the Aberdares excluding of course the marine parks, and the 16 or so reserves. In Kenya, over the last 100 years, there have been no records of the White Rhino ever existing. However, evidence from prehistoric time found in bush paintings and fossils near Lake Turkana, indicates numerous killings of White Rhino by early tribesmen. The last pocket of Northern White Rhino were found in Uganda. They are now extinct!"*

We retired for the evening having had a most interesting discussion and a wonderful meal prepared by Peter and Sarah's cheerful cook on their lovely old wood stove. It was so homely, and as I retired for the night in a cosy bed I thought about our interesting discussion before falling asleep as the evening mist fell over the Aberdare forest for the night.

24<sup>th</sup> May 1988

An interesting day, Peter and Sarah arranged to show us one of

the oldest and largest, 15 000 acre rhino sanctuaries on Solio ranch. Mr and Mrs Parfet, owners of the ranch, established this private sanctuary in 1960/61. As described by Peter here in his own words, *"In an effort to separate the wildlife from the ranch operation, they fenced off the valley area. Over a period of 8 years the Parfet's, with government approval, introduced 23 Black Rhino to the sanctuary. Unfortunately no records were kept of the sexes however, they successfully built up to 106 rhino. It was obvious that the rhino had exceeded the carrying capacity of the habitat, and were making an impact on it. Consequently, some had to be translocated. 4 female rhino were given to Lewa Downs Sanctuary 5 years ago, and another 17 recently to Nakuru Sanctuary. This has brought the population down to about 80. Ideally the number should be dropped still further giving the habitat a chance to grow. This year breeding has been successful, with 8 new calves being born. In the near future depending on the breeding rates, they hope to translocate 35 to 45 rhino some of which will go to the new Aberdares Sanctuary."*

Whilst driving around the sanctuary, we saw plenty of White Rhino; they tend to roam in groups, rather than being solitary. The White Rhino are grazers, and have a square lipped mouth, usually seen on the open plains. The Black are browsers and are solitary unless calving and have a prehensile lip. Following are some interesting points regarding both species that Peter discussed with us and also additional notes when studying to become a professional guide:

## Odd Toed ungulates – Perissodactyla

### Rhinoceros, Black *Diceros bicornis*



(Source: Photo – 'ZNCT' - Rhino Survival Campaign)

- No taller than buffalo but twice as heavy. Approx weight: Males 996 to 1362kgs; Females as big but 100kgs lighter.
- Horns composed of modified hair-like fibres but keratin; lacking bony skull; unattached to skull
- Teeth - massive molars and premolars adapted for grazing with no canines or incisors.
- Upper lip triangulate and flexible used as a grasping organ. Can browse selectively.
- Nearly pure browser. Eats over 200 plants in 50 different families. Favours leguminous. Can go 4 to 5 days without water by chewing succulents; rhinos may travel 8 to 25 km to water everyday and dig for water in sandy river beds in drought.
- Horn is used as tool.
- Adult males are usually solitary.
- Rhinos mostly sleep and eat, active morning and evening.
- Gestation 16 to 25 months. Calves follow their mothers.

- They live approx. 40 years.
- Rhinoceros derives from the Greek word 'Rhi' meaning nose and 'Keras' meaning horn. The horn is used as ceremonial dagger handles in the Yemen as a status symbol and as an aphrodisiac and medicine in the Far East and Asia.

**Rhinoceros, White (or Square-lipped) *Ceratotherium simum***

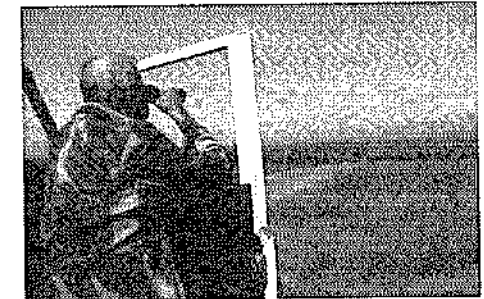


(Source: Photo by JA M Edwards - copyright Rhino Girls Photo Library©1988 - 2008)

- Biggest land mammal after elephant. Males 2040 to 2260kgs. Females 1600kgs. Twice the bulk of black rhino; with proportionally longer, larger head, wide square mouth, large ears, pronounced hump.
- Widely distributed in northern and southern savannah. In decline due to inability to adapt to human predation and space competition.
- Possibly the largest pure grazer that ever lived. Bulk feeder, wide square mouth enables it to graze most efficiently.

- Semi-social, tend to be gregarious; sedentary.
- White rhino were wiped out; 2000 + from Natal's Umfolozi and Hluhluwe have gone on to produce surplus for restocking.
- Calves lead their mothers during flight.
- Gestation - 16 months live 45 years.
- Height: 180cm; Weight: 2200kgs.

We returned back to the home of Peter and Sarah to share a bite to eat and also were introduced to the Warden John Muhanga, and Sam Ngethe, head of the capture unit. Sam and Peter showed us a rhino snare, which they had captured from the poachers.



Peter Jenkins checking the fenceline on Solio ranch

Peter Jenkins and Sam Ngethe (National Parks of Kenya) hold a rhino snare - this is buried in the sand, the rhino's habitual movement easily stands on this trap, which is set by poachers, arrow tips usually poisoned, rhino dies an agonizing death. (Source: Ride for Rhino Photo library - photo by Julie Anne Edwards copyright© 1988)

After lunch we hopped back in the Land Rover with a thermos of hot tea, our jersey's, binoculars and camera, to experience a very exciting afternoon game viewing in the Aberdare National Park. Peter and Sarah drove us round the Aberdare's to check out the proposed fence area for the rhino sanctuary. The area is ideal for rhino, and we managed to find several. We also saw the 'Big Five' in one afternoon! The highlight being a leopard sitting quietly up in a large forest tree, where we sat excitedly, but very

quietly still, watching for a long while at his every move. It was special to get so close up, literally under our roof!

The Aberdare National Park has unique and interesting species, including Black and White Colobus and Sykes Monkey. An exciting find for me personally was Peter showing us the Giant Forest Hog, I could not believe the enormous size of these hogs, as they do not occur further south in Africa. Another special sighting for us 'Southern Africans' was the rare Bongo - an elusive forest antelope that lives in the bamboo forest. We saw several Black Rhino at the 'Ark' main waterhole, (a lodge in the shape of Noah's Ark where one can view the game coming down to drink 24 hours a day). We sat enjoying a sundowner with Peter and Sarah at the lodge when a lioness unexpectedly also turned up with the rhino in full view.

The drives through the montane forest were beautiful. The birdlife although far more challenging was also a fascination and Peter and Sarah pointed out species of interest. *'The National Park is mostly at a higher altitude than the Forest Reserves and between them they provide a habitat for a number of globally and regionally threatened species. Some of these, such as the African Green Ibis, Ayres's Hawk Eagle, Crowned Eagle, African Grass Owl, Cape Eagle Owl and Long-tailed Widowbird, it has in common with Mt Kenya, but it also has the Aberdare Cisticola, Baillon's Crake and the Striped Flufftail.'* (Source: [www.kenyabirds.org.uk](http://www.kenyabirds.org.uk)).

We eventually returned to the National Parks HQ and Peter and Sarah's home in time for a lovely supper prepared by their ever cheerful cook.

25<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Yesterday morning spent at Solio and in the Aberdare's forest sanctuary was fascinating. Sadly the time came to cycle on and

we bade our farewells to Peter and Sarah. Peter presented us with a copy of his Rhino Sanctuary Document, this being his official Kenyan plan for protecting the rhino in enclosed sanctuaries. He also shared with us examples of specialized rhino fencing. The entire experience with him has been fascinating. I felt privileged to have had this opportunity of being shown the Aberdare National Park and other rhino projects by Peter and Sarah personally, with their lifetime experience and commitment to wildlife in Kenya. What an honour this was!

It was back on the road for us as our ride would eventually lead us all the way home. Each day we ride is a day closer to home. We cycled to a place called Makuyu, where we pitched camp at the sports club house. We were lucky to get a hot shower, and use of the club's cooking facilities. Our 'North Face' tents which provided a roof over our heads in all weathers from snow to desert, now protected us from the rain in the forested area we travelled through. We are now only 70km from Nairobi, and the route seems to be mostly downhill from here on.

26<sup>th</sup> May 1988

Today we cycled hard, until we finally arrived at Rhino Ark offices in Nairobi having completed the ride for Kenya's rhino, raising locally, some 46 000 Kenyan Shillings. The money raised went towards building the new fence at the Aberdare's. We also generated publicity in newspapers for the local conservation organisations. It was not a million dollars but we had done our little bit!

Rhino conservation on private land in Kenya has been a gratifying success story. The object of the sanctuary was to provide a genetic pool, which can, with successful breeding, produce sufficient animals to start re-introduction, or provide essential additions to other areas. In Kenya the sanctuary scheme successfully reversed

the rhino situation, and they have slowly increased.

Excerpts of a letter from Peter R. Jenkins, Co-Coordinator – Kenya Rhino Rescue project, addressed to John Pile Esq. Director of the Zimbabwe National Conservation Trust. Dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 1988, Nyeri, Kenya, and copied to me by the Late John Pile Esq. *'I thought you would like to know that we have just had Julie Edwards and Charlie Hewat staying with us, while on their Ride for Rhino in Kenya. I would like to congratulate you all on the organisation that this must have required. I should also like to say how very impressed I was by the total dedication and courage of these two girls in undertaking this marathon exercise. It is a magnificent effort by any standard, and I wish it the greatest success it deserves.*

*I have been involved in the Kenya Rhino Rescue Project since its inception and am now responsible for the co-ordination of the project. Our problem is basically the same as yours, although it had reached a more critical state, and as such we have decided to tackle the situation by creating Special Rhino Sanctuaries. I was interested to note that some overseas media have dubbed these as "Glorified Zoos"! In fact, the rhino will be released into completely wild and natural conditions. Our smallest sanctuary is 10,000 acres – going up to 60,000 acres – all containing a number of other species already there. They are, or will be, ring fenced – firstly, to stop newly introduced animals wandering out into settled areas, and secondly as a deterrent to human intruders. We were not successful in our armed conflict in the past, in spite of a number of poachers being killed.*

*I was able to show the girls a little of what we are trying to do. Their effort for this country is greatly appreciated by us all. I hope to be in Zimbabwe briefly late September and hope to talk with some of your people about the progress you are*

*making with your project.*

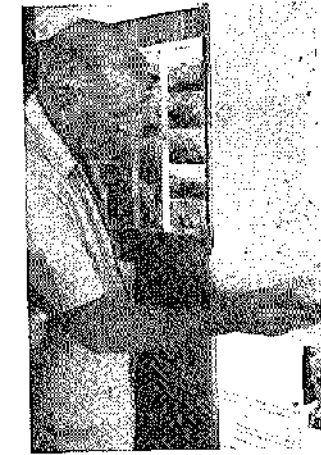
*With best wishes,*

*Yours sincerely,*

*P.R Jenkins, Co-Coordinator-Kenya Rhino Rescue Project  
cc Director, Wildlife Conservation & Management Dept.*



An example of the fencing, designed by Peter Jenkins for the Rhino sanctuaries



Peter Jenkins showing areas of rhino sanctuaries

(Source: Ride for Rhino photo library – photo by Julie Anne Edwards copyright©1988)

*Peter Jenkins M.B.E. 1930 to 2001, remembered as one of the world's greatest conservationists.*

*A quiet man who thought deeply, but felt passionately about conserving wildlife.*

*It is important that the work he set in progress is never forgotten.*

Back in Nairobi, we met with conservationist and researcher, Dr Esmond Bradley Martin and spoke in-depth regarding the horn trade. He explained that this trade in rhino horn continues to be lucrative, with middle men financing trade routes that extend from the south of the continent to North Yemen, The United Arab Emirates and Middle East. Political pressure was being put on those countries where rhino horn is imported, to end the

trade, but it is a desperate race against time. He explained that, *"to stop poaching, we have to see a collapse in horn prices, and healthy economies in those countries, where otherwise, people will have a financial incentive to kill rhino. Without that, and certainly north of the Zambezi, the only Black Rhino that will survive in Africa are those kept behind fences."*

Prior to our departure we met with the Director of Parks and Wildlife of Kenya Perez Orlindo and the Deputy Minister for Tourism & Wildlife, Phillip Leaky. They both wished us well on our journey, thanking us for our efforts for rhino.

As the Land Rovers had arrived we bade farewell to Kenya and set off on our bicycles to the Tanzania border. The route Nairobi to Namanga was 169km, which was a two day ride from Nairobi, and was more or less downhill all the way. As we got nearer to the border we spotted Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa. We were about to enter the land of the Masai.

To those dedicated conservationists in Kenya, some of which have passed on - in memory of Bill Woodley, Ken Khule and Peter Jenkins MBE who I was fortunate and privileged to have met, 'Thank You', from the next generation, which you inspired and most importantly the rhino and wildlife you helped to protect.

#### **Distance cycled for the rhino**

Mombasa to Nairobi 530km

Nairobi around Mt Kenya - 500km

Nairobi to Namanga / Tanzania border - 169km

Total distances cycled in Kenya 1 199km

Total Distance from Glasgow, Scotland to the Tanzania border

9 879km



David Sheldrick Wildlife Trusts  
black rhino orphan - Nairobi, 1988  
(Picture Copyright© Rhino Girls  
Photo Library 1988 - 2008)

#### **Some Rhino Updates**

#### **'RHINO ARK: HUMANS IN HARMONY WITH HABITAT AND WILDLIFE**

*The 2,000 square kilometre Aberdare Ecosystem is one of Kenya's 5 water towers and home to numerous species of wildlife, including the endangered Black Rhino and Mountain Bongo. The heart of the ecosystem is a 70km long towering mountain range covered by rain forest, boasting peaks of over 12,000 feet above sea level. Over the years this critical national resource has endured grave threats, including the near extinction, through rampant poaching, of its indigenous Black Rhino population.*

*Rhino Ark Charitable Trust was formed in 1988 as a conservation initiative to address the rampant poaching of wildlife and to protect the neighbouring farming communities from losses caused by wildlife in the Aberdare Ecosystem. A simple yet elegant solution was adopted; the construction of an electric game-proof fence around the entire ecosystem, and over the last 20 years Rhino Ark has been raising funds for fence construction. By September 2008, over 350kms of*



the targeted 400kms of fence had been built. The construction effort continues apace, as the focus now shifts towards ensuring a sustainable mechanism for fence maintenance in perpetuity. Visit [www.rhinoark.org](http://www.rhinoark.org) for more information about our work.'

### Table for White & Black Rhino 2008

**NB:** Table excludes speculative guesstimates

Numbers primarily compiled at the USFWS Rhino & Tiger Conservation Fund- and WWF African Rhino Programme-sponsored 2008 IUCN SSC AFRSG Meeting in Tanzania. Species and Subspecies totals >500 have been rounded to nearest five rhino; figures are correct as at 01 October 2008. Trends are as compared to the 2006 figures - (Source: "Save the Rhino International - Registered Charity Number: 1035072")

### White Rhino

Country	Northern	Southern	Total	Trend
	Ceratotherium simum cottoni	Ceratotherium simum simum		
Botswana		106	106	Up
DRC	4		4	Stable?
Kenya		303	303	Up
Mozambique		9	9	?
Namibia		370	370	Up
South Africa		16,273	16,273	Up
Swaziland		89	89	Up
Zambia		1	1	Down
Zimbabwe		341	341	Up
Uganda		6	6	Stable+Intro
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17,498</b>	<b>17,502</b>	<b>Up</b>

### Black Rhino

Country	SouthWest	Western	Eastern	SouthCentral		Total	Trend
	Diceros bicornis bicornis	Diceros bicornis longipes	Diceros bicornis michaeli	Diceros bicornis minor	Diceros bicornis brucei		
Botswana				7		7	Stable
Cameroon		?				0?	Extinct?
Ethiopia						0?	Extinct?
Kenya			577			577	Up
Malawi				16		16	Up
Namibia	1,435					1,435	Up
Rwanda			1			1	?
South Africa	113		54	1,321		1,488	Up
Swaziland				18		18	Up
Tanzania			67	56		123	Up
Zambia				16		16	Stable+Intro
Zimbabwe				558		558	Up
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,548</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>1,992</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,239</b>	<b>Up</b>

### Rhino 2007

Current data on the rhino is available from the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List entry for the Black Rhino: 'In 1995, the population of Black Rhino declined by 90% over the last sixty years reaching a low of 2,410. Numbers have been steadily increasing at a continental level reaching 3,100 by 2001. For the most part, the large free ranging populations of rhinos that used to roam over huge areas, and which therefore could not be adequately protected, have been eliminated or reduced to low numbers. The bulk of remaining Black Rhino occur in areas with more concentrated security. International trade bans under CITES have also been complemented by increased domestic anti-trade legislation.' (Source: "Helen Temple IUCN")

**Rhino - 16 June 2008** | Source IUCN (International Union Conservation Nature): · Sarah Halls, IUCN Media Relations Officer, · Lynette Lew, IUCN Species Communications Officer

'The African White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum*) has increased from 14,540 in 2005 to 17,480 in 2007. It is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, but one of its two subspecies, the Northern White Rhino, is listed as Critically Endangered and is on the brink of extinction. It is restricted in the wild to Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the only remaining population was reduced by poaching from 30 in April 2003 to only four confirmed animals by August 2006. "Worryingly, recent fieldwork has so far failed to find any presence of these four remaining rhinos," says Dr Martin Brooks, Chair of the IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group. *"Unless animals are found during the intensive surveys that are planned under the direction of the African Parks Foundation, the subspecies may be doomed to extinction."*

In contrast, the other subspecies, the Southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*), is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List and continues to increase in numbers and range.

Similarly, the population of African Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), has increased from 3,730 in 2005 to 4,180 in 2007, although it still remains Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.'

To learn more and support wildlife sanctuaries and conservation projects of the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, formerly Ngare Seroi Rhino Sanctuary, Rhino Ark and the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trusts go to: [www.rhinoark.org](http://www.rhinoark.org); [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org); [www.lewa.org](http://www.lewa.org). **Update! As of December 2008 Lewa Downs Wildlife Conservancy has had its 100<sup>th</sup> rhino birth**

*'But scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon  
by angels in their flight'*

*Dr David Livingstone, 1857: Missionary, Explorer & Liberator  
(One of the first Europeans to see the Victoria Falls)*

*'About 1 kilometre upstream of the Falls, Livingstone transferred to a smaller canoe and proceeded to the island between the Main and Rainbow Falls which today is called 'Livingstone Island' to see for himself the area the 'Kololo' people who invaded from the south in about 1838, and who called it "Mosi-oo-Tunya", "The smoke that thunders". (Source: David Phillipson, "The Victoria Falls and the European Penetration of Central Africa" (1975).*

#### **Chapter 4** **The Smoke That Thunders** *'Mosi-oo-tunya'*

It was the end of May 1988 when we headed out of Kenya and into Tanzania. The object of the ride was to continue to raise awareness for the plight of the Tanzania Rhino, now literally reduced to a handful in the Ngorongoro Crater, adjacent to the Serengeti Plains, the fourth largest caldera in the world.

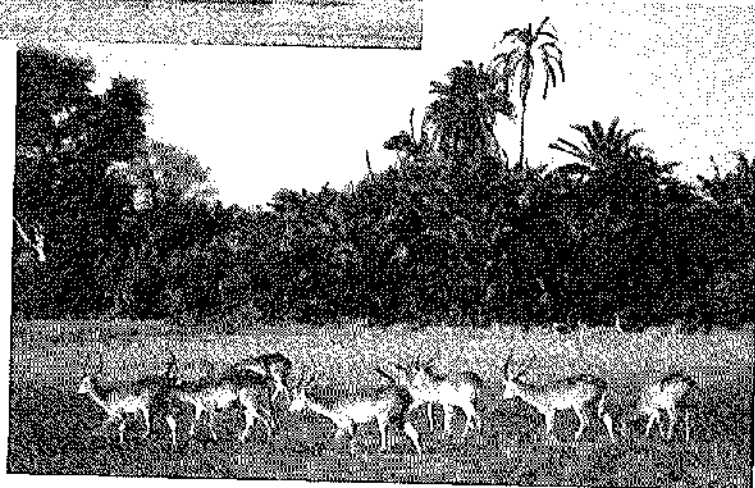


Black Rhino & Calf in Ngorongoro Crater  
(Source: Provided by IUCN - Photographer, Richard Emslie ©copyright 2008)

- For further information on rhino sanctuary in Botswana go to: [www.khamarhinosanctuary.com](http://www.khamarhinosanctuary.com)
- A website dedicated to the San go to: [www.kalahari.org](http://www.kalahari.org)
- For a fascinating read and general information on the country refer to 'Shell Guide to Botswana' and "Shell Guide to Trees & Shrubs of the Okavango Delta" and other titles by Author, Veronica Roodt go to: [www.veronicaroodt.co.za](http://www.veronicaroodt.co.za)
- Botswana Birdlife – learn about the conservation status of birds refer to Birdlife International in particular the status of the African skimmer go to: [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)



Palm Island of the Okavango delta Red Lechwe  
(Source: Photo's by author)



*"Why do I travel?... I see views, people, places I never imagined existed. I learn new customs and hear old history... I am wonderfully lucky and see something very few white people have seen before... And for a short time I shed the aura of civilisation and become a different person'... Genest Hamilton, "A Stone's Throw Travels from Africa in Six Decades"*

## Chapter 8 Rhinos, Lions and Landmines 'Kasane to Kariba on horseback'

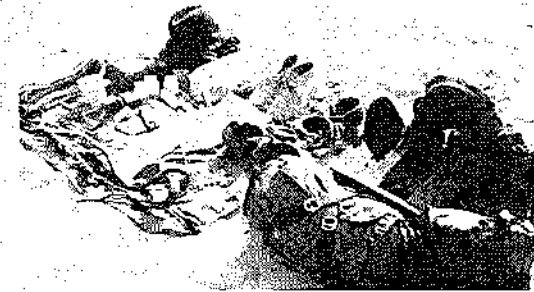


*'For Grey, Harry, Fleck & Korrisan'*

My part of Ride for Sudan began in June 1991, at the Botswana border village of Kasane, on the bank of the Chobe River, where four countries meet, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia. Ride for Sudan was initiated by David Parry and Philip Tetley, a horse trek to establish awareness, and raise funds to support a sustainable conservation project, in the severely poached wildlife areas of Southern Sudan. In recent travels, having also journeyed into Sudan, I had come across camel trains crossing the Nubian Desert, in north eastern Sudan. They were loaded with salt and other supplies, however, on some of these trains journeying in the south were armed poachers loaded with plundered ivory, which Philip Tetley had personally run into in his travels further south.

The 'Northern White Rhino', originally inhabiting the wilds of Southern Sudan, has been brought to extinction. Now it was the elephants turn, and the plundering of the elephant population for their ivory in the south, and the neighbouring countries of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic, Kenya and Chad, for export to Asia was seriously impacting the herds. According to wildlife reports, it is estimated that between 6 000 and 12 000 animals per annum are poached. The Sudan civil war between the Khartoum's Arab and Moslem elite, against Christian and ethnic Africans, also involved armed clashes and the slaughtering of large numbers of elephants. According to a report compiled by Dr Esmond Bradley Martin, "The killing of elephants and rhino is out of control. The poachers are mainly members of the Sudanese army who possess the necessary firearms and ammunition. They also have access to government transport to move tusks to Khartoum and Omdurman. Merchants in the Sudanese capital and the market town of Omdurman constitute the main suppliers of ivory, and about 75 percent of it is sold to Asian nations. While large numbers of buyers hail from South Korea and the Gulf Arab states, Chinese contractors working in Sudan's oil, construction and mining sectors are the largest consumers. It is said that the demand for trophies in China, the world's most populous nation, has been fanned by its ever growing economy and the skyrocketing purchasing power of its population. This, in turn, has driven up the cost of illegal ivory from US\$15 to US\$43 per kilo in 1997, to between US\$44 and US\$148 dollars per kilo today, depending on the quality and weight of the tusks. This unregulated trade in Sudan - which has a stockpile of about 50 000 kilos of ivory - has cast a dark shadow on Africa's elephant population now standing at between 400 000 and 660 000 in central Africa. The unregulated ivory trade from Khartoum and Omdurman, both

for local and external markets, has had devastating effects on elephants, especially in central Africa. Reliable statistics on elephant populations in the region are difficult to come by, but in Southern Sudan alone the figure fell from 133 000 in 1976 to about 40 000 in 1991."



My kit for a 7 week trip in the bush  
- photo by author

David and Philip heard about our 'Ride for the Rhino' in Sudan, and approached us for support and information at our Environment 2000 Headquarters. The planning for Ride for Sudan took many months, and we did what we could to assist the project. Finally, having secured equipment sponsorship, including hand-made light-weight 'McClellan saddles from Johnston's Saddlery, they set off with their co-rider Gafella, (The son of a Botswana chief) across Botswana. In each country they visited an active conservationist would join them as they rode through. It was agreed I join them at Kasane, for the section through the Zambezi Valley, from Kasane to Kariba in Zimbabwe.

The saddles were based on the McClellan design, hand made in Zimbabwe by Johnston's Saddlery. They are light and comfortable on the horses, and even as the horses lose condition, the saddle continues to fit comfortably round its back. 'The McClellan saddle was originally adopted for the Rhodesian Forces Grey Scouts units. The Grey Scouts were a mounted infantry regiment of the former Rhodesian army. The unit got its name

from George Grey, a hero in Rhodesia for his acts and selfless service during the Matabele War of 1893. The unit was known for their operational effectiveness during the war in Rhodesia, and were feared by their enemies. The Grey Scouts were initially raised for anti terrorist gang work, first working in Troops, but eventually developed into two entire squadrons.



On the 1st of November 1980 the Grey Scouts stood down. The Zimbabwe National Army were inspired to create their 1st Mounted Infantry Battalion by the Grey success, testimony indeed to a regiment that had proved to be a scourge to the guerrillas seeking to disrupt Rhodesia! This new battalion was made up of many black soldiers from the Grey Scouts. However, the new unit did not last, because it proved impossible to maintain personnel for training exercises and purposes, and so the 1st Mounted Infantry Battalion soon disintegrated.' (Source: Wikipedia "Grey Scouts") During the writing of these pages I met with an ex Grey Scout (who wishes to remain anonymous) and during our discussions on the subject he relayed the following story which is recorded here as an example of the tragic and unfortunate savagery of the time. "During the war our patrols to the remote border proved to be highly effective and were efficiently carried out. Riding on horseback enabled the Scouts to undertake surprise ambush contacts on groups of 'terrs' hiding out amongst the villages and in the bush. These follow up operations proved successful and the Scouts were

greatly feared by their enemies and respected by the Rhodesian Forces. On one particular occasion the stick had been assigned to undertake road blocks due to a shortage of ground troops and further assistance was required. A bus carrying African civilians travelling in from the Tribal Trust Lands arrived at the road block. The Scouts numbering approximately 6 stopped the bus having instructed the driver to halt. As the bus driver was being questioned a couple of the Scouts were inspecting the passengers on board. One of them noticed some unusual behaviour that caught the Scout's attention. An African women's rocking and shushing of her baby for some reason drew attention to herself that looked unnatural. She had a baby wrapped on her back that was not even making a sound. On closer inspection the baby was not even breathing, but dead. The women continued to pretend to rock it to keep it quiet. The Scout requested the woman to remove her baby from her back. The stomach of the baby had stiches. It appeared that its internal organs had been removed from inside the cavity and it was found to be carrying rounds of ammunition and other war items and had been sewn up. The terrorists had many savage ways of bringing in ammunition even through the road block, and inside a dead baby's stomach!"

I was about to undertake my own journey through the harsh terrain in the remote border areas of the Zambezi Valley. Now several years have passed since the war days, and on the same saddles as the Grey Scout's. I followed a path that took me into some dangerous situations and through some old minefields that I had no idea even existed!

Ride for the Rhino had become well known; however I was in no way an experienced horse woman. I still felt unsure about how the horses would handle me. Or to be particular, how would

I handle the horses, especially through the lion infested country of the rugged Zambezi Valley. Nevertheless the idea excited me immensely, and I got into training. I am always invigorated by rugged wild places, which is where I feel most alive, with all my senses in sync. However, as I have indicated, the thought of being on horseback in lion country really concerned me. But the anxiety for Africa's great pachyderms being systematically wiped out concerned me more. I also thought that possibly some new thinking and energy, creating awareness would inspire me to be of help in saving the precious wildlife heritage. I would do whatever it took to complete the ride. Hopefully it would highlight some attention to wildlife in the world, and educate people along the way. Approaching the area on horseback seemed a less intrusive and more natural way to travel. It would also be an opportunity to get a better idea of exactly what was going on in the Valley. I would also be following in the pioneering footsteps of my grandfather and great grandparents in their intrepid journeys across Africa on horseback especially serving in the Boer and World Wars.

It was 6am on June 1991 and I was in the Kavira Forest, where final permission had been granted to us for the ride through the Chete Safari Area of the Zambezi Valley to the shores of Lake Kariba. Having set a course towards the Zambezi, we were still far from the main river, right in the middle of the "shlateen", (bush). Earlier we had been tracking for some miles on horseback in the "gusu" (Kalahari sand), following an elephant trail. Beside this sandy track I suddenly noticed a broken fence line, occasionally showing the odd wire strand intact. A battered, old, rusty, metal warning sign clung to the corroded thin wire, inscribed with the legend "Chenjera Chimbabaira", [Danger Mines!] It also exhibited a diagram in black of two bones crossed beneath a skull. We had discovered that we were passing through an old minefield, a relic

of the Rhodesian war, as a result of following an elephant trail. Upon suddenly realising our predicament, and gripped by profound fear, we decided to retrace our steps. Continuing on foot, we were very careful to keep ourselves, and the horses, on the path. With sweating foreheads and palms, we finally emerged unscathed. The elephant had actually mastered the art of walking safely through a land mine infested area.

Eventually the trail led us to a small river bed, which was completely dry. It was midday by then, and we and the horses were weary and suffering from severe thirst. Not knowing where we could find water was disconcerting, and became pressing. I had a water bottle hanging over my pommel containing a few mouthfuls of liquid left. I recall avoiding drinking from it in front of my horse, 'Grey', for he and I had become close companions. There was no way in hell that I was going to drink the last few drops of water in my bottle until my horse had been watered. 'Grey' always came first.

Eleven years had elapsed since the bush war in Rhodesia had ended, but there were still signs of the war throughout the remote areas of Zimbabwe. "Clop, clop, clop", the horses hooves made the only sounds we heard in the silence. I slowly walked past derelict buildings, with bullet holes punched into their walls, and doors and windows removed. Those old, derelict places we came across in this isolated zone were like skeletons scarring the landscape. A sad reminder to me of those years past, when brave people had given their lives for what they believed in. The mine belts encountered were a disturbing experience, after being caught unaware by them as many of the warning signs had been removed or had rusted away. If it had not been for the 'elephants' path', we would certainly have been in real trouble.

During 1975 the Rhodesians laid mine belts in many border areas of their country, some being placed along the Zambezi River. At that time more and more dissidents infiltrated the country in pursuit of their second 'Chimurenga' war against the whites. These insurgents killed many innocents, horrifically slaughtering and maiming indiscriminately, particularly rural villagers, and all in the name of 'liberation and freedom'! This murderous Marxist Bush War was directed against all the Rhodesian people. At the time the mine belts were thought to be a good deterrent against armed gangs entering the country. Minefields covered vast border areas, however due to a shortage of Rhodesian manpower to patrol the fields they could not be patrolled all the time. The terrorists were able to establish paths through several minefields. Using cunning, they lifted claymore mines, and turned them against the Rhodesians on roads, or in other booby traps.

Years after the war, these abandoned minefields continued to cause tragic, horrific casualties among many civilians and animals alike. The wilderness border areas were where a great deal of the wildlife existed. With the passage of time many of the minefields were cleared but this proved difficult as many of their locations were forgotten, even by those who had laid them. Maps and fence lines have long since been destroyed as the soil has shifted during the rainy seasons many mines have actually moved. So although many a minefield was cleared, they were never really completely safe, countless mines continuing to be 'live', long after the war. Fencing wire was regularly stolen, and used to make snares to poach game. Knowing all this, it was not difficult to imagine that one could suddenly end up in a real predicament whilst travelling on foot, or horseback, in the Valley.

Little did we realize that 1991 saw the start of one of the areas severest droughts. The trees, except the acacias, were dry and it

being warm in the Valley one did not even feel the effects of winter, except when it was 5am in the morning, or late at night, while we slept under the stars on the ground, next to our horses.

In the early fifties the damming of the Zambezi River created one of the largest lakes of its time - Lake Kariba, as described previously in Chapter 6. The local people, the BaTonga who lived along the banks of the Zambezi River were very superstitious. They believed in "Nyaminyami" the snake god of the Zambezi, and they were not at all happy about the damming of the great Zambezi River. They warned the engineers of the vindictive spirit of "Nyaminyami", the river god. During the building of the Kariba Dam, many BaTonga communities had to be resettled along the shores of the lake. These people believe that it was the river god "Nyaminyami" who annually caused the flooding of the Zambezi River. They also claimed that the building of the dam would separate Nyaminyami from his wife, who lived downstream and thus, annoy him. They consider the river god responsible for the many problems encountered by the Kariba Dam builders. These include the deaths of several construction workers in accidents, and the severe damage caused by the flooding in 1958. The BaTonga, to this day, expect Nyaminyami will finally have his way with the Kariba Dam!

The BaTonga survived by fishing, and lived in very isolated areas. They habitually knocked out the front teeth of their children. Apparently this began to frustrate the Arab slavers who originally tried to enslave people. The habit made them unattractive to the potential slavers. In the Shona and Ndebele beliefs the BaTonga are considered to be inferiors in the ranks of the human hierarchy.

These hardy people impressed me with their helpful generosity, and their complete willingness to give everything they had to help a fellow traveller. It is a characteristic missing in our societies

today. Africa's cultures are totally different to the English and other western civilizations. Yet at times it touched me how when asked where to find water, they gave all they had. Unhappily it was not enough for our horses, but still the thought, and kindness, behind their offer touched me. It made me realize that even though my family had been on the continent since the early 1800's, as a white African, I felt in this instance that I did not know my own country, particularly the BaTonka, but I was learning fast!

Thus my journey into that remote Zambezi Valley was a journey of learning. Government policy ensured that many Shona had been recently settled amongst the BaTonga villagers, in order to control them, and to benefit from the CAMPFIRE programme. It was scary to find to what extent the ZANU PF (A Marxist orientated ultra nationalistic organisation that is the defacto government of Zimbabwe) had infiltrated into even the most remote villages. By subverting the chief's authority, and establishing their own network of Counsellors, Ward and Village Officers they controlled the community with their intimidating networks, even down to the level of village headman. It was apparent to me in all my work, how the rural poor were being led by a political party that constantly stirred up anti white nonsense. Further into my story I will tell of many occasions when I felt this.

One day, shortly after we entered The Chete Safari area, (a rugged wildlife hunting area in the Zambezi Valley), we located an ancient water source for the animals. It consisted of a small spring set in among the rocky outcrops. As we entered the spring area evidence of game came to life, as not far off, a young bull elephant stood. Having just been down to the spring he had caught wind of the horse, and that suddenly made him disappear into the bush. Seeing elephant, or other game, take off in this manner I knew

they had been poached and severely hunted. Shortly thereafter we found a rough dirt road that was so rocky we had to walk. It was here we met up with one of the National Park trackers who radioed our arrival to the Warden of Chete, Norman English. My first introduction to Norman found me being told we were absolutely mad to be riding horses through tsetse ridden, lion infested country! The good news was that Norman had decided that he and his scout would join us for a couple of evenings around our campfire, as we continued on our trek through the bush.

One of those evenings, while settling in for the night around the fire, we suddenly heard rhino snorting less than a hundred meters from us. We could not actually see them from the light of our three fires around the camp that protected us from lions.

The noise suddenly induced Norman and his scout, to jump up. It occurred to me that if the warden jumped up so should I! My adrenalin worked overtime that night as I had got such a fright, I almost stood on Normans head, whilst climbing up a Mopane tree and when to cap it all, I dropped my small torch on top of him! The rhino eventually left us in peace - so much for my panic! Norman and I have subsequently had light hearted moments recalling the events of that night, and remained friends ever since.

Rhino poaching was very serious in the Chete area and in 1991 more than half the resident population were poached in a four month period. At Norman's house was a depressing pile of rhino skulls, numbering more than 60. I never saw that number alive in my life.

Next morning Norman took us to one of the springs the rhino used. The rocky track was so well trodden that the rhino had



actually worn a flat path on the rocks to their water point. Norman eventually ended up as the Sinamatella Camp Warden in Hwange National Park, one of the largest National Parks in Zimbabwe. At least 13% of Zimbabwe land mass was set aside for the preservation of wildlife. During this period of political change ecologists throughout Africa were moving towards a policy of conservation which encouraged the use of wildlife for the economic benefit of rural communities. In principle this sounded ideal but in practice it was another story. Revolutionary paradigms had torched themselves finally on our land paving the way of so called liberal reform. I had my own personal doubts about these developments but was still too young to be able to do anything.

'Democratic processes' were now at work under a new regime. Reason for change was all well and good, and it was important for communities to decide the optimum use of their resources in their own areas. This, of course, must be sustained by financial and moral support from outside groups. That way, wildlife would become an essential asset to the country, and not an exclusive luxury, protected from local inhabitants for enjoyment by foreigners. As already stated the idea in principle sounds ok, but in reality, when poor primitive communities with little less than the basics, are involved in their cultural backwaters, development, politics and corruption intervene. The dissemination of benefits does not filter down into the hands of the inhabitants, but into those of corrupt politicians. Thus, if the reality of saving wildlife seemed to some overseas folks as being ideal, born and bred locals were sceptical.

Having travelled for weeks in the Zambezi Valley we entered the Nyaminyami area feeling depressed.

This was because the world where the wild animal roamed was

being threatened everywhere; its future was bleak.

### **My private diary - The Horse Ride through the Zambezi Valley (written in youthful exhuberance!)**

Route: Botswana Border to Kariba approximately. 753km

Kasane / Kazungula to Kariba time approximately. 45 days

Actual riding days 33 averaging 22,8km per day

15 to 20 days were spent in lion country

Arriving at Kariba on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1991

26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June 1991

I arrived at Kasane, having left the Victoria Falls, where many of the Zimbabwean Operators had been negative about lion in the country that we were about to traverse, and their pessimism became boring after a while. Met up with the co-riders and had my introduction to all four horses, which were oblivious to anything around them, except heads down grazing peacefully on the banks of the Chobe River.

Prior to sunset we took the horses for a ride, and this was my first ride on Grey, a part Arab stallion who had come from the Ghanzi farm area. In earlier times Bushmen used to ride trailing the Ganzi cattle rancher's herds across the vast Kalahari to market. But times had changed, and the modern way was transportation in cattle trucks.

We trotted off into the Teak Forest, *Baikiaea plurijuga*, on the Kalahari Sands, adjacent to the Chobe River. The soft sands were

amazing to ride on and headed down towards a saltpan near the river, arriving there at sunset. On the opposite island, ranks of elephant came down to drink, as was evident by all the droppings. We quietly watched the sun go down, giving the horses a break, before mounting them again and returning to camp.

29<sup>th</sup> June 1991

Early to rise and, anxious to get going and keep to our schedules, riding our horses out again to exercise them. Grey and I are becoming a little accustomed to each other. Returning to camp and after grooming the horses we oiled the tack, and planned for our start on the 1<sup>st</sup> July. Thus, this entire day revolved around the horses and their equipment.

30<sup>th</sup> June 1991

We completed the final preparations for our departure. The horses are groomed, exercised, equipment checked and packed into our saddle bags ready for our departure at first light. The afternoon is free time to rest and the horses are let out to graze. Soon enough we finally are saying cheerio to our last Botswana sunset on the Chobe River.

1<sup>st</sup> July 1991 - 11km

It's Monday morning and we rise at dawn. As we dismantle camp, I am feeling nervous, praying "Bwana George, please take care of the lions, so that they will not eat us or the horses on the trail." Our trek is a short one today, through the customs border post at Kazungula. It feels strange to take horses across a border but the officials were very cooperative, and pleasant. We spent the night at Imbabala Lodge. The owners had made a thorn boma for the horses to protect them from lions. The Imbabala area is known to have a high population of lion, evident in the number of tracks we saw. The camp by the Zambezi River was a good

birding site, boasting over 400 species of birds.

I thought to myself, "Perhaps in truth we are somewhat eccentric to be embarking on an expedition such as this." Early next morning we gathered round the fires, sipping tea and biscuits while plotting our progress.

2<sup>nd</sup> July 1991 - 55km

Last night an armed guard from the camp (who patrolled the thorn boma) told us there were lions near camp. Customarily in Africa we get up very early, because the best time of day is just before the sun rises, when all is quiet and peaceful. By sunrise we were mounted, and ready to head off into the wilderness of the Valley, following the course of the Zambezi River. Because, there was very little protection against lion, it was necessary for us to take turns as sentries so we could raise the alarm if danger threatened.

Just as we are about to leave one of the owners of Imbabala Camp tells us that the National Parks Ranger in charge of the Katimbora rapids area is concerned, feeling he is not properly informed about our proposed journey through the park! We are told not to go any further! Calling on him I explained we had a letter granting us permission from a Mr. Makombe (3<sup>rd</sup> on the Parks Totem) and he reluctantly agrees to let us continue, but we must visit him at his station, when passing through to explain to him details of our route. Ah! The joys of bureaucracy!

Our farewells are then completed, and finally we trotted off, knowing full well these are the last home comforts we shall enjoy for a while. As soon as we left camp we run into a huge herd of Cape buffalo. Our horses proved frisky, so a steady pace was set, tripling - a gait in between a canter and a trot.

There is dense vegetation on both sides of our track, and we are soon weary from the constant look out for lion. Sightings of lion spoor all over the cut lines further ensured it was a tense period.

With the river on our left, I was overwhelmed by the feeling of isolation. Our horses are our only transport, being loaded with the most basic of provisions for the 105 km ride through the bush to Victoria Falls. Grey, manifests the most uncomfortable trot, and is very bouncy. Today after covering 28 km and bashing through wild routes including many thorns, we finally hit the old dirt road. As stony as it is, this is not good on the horses' hooves. With Kalahari sand very scarce it seems endless, but after a few hours we take an elephant path, and head towards the river. The vegetation where we are passing is of dry thorn and mopane. Nearing the river the vegetation becomes beautiful after the dryness and harshness inland. There is quite a lot of game evident which we quietly trot through - Suddenly I spot a Cheetah - literally running right next to me!

Riding a horse enables you to be in close proximity to the animals in the bush and so you become part of the system. Impala do not bolt so rapidly from horses and some a few meters in front of us, leap high into the air. Our eyes are keenly alert for the slightest hint of lion. By mid morning we found a lovely area for the horses to rest under the shade of a tree. Earlier we had stopped in a mopane forest, to enable the horses to drink at a spring. Just as they began their drink we heard a rifle shot from the direction of the National Parks rifle range HQ.

Finally we arrive at the National Parks, where the senior ranger is happy to see us and after we discuss our route with him we are allowed to resume our ride. Midday, Grey bolts - and my water bottle falls off - its time for a readjustment. We are about 10 km

from our proposed night camp. The horses are hobbled and left to graze around camp. We rest on the edge of a beautiful gorge over-looking the Zambezi River. An hour later, after eating biscuits, and resting we ride out towards our night camp. The last few km of our journey has been extremely tiring. We eat our camp dinner of soup, pasta, and sadza, and drink tea. We bed in the sand, and soon have a large fire going. After dark the horses are tethered behind us, as we use our small torches for light. We all feel anxious about the lion. Lion guards do three hour shifts and I do the first watch from 8 to 11pm. David does 11 to 2am, and Phillip 2 to 5am. Once they all settle in, and get tucked into their sleeping bags, I'm alone to keep watch. Gosh is this fun or what? My tiny torch flashes out into the darkness at the slightest noise. However, after 3 hours of this, trying to keep my eyes open, my body is aching and tired. My only companion is the fire. Horses really are incredibly vulnerable at night. Grey has tangled himself up. Standing quietly, he is untied, and sorted out. The fire is maintained, while making the wood last, I certainly am not brave enough to march off looking for wood in the dark. Phil reckons if the horses show signs of fear then you know something's up. The stars above are great in the bush.

My co-riders are sound asleep, and all is still. I stoke the fire while speaking to myself saying, "Be brave", and do a short walk around. For some reason I was really nervous; I tell myself "It's all in the damn mind for Gods sake!" Being afraid of lions, I try desperately not to nod off. Finally David wakes up for his turn, what relief - and Philip a little later. I can't wait to curl up and go to sleep. Suddenly we hear a rustling in the bush nearby - LION! - Its early morning, and the mere sound wakes us all up! False alarm! - Only a bush buck, but it made us all jump. Hyped up as we were it was early to rise, hot coffee and cold sadza for breakfast.

3<sup>rd</sup> July 1991 - 50km

We travelled 50 odd km today finally arriving at Victoria Falls. We had been told that this stretch of the journey was our worst for lion! I sometimes asked myself whether people, and especially old hunters, just try to frighten you. Everyone we spoke to thought we had been mad to take our horses through this bush country which had a high concentration of lion. Philip is singing rather loudly in front – I surmise, to frighten the lion away – as we canter. We are making good progress here – the bush track is right for the horse's hooves.

In the event there were neither lion, nor elephant, but giraffe and impala were abundant. They are ok; I can deal with 'em! After resting, we remount and set a fast pace. Nearing the Victoria Falls we penetrate a land mine area – unknown to us, as we are following the elephant trail when the exit sign appears, we cope with a few moments of absolute terror! Suddenly lion are no longer our major concern, but trying to get out of a land mine infested area alive is! Stretches of the Zambezi River are really wild. Tired and weary we finally reach the park entrance at Victoria Falls, having had to retrace our steps on an elephant foot path, not daring to step anywhere else but in theirs. Only an elephant knows where to safely step.

Just before we arrived at the Victoria Falls we came upon a huge herd of several hundred buffalo – the game scout had warned of a lioness near the herd, so to keep a watchful look out as she might like a meal of horse rather than buffalo! On proceeding through the mopane scrub, I noticed all the buffalo were scattered to the one side, major road construction and development of a lodge and golf course was taking place, no one had considered creating a game corridor for the animals to get down to the Zambezi to drink. I was horrified at this and watched the animals

waiting on the side of the track in the dry barren bushveld. They would have a much longer route now to by pass the development to get to water!

Total mileage on horseback from Kasane to Vic. Falls is approximately 116 km.

20<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 45km

It's winter in Zimbabwe, and we depart Victoria Falls. Today we cover 45km, following the railway line a lot of the way, which takes us onto Kalahari sands, where it's easy to canter. Passing through villages the children are clearly aware of us, shouting "imbesi" (a Shona word used for zebra or horse.) Many of these communities probably have never seen a horse; although they have elephant, and lion visiting their area, there are no horses here. Horses were brought into Zimbabwe by the whites but not in this area of the Zambezi Valley, because of the presence of Nanga (sleeping sickness), and foot and mouth are deadly to horses.

Grey galloped today, it was the fastest I have ever been on him - I hung on for dear life!

The inside of my legs are bruised black and blue! I wore long johns, and thick socks, underneath my cotton khaki riding breeches to try to avoid this. Thankfully the worst of it passed after about two weeks or so in the saddle. We camped at an old mission, and chatted to the locals. An African woman from Manica District who is a teacher at the local school joined us.

Women, according to the prevailing male African culture, do not ride horses, donkeys or bicycles. This philosophy felt very backward to me. I note that when we pass through some remote African villages the males show no respect for woman. Having said that, some of these men, even out here, have seen us on TV, and know

about the original Ride for the Rhino Bicycle Ride from UK to Zimbabwe, while others, have learnt about us by bush telegraph. There is not much for horses to feed on, and we often barter for dry old mealie cobs to feed them, for there is just no grass around. I cannot imagine what the poor local cattle and goats eat here. It's ironic really, in many cases we faced a reality that people did not care too much about animals, and abused them. Then in another nearby environment they show concern for animals. The villagers always allow us to use their watering points invariably creating havoc between thirsty goats and parched horses.

We stopped for two hours for lunch...but only for a break, no food, just tea. Children from the village surround us and are interested in a Swiss army knife that one of the riders is flashing around. I watch while two older African youths approached us chatting, I knew they were Tsotsies (Ruffians), next thing they disappear, and the knife is gone! The children of the village comment by saying, "they are evil men."

Thanks for telling us that after the fact, but I knew instinctively they were no good, Philip had continued to talk with them all the while I had kept my distance. The horses are out in the field; and after sleeping on the ground for a while, we collected them, and saddled up.

21<sup>st</sup> July 1991 - 40km

For part of the journey we have a film crew follow us. They shoot for a couple of days, which is a bit of a pain. This morning we get moving a long time before sunrise. Our routine has been to sleep by the fire, after planning our route for the next day. My body aches, and we are all freezing – hot coffee is made on the fire followed by a walk down to the horses. Although we are travelling through incredible scenery, today has been physically

painful.

Our days revolve around the care of our horses, and no matter how exhausted we are feeling the horses always come first, and they are groomed at every opportunity. We sleep in under blankets at night, which then goes underneath the saddle during the day, when we are riding. Philip rides Harry, David is on Fleck, and Korrisan on the pack horse and Grey is mine. We stick with our individual mounts to bond with them, and I always fuss with Grey. Carrying only the minimum of supplies, we pay every consideration for weight to avoid straining our horses.

22<sup>nd</sup> July 1991 - 30 km

My body feels exhausted; for yesterday we travelled 45 km, and today it will be another 30km. It's dawn and, as every morning, the cattle and goats are being let out of the kraal (a small fenced area utilising thorn trees). The dawn cockerel serenades to his hens, and golden reddish light reflects off the backs of the cattle. It's a tranquil scene; livestock out here seem to find a way of surviving, despite the dryness and lack of grass. I wonder what they live on? The surrounding thorn trees no doubt provide fodder during the dry months. Many are an important source of food. Zimbabwe has over 40 varieties of acacia trees. Diverse concentration occurs along the Umgusa River further south, however, the entire Valley floor has a wide variety.

The silent stirring of the village heralds it is beginning to awaken. The village headman bade us farewell and we thank him for allowing us to pass through his area. Today the terrain has deteriorated to the worst it has been so far, and we spend most of 30km staggering about on foot over very rocky country. All our mounts wear easy boots except for Grey. Grey is of mixed blood, mainly Arab stallion, and his hooves are very agile and they do

not hurt him at all. He is the smallest of our horses and yet the strongest, and most durable. I now realize how vulnerable horses' hooves are. The Zambezi Valley in all its manifestations is amazing, for as we travel through incredibly rugged terrain there is also a sense of beauty. I think to myself a lot, for one has loads of time for contemplating. The clapping of hooves at a slow walking pace, is the overriding sound penetrating ones ears. How, I wonder do people survive in this harsh land?

The original inhabitants of the Zambezi Valley were the BaTonga people. They live in the middle Zambezi Valley, on both sides of the Zambezi River that is in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The BaTonga is the third largest native group in Zimbabwe, after the Shona and Ndebele. In the 1950's they were relocated from the banks of the Zambezi River to allow for the building of Kariba. However



BaTonga village woman smoking on her traditional pipe. Photo's by author

after Mugabe took over Zimbabwe a lot of Shona communities were relocated into the BaTonga territory. Some African women are friendly, and the young ones like the idea of riding horses and all want to try. Having arrived at a community hand watering pump, and after requesting permission to obtain water, we patiently waited our turn. Some villages that were predominantly Shona were pleasant. However, I noticed a strange air about the place. A few of the women were markedly unpleasant. We greeted them in Shona and carried on with what we were doing, respectful at all times. Having watered and rested for a short period, we saddled up and rode out. A few children were running after us, and as I turned round we noticed a large fire was now raging where we had been resting in the long grass. A couple of politicised Shona women were shouting at us, indicating to the rest of the villagers, that we had lit the fire, and shouting 'Malungu, Malungu' while pointing at us. I immediately said to David and Philip we must turn round and go back and face this village to inform them that we did not light the fire, and that someone was trying to sabotage us. I felt it important to go back and tell the other villagers the truth, which I duly did. The hatred and anger in these political black faces was not pleasant. It was confusing to me!



Riding Grey into the falls

Stop to look at map near Kariba



We move through some thick thorn bushes, and my face is getting struck by the "wag n bietjie" bos (wait a minute bush), which drew blood. The "wag n bietjie" bush thorns have spines and hooks pointing in different random order, and when caught in this it is really painful, ripping skin or clothes. This day finished late, and darkness had fallen upon us by the time we found a suitable spot to camp for the night.

The horses looked a bit sorry for themselves so Philip goes off to barter for mealies to feed them. A short time later, and the food arrives, the horses' problem is solved, and they are now happy! We're camped in a river bed; I am bedded on the ground in a sleeping bag and a blanket that the horse wears on its back everyday. It smells of horse sweat, we all feel exhausted. While sitting round the fires discussing routes for tomorrow, I study the stars, and all is quiet through the night. We are out of the main Valley wildlife areas, camped near a village, we do not have to keep watch for lion, so life is a bit more restful.

The track today was long and dry, km after km of it, ending near Matetsi where we take a break following the river to a DC's Camp. These District Commissioners' camps were established during colonial times, and are invariably well sited. The view from ours is amazing, and we can see the Zambezi River again. As darkness falls the mighty spirit of the Zambezi takes over, counterpointed by the constant low grunting from the hippo pod nearby. The sound of rapids from the river echo through the gorge sending one to sleep, as do the four horses munching in the background. The scene is almost overwhelming.

Our horses are becoming quite tame, and respond when we whistle for them. I watched two African cattle bulls fight today on the Gwaai River, a tributary of the Zambezi river system. Later,

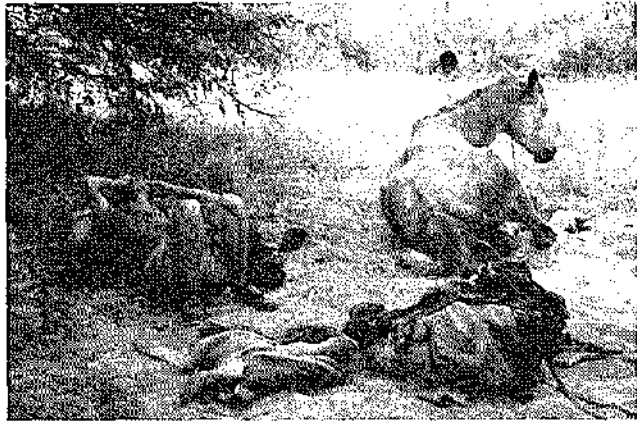
riding downstream, a bull jogged up to me, and gave Grey a kick in the ribs! He had huge horns, and did not look at all too friendly! Grey took off, it was so hilarious, that I laughed; I thought the bull was after us with his rather large horns! Harry, Philip's horse annoyed him today, being particularly stubborn, and so Philip gave him a whack on his behind. I must say I felt a bit sorry for poor Harry. I rode behind the other two riders and the scenery all around us was quite amazing. This trek was hard going, but fun.

23<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 28km

Our camp location on the Zambezi River this morning was really amazing. Grey, came and lay next to me last night, which was quite extraordinary, Grey and I are getting used to each other and maybe even growing fond of one another! When I first started to ride him every morning he would try to bite me. In the end he gave that up, but now he has decided he had better come and sleep by me instead! The weather is hotter as we enter the Valley. Today we passed another land minefield, riding through the area without even knowing it was there, until we were close to its end. Today we camped on the Gwaai River, and just opposite us discovered another land mine area, that I found extremely daunting. The river itself is beautiful, and after we had made a fire I enjoyed sleeping under the stars. Such direct contact clears my mind and head, being so close to nature!

24<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 50 km

Up before sunrise, the earliest we have ever been on the road! There are land mines on our left, and the road is very rocky. We walk uphill and the sun is rising - an inspirational moment, but no one says anything, except Philip who is chasing Harry, "Come on Harry", or myself, saying "Come on Grey". Our feet are cold - by 11 am we hit sand, which is far easier on the horses' hooves.



Grey and Julie Anne  
take a rest after a  
'groot trek'!

We canter through the Kavira forest area, which feels unrestricted despite land mines on one side! We arrive at a river bed, and head up it to what we thought would turn out to be a river, but find no water at all. So we unsaddled in the heat of midday, the horses did not move and neither did we, all of us were so tired and thirsty, and afraid of land mines – truly a crazy situation! Our water has run out, the riverbed is parched dry; we rested in the shade for awhile and continued to trudge through the midday sun in the dry sandy bed. Still no signs of water, a pretty bleak situation. Eventually we find a cut line, and attempt to search for a BaTonga village; where we know we can get water for our horses.

After about an hour or so, we arrive eventually at a nearby BaTonga village with huts on stilts. The reason for them building in this way is to protect them from lion. The kids are pounding sorghum, their clay grain bins are beautiful, and also stored off the ground on wooden stick platforms.

It was tiring, thirsty, but amazing. These same children led us to the nearest river, several kilometres away, and there it was – water in abundance – what a relief! After a very long drink we head towards the bush once again. I spotted a *Gymnogene*, now known

as an African Harrier Hawk, *Polyboroides typus*, similar to Goshawks. This is a raptor which has an unusual synovial joint enabling it to exercise mobility in the most extraordinary positions so it can attack nests upside down and get at the chicks. It seemed unafraid of us.

I was just thinking how amazing the BaTonga people are to survive in this harsh terrain. We cantered through many villages until passing a natural hot spring where women were bathing in a shallow hole in it, which was a surprise to suddenly come across in the middle of the bush! I felt we were intruding, so as quickly and quietly as we came in we carried on, through the thick thornveldt. BaTonga women seem to do all the transporting of water to the villages. On this particular night we slept in a BaTonga kraal where water is really scarce and additionally, we had no food. Later a village woman brought us sorghum sadza, and fish, and water. They are sensitive, caring, and happy people, with few material possessions. They interacted with us for a while, before leaving us to be alone with our thoughts. Happy voices echo around us as the sun disappears on the horizon, and all we can see now is the light of small fires.

25<sup>th</sup> July 1991 – 11km

Philip left early in the morning to go to Mlibizi, a small fishing village on the shores of Lake Kariba. He returned, having had a shower, and some food, with a native farrier. While the horses were being shod, I managed to wangle a lift into Mlibizi Lodge and phoned home. The lodge operators very kindly gave me the use of a bathroom, and I also managed to have my clothes washed by the laundry service! Mercifully, I also had a most welcome meal. I hadn't had anything for the last 24 hours except a couple of mouthfuls of stone ground sorghum! The horses were fed, watered and shod. Later in the afternoon we rode towards the



Zambezi Mission, with its outstanding view.

Later we chatted with a BaTonga Minister (Religious), on the topic of the building of Kariba dam. The BaTonga are divided, half live in Zimbabwe, and the rest in Zambia. The whole area is underdeveloped, the BaTonga do not receive much education from Mugabe's people. The BaTonga suffered badly during the war from the depredations of terrorists. Many of them played along with the guerrillas simply to survive. It's difficult writing all this down now except to say I just try to absorb and take in what I can. It is a long ride, and I am seeing and learning many things. The old man agreed to be filmed by our camera crew, and we shall speak to the BaTonga children at their school in the morning. In this, one of the remotest villages someone had heard of my previous Bicycle Ride for the Rhino across Africa, specifically, when we arrived at Victoria Falls. We discussed the land mine areas we had travelled through. In certain areas mines were laid at a density of 3 per sq. metre along the border with Zambia. Many mines were plastic, and set in different patterns. Reputedly, the men planting the mines from the Rhodesian Armed Forces would drink half a bottle of brandy to stay calm. So I had heard. It seemed all such a wasted effort but that is war, and so many ordinary people died. There will never be any real chance of a complete recovery under the present Mugabe regime, for this is BaTonga area and by his reckoning unimportant. Many mines have shifted, and some of the plastic ones are light sensitive, while, the maps recording disposition were destroyed!

26<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 35km

In was the heat of midday, the film crew finally caught up with us as we were all resting in the shade by a dry river bed, and covered in mosquito nets to avoid the mass of mopane bees swarming our faces to get at the moisture, instead they swarmed

onto the net. The horses were out grazing, and had been hobbled. I was musing on an earlier meeting with the local school where the pupils had drawn lovely animal pictures on their school walls. Most of them were of animals that occurred in the area, including elephant, buffalo, lion, zebra, and impala.

The film crew filmed the campfire chap, and his father, both of whom were born where the waters of Lake Kariba now cover their village. The BaTonga children responded very well to our horses. We left late in the day and the going, in comparison to what we had endured before, was great.

At one BaTonga village we passed they were all drunk, and singing at the tops of their voices! But fortunately they were friendly, and ran out to greet us in the middle of the bush!

We were now deep in the heart of the Zambezi Valley, deep within the CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources). Its purpose involves co-operation between authorities, and the local populace to improve natural resource management. The main intention has been to make local communities responsible for game management in their region and to ensure that they receive the income from hunting and tourism regulated according to ecological principles. The CAMPFIRE programmes have been operating for some years in Zimbabwe.

I viewed all this with some scepticism. At the end of the day, with too many people on the planet, these resources could never be shared and over development of an area would leave no room for the wildlife. This has also led to corruption and political interventions. At some point there had to be an appreciation and respect for wildlife. I truly believe, and question "why does

everything have to be bought and sold and an animal have a price tag!"

27<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 45km

We celebrated the rising of the moon last night with a bit of a party, having purchased some beers at a local village store. It looked like an ordinary little mud hut which we had happened to come across. Later that night we finally crashed out under the stars, next to a large baobab tree of which there are many in the area. Up before dawn this morning, and brushing the horses, I called them for their feed. There is not much water around here. The locals go and collect theirs from a dry river bed for this is a harsh environment. Grey is not himself today, and I am concerned, we put tick ointment in his ears. All of us are tired, bone weary, hot and thin. One is an unwitting witness to the reality of Africa, and how difficult it is for human beings to survive in it. Now is our second break of the day and the horses are once again unsaddled and we all bivouac under sparse mopane shade. The film crew spoke of spending a few days filming in Chete; thereafter we will not see them for a while. There really is next to no food or water around, but nevertheless we continue. Sometimes I count the days to reach Kariba, but at other times I do not wish to return to civilisation. There is so much out here and one drifts away and back again to the here and now! With plenty of mopane flies around we walked about 8 km for our last stretch to another village. It was very dark when we arrived, and we unsaddled, and rode bareback to the river. The locals had warned us about the elephant here. Local elephant had killed 8 people over a period of time, so we were very cautious. We dug a hole where the elephant had dug theirs creating a well, lined by a bivvy. We scooped the water up out of the river bed into the well, so each horse could drink in turn.

28<sup>th</sup> July 1991 - 40km

We were in the Chete Safari Area this evening where in a mopane tree, keeping watch for lion I wrote my diary. It was around midnight, and although I had heard the calling of lion, we had not seen them near our camp. There were two more hours to go to end my shift. Two fires were lit, and the horses were tethered. The entire day had been spent travelling over very rocky and hilly terrain. Up in my mopane tree I got the best of views and could see way out to where the fire light extended – for the moon was behind a cloud. Earlier today we had come through a very large herd of buffalo by the almost dry Sengwa River. It was such an experience; it made me feel like a real pioneer in this dry, dusty, wild bush! I felt so much safer keeping watch from up in my tree and if I could, I would sleep up here. Watching the horses, which have lost a lot of weight, they revealed no signs of any problems. There was little enough for them to eat, but wherever we could, we would buy portions of mealie cobs, or grain, from local villages. The horses were unsaddled twice a day, and then hobbled so they could go and graze. Our camp had been prepared earlier, and just after dark one of the film crew appeared with the Warden, Norman English. At least they had found us, and know we're around, and had not been eaten by lion, or shot at by rhino poachers! Norman left us his AK automatic rifle! The horses were definitely lion bait, and we were all nervous in lion country!

After I climbed down the tree, I had to stoke the fires. I kept watch for three hours until 1 am. Phil and David were asleep. Your angle of vision in the night is far greater. Chete is an extremely rugged and wild place, for one is captured and held in thrall by this remote and vast wilderness. I soberly realise how life can truly depend on a single waterhole in this area during the dry season.

29<sup>th</sup> – 1st August 1991 – 35 km

10 days more riding until we reach Kariba! As I write on this day, there are two rhino just outside the camp. David was on duty – I having being on last call before sunrise. The rhino were snorting loudly. They are known to stomp out camp fires, and become rather aggressive at times! These rhino had been attracted to our camp fire. The Shona Sergeant, and Warden Norman English, were staying in our camp this evening with two rifles. We all slept around the fire, and my head rested on my saddle in my sleeping bag. I had tried to bed down next to a tree trunk as I did not fancy being snatched by a lion! – The lion roared through the night near the spring where we had found water for the horses. It was the most amazing spring which the elephant had found, and had dug a hole, the size of its trunk, between two rocks at the base of a small hill. It was quite extraordinary how they had managed to find water. We had seen a lot of lion spoor around today, and even the Warden was worried about us. It was really scary at times because lion find horses delicious to eat. If I had been on foot it would have been very different. The route we had travelled was very sandy before but it had reverted into another rocky area.

2<sup>nd</sup> August 1991 – 35km

As I write I hear rhino snorting again, and figured maybe we were in their territory. The moon is slowly rising, and life is so different out here, compared to town. I am totally absorbed by the bush and enjoying the expedition immensely; it's the most wonderful experience. Two camp fires are presently burning but I cannot sleep. You can't imagine the entire lion spoor we saw today! The other day we walked close to a large herd of buffalo. Haven't seen so many lately, except that the signs are all here. Just by observing the tracks, and fresh dung, one gets an indication of what animals are around. The game in this area seems nervous so I guess it's

being hunted. In the last two years I have only seen one lion, but in these concessions 6 lions per year are put out on hunting quota. So the wild animals are very 'dodgy', and wary of humans.

3<sup>rd</sup> August 1991 – 20km

I'm on first watch – now that we're out of Chete Safari Area, there is nothing around. I can't wait to leave this lion infested country especially as we are unarmed. We camped under a baobab tree near the village of Chief Chunga. At midday we had stopped in a dry river bed and procured our drinking water, which was brown – taken out of the sandy river bed. The first spring we came across was also frequented by rhino – their spoor was everywhere. We were nervous, as rhino would think nothing of gouging a hole in a horse! Our riding is very tough on our horses as there is not much grazing, and they lose condition quickly. We spent a lot of time on foot just walking. The terrain is very rocky, and arid. Additionally disheartening, was that we almost found ourselves going off in the wrong direction! I was annoyed by this, and was also concerned about rhino and lion in the thick 'shlateen' (bush). When will we ever get to Kariba?

Tonight our supper was soup and mealie meal and after this long day, we are camped under a baobab tree. At midday when we stopped to rest the horses and give ourselves a break my horse Grey, urinated all over Phil's saddle – it was really funny – particularly since Phil was already upset about something! This was a hard day, not in mileage but in the sense of the terrain and water. We are looking forward to reaching the shores of Lake Kariba, it's been so long, and some days are harder than others.

4<sup>th</sup> August 1991 – 23km

There is no water around here, or grazing for the horses, and this morning they had wandered off quite far from camp. It took us

time to find them!

5<sup>th</sup> August 1991 - Chunga to Sengwa River - 15km  
We arrived at the village of Chunga hungry and thirsty. First we found the water point for the horses; they are getting really thin and tired, and so are we! There is much interest in our activity by the village children. We rest for a couple of hours – don't know when we will get to Kariba! We follow elephant tracks east along a mountain range towards the Sebungwe River, where a steep cliff down to the water stopped our advance. We searched frantically for a track down to the waters edge far below. All we found were steep elephant paths. After further searching we found an elephant path that offered some possibility to get down. For hours we carried out a precarious descent. We scrambled down an escarpment, and as we were on our way down I had to watch out that Grey wouldn't stand on me and in the process. I had to by pass a puff adder sitting on a rock; fortunately I had seen it first! Finally at the base of the cliff we found the Sengwa River, it was an amazing spot. As we were low on food and supplies we decided to stay over, sleeping in a dry section of the river bed in the sand. I had a chance to go off on my own, and swim in a shallow pool, being careful to watch out for elephant, lion and croc. The local elephant had proved to be better mountaineers than our horses!

6<sup>th</sup> August 1991 – 30km to SiaKovu village.

On our arrival we managed to find a local store, and the people there were friendly. We decided to sit outside with the horses, and have a coke and a beer, as it was just on sunset. Many of the locals became drunk and behaving vilely. We waited, biding our time, and then walked out in the night, following a dirt road after dark to camp in a clinic's grounds. There were a lot of people around, and we were quite concerned for our safety, and the prospect of being robbed. We camped on the escarpment, having

found a wonderful English cottage in the middle of nowhere at SiaKovu. The cottage itself was filthy so we camped outside in its garden. It had the most wonderful view, and we were able to sleep on soft green grass. I was awakened at night by the horses grazing by my head.



Grey at the store

7<sup>th</sup> August 1991 - 30km

We continued down another escarpment meeting up with Chief Nembu's son. Here we found another African store and re supplied ourselves. The few village stores we came across were just tiny mud shacks, quaint in appearance. The only thing to inform you it was a store would be the Castle beer, Chibuku beer or Coca Cola logo's on it. In many villages we would purchase maize for the horses from the locals. I noticed that whenever we approached these people, particularly at this point, their women were treated with no respect at all. It was humiliating at times, as I too would be completely ignored. Men would greet one another and completely ignore me or any other women. I have found this aberration amongst the odd young white hunter, and most black men. I think deep down they may feel a threat to their egos! Personally I had spent my whole life out in the wilds, and could handle rugged terrain and myself. I had ridden thus far and felt annoyed not to receive even a recognition that I existed. We discussed this among many issues around the campfire that night, when we were out in the bush again on our own.



"Finding water"

Julie Anne and Grey take a drink at an elephant watering hole in Chete Safari Area.

"Another watering spot" Dug by the elephant – just wide enough for their trunk.



8<sup>th</sup> August 1991 - 20km

We camped in a mopane forest and headed towards Sanyati. Dawn saw us anxious to get moving, hungry although we had baked bread on the fire last night, we were reduced to eating leftovers. Elephant were reported near camp last night - but I never heard a thing! Many of our amazing experiences defy capture in writing, or by pictures. We arrived at 'Peter's Store' about 20km from the Sanyati River, and enjoyed a cold beer – the horses were tired. We left after 5 pm. The sun was setting, and excited African children followed us down the hill happy to see us, it was a wonderful scene. We now have three days left to reach Kariba. We are weary, with dirty, torn clothes and missing good food and we dream of a plate of our favourite dishes!

9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>...August 1991 - 73km

A grouping of hills cut us off from the lake, so we had to follow the power line. This route turned out to be the roughest section so far, and after a full day negotiating the high ground, rugged, harsh terrain - without water for the horses for 25km - we came down some incredibly steep hillsides. Lately I haven't been able to write much in my diary. We are anxious to get to Kariba now, and I wonder if anyone realises that we are not too far away? At one stage we followed an old track down the rugged escarpment and the horses and ourselves were sorely tested over the rocks. It's harsh, but it's also peaceful and I don't even know what day it is! Another day, another sunset, sunrise, starry night – with a campfire, bread cooked on the coals with jam or sumu, and a tin of beans for food!

We finally reached the open waters of Lake Kariba and noted that there were plenty of crocs in the water. (We also almost rode into lion at the Nyodza River where a lioness with three cubs had just killed a waterbuck). We tethered our horses, and crept through the bush to the edge of the riverine bush to take a look at them. The lioness was watching us, and just about to feed with her cubs. That night we had four fires going as an anti lion precaution for the night ahead! But it was wonderful to have seen the lion's on their kill.

By the time I arrived at Kariba I was able to ride bareback on Grey, in sandals and light cotton shorts. My equine friend did not seem to mind!

13<sup>th</sup> August 1991 Charara Estates - 15km

It was a 15km ride to Charara on a hard and windy road as I set the pace, and we made good progress. We have eaten very little, and are now feeling washed out but we still go on. The horses

are weary and we all yearn for food and rest. Finally we see the lake, and riding through some thick bush we passed quietly within 4 m of a bull elephant. The Jesse was so dense that all I could see of his enormous body was his trunk, and a glimpse of an eye; he was very relaxed! So, tired and subdued, we hobbled into Kariba and as we rode down the power line into Charara I noticed an old, series one Land Rover, driving along. Then it suddenly slammed on its brakes and did a noisy reverse back. The men in this vehicle were ex Selous Scouts, and they could not believe what they saw when we came out of the bush! In fact 'We had gone bush', that is all I will say! We had got into a rough section – nobody must follow this route, via the power line again, with its serious rocky slopes. We were absolutely starving, and at the end of a very, very hard day, the "ex scouts" introduced us to the banana farm managers, Bruce and Des Elliot, who kindly invited us in, and gave us a huge meal, and the horses loads to eat and drink!

14<sup>th</sup> August 1991 - 18km

That last 18km from Charara to Kariba through the bush, proved to be the hardest day of the entire route! Exhausted, we all suffered a bit of an anti climax. My foot ached as Grey had trodden on it, and we were all very hungry and thirsty.

A week later I was on the Kariba Dam wall saying farewell, as the other riders headed off towards Zambia, as I had completed my section of the journey.

"It was a sad event seeing Julie Anne get off her horse Grey and walk slowly away, back to Zimbabwe. Ahead of us was Zambia, there were scores of children in "Ride for Sudan" T Shirts, it was a new frontier. Sitting on our horses in the middle of that wall, little dots in the midday sun, we wondered where our place was

in the vastness and beauty of Africa", David Parry & Philip Tetley.

Below is a letter from David Parry & Philip Tetley dated the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1991

*"Dear Julie Anne*

*I am sorry to bring you such bad news about the deaths of Harry & Fleck in Central Tanzania. It was a crazy incident with no logic at all. Thankfully, your horse, Grey escaped all injury, but misses his friends terribly. He now spends all his time with us, like a dog, in camp all the time sleeping standing over me, He has kept his condition very well and looks in really good nick. Phil has gone north to look for more horses and I am to ride north to meet him at Babati in two weeks time. I hope all is well with you and Environment 2000.*

*Best regards*

*David & Philip"*

Here is a narrative report about the unfortunate incident that happened at Mtera Dam, written by Philip Tetley.

Dated: 15 November 1991

*"We arrived at Mtera Dam at about 6.00pm. We were invited by the Acting Manager of Tanesco to stay at their guest house. We informed him that we had to stay with the horses, since the horses would be too restless if they could not see us. The Acting Manager offered us a place to stay near the water tank of the purification plant, which had some green grass around it. The Acting Manager informed all the security guards in the area and the Head of Security about us camping there.*

*We made camp on a sandy spot near the water tank and went to*

sleep. The horses were hobbled and left to graze around camp. At dawn we were woken by two shots 60 - 80 m away and saw the flash of a third shot fired a few seconds later. We found two horses nearby, Harry was bleeding badly with his intestines hanging out, he later died at the spot. Grey was uninjured. Philip went down to where the shot was fired from and found the third horse Fleck shot through the back of the head. Fleck was dead outside the security fence. He then went down to the guard house and asked what had happened. The security guard gave no reasons and another one came to call his superiors. The Acting Manager came down immediately and was very shocked about it and helped organize transport to Dodoma for Philip.

The incident was reported to the local Police Commander who personally came to the scene and assured them that the matter will be investigated; pictures were taken by the Police. We were told that the guard on duty was drunk. He had informed his superiors that he thought the horses were young elephants. The horses were, however, killed at short range 3 to 4 m and at first light around 5.20am, where anybody normal could distinguish between a horse and an elephant." These poor horses had gone so far and then were shot by a drunk African security guard thinking they were elephants! My faith in Africa was diminishing.

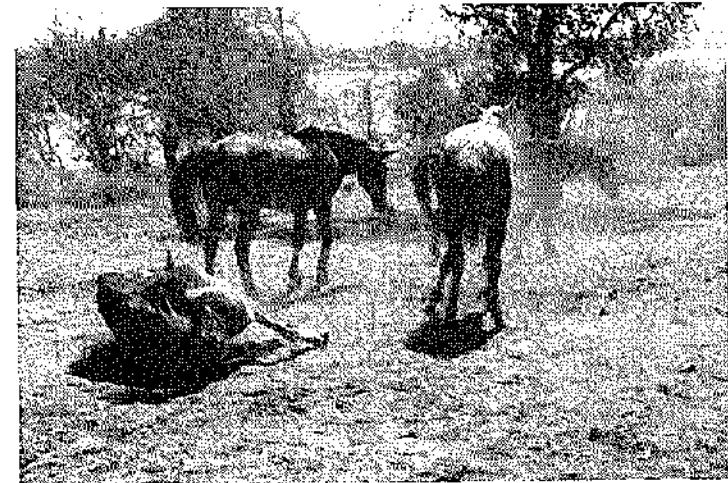
For several weeks I had experienced a nomadic life, and trekked the land feeling every step on the earth below me, in the stony heat and dust. Suddenly life seemed so easy, you arrived at your destination, and enjoyed the land of plenty, with water, plenty of food, and contact with your own tribe. The hills of Africa were now far away, the veldt fires in the distance set by unprincipled poachers, and ignorant villagers, had been going on for days. I now realized mankind has the ability to conquer the most inaccessible areas. There are not many places left as wilderness,

but still many more for an individual to see. Nature always leaves a secret for us to discover! Now and again, I am called back into the wilderness, and driven to go in search of more. Why? One does not know; it is an instinct. Another time will come - when the chaos arrives, later the peace will follow. Will they continue to eliminate wildlife and manipulate a life and soul, or upset a peaceful spirit? Loss of habitat is primarily due to mankind's activities, and is the main cause of the decline of most species. With all this in mind I realized that the writing is on the wall for my dear land.



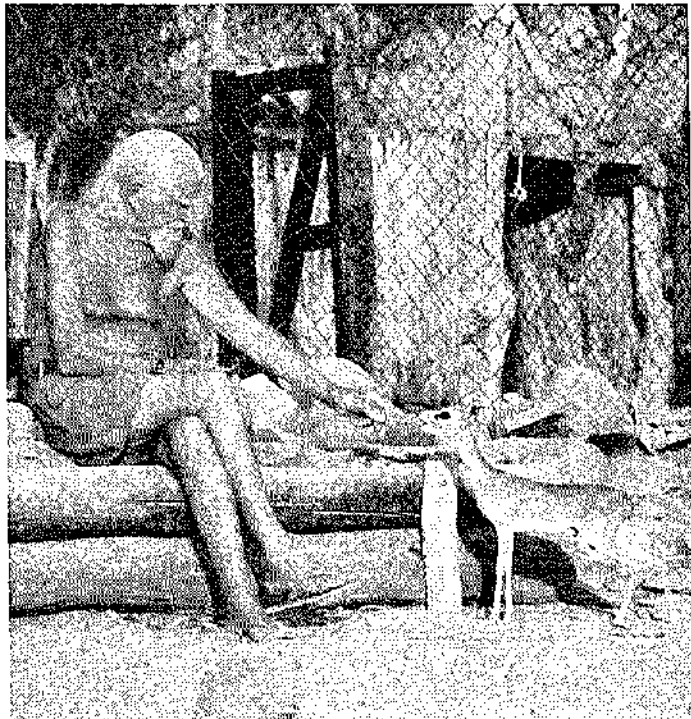
The horses at the Victoria Falls. (Photo by Eco Focus photo library)

'Time out' The horses relax somewhere along the Zambezi upstream of the Falls. (Photo by author)

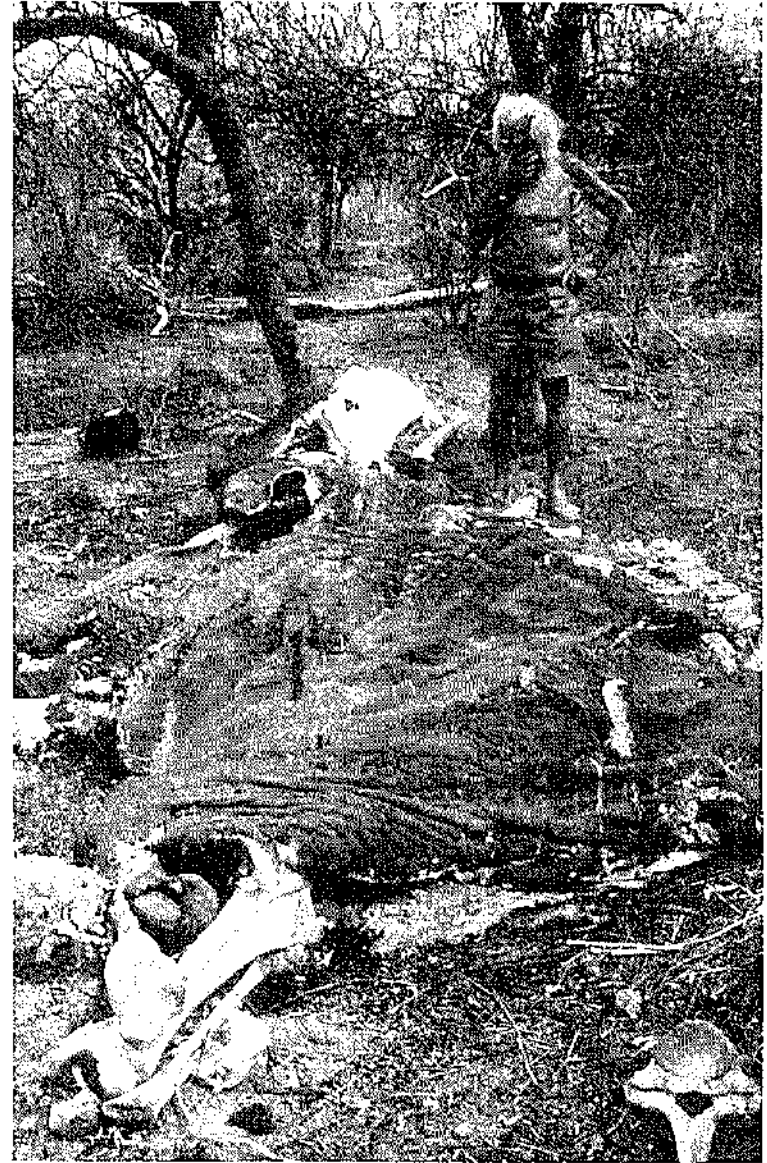




Poached Black Rhino – skull hacked with axe to remove horns  
(Source: Ride for Rhino photo library – Rhino Survival Campaign copyright © 1988)



George Adamson at his 'Kampi ya Simba' feeding a Dik Dik, Kora Reserve  
(Source: Ride for Rhino photo library – Photo taken by Julie Anne Edwards copyright © 1988)



George Adamson finding an elephant carcass shot by poachers in Kora Reserve - 1988  
(Source: Ride for Rhino photo library - Photo taken by Julie Anne Edwards copyright © 1988)