

My first Ulendo from Salisbury to Abercorn 1905

I came out to Northern Rhodesia in May 1905. Hugh Cleaver came with me. He was a brother of Reginald & Ralph the black and white artists who used to draw for Punch in those days. We left London, Liverpool Street station from Harwich for Rotterdam. There we took the German boat "The Margraf" for Beira. She was a beast of a boat. We could only have our portholes open in the Canal as she was so low in the water.

In our cabin were 3 bunks and a settee. We had this to ourselves until Maraeiles, then the ship filled up and we had 4 in it. The fare in those days was £22.10.0 from London to Salisbury so I suppose one could not expect too much. She was sunk in the first world war and the best place for her. There was on board a Lanagan Okeef brother of the N W one. His birthday was on 23 April, mine the 25th so we gave a party on the 24th. It cost us 14 bottles of champagne. All the ship's officers from the Captain downwards joining in.

On arriving at Beira, we had dinner at the hotel. We had our legs in sacks to keep the mosquitoes off. We got into the train that night for Salisbury. Cleaver had a letter to Mr Tredgold. We contacted him in court. He passed us on to Sony Taberer the C N C also Major Drury the Chief of the Police. We dined with them 2 or 3 times and they were most helpful in every way. We stayed at the Avenue Hotel for 10 days.

There was a train to the Ayrshire Mine in those days, the carriages were like a tramcar along the sides. An old lady at home had given me a tea basket with a spirit kettle in it and we caused great amusement when we made tea on the train but the passengers did not mind joining in. At the Ayreshire we had to get carriers to take us to Feira. We also had to wait for Sony Taberer. A chap name Scott N C Lomogendi. We knew nothing about Ulendo in those days so they said we could go

with them to Feira. This was a Godsend as it taught us a lot. Taberer was going up to Feira to open a new station on the south bank of the Zambezi.

At Sipperlilos we picked up another chap Boucker who was to be stationed at this new station. We intended to travel up without a tent as we had done in the Boer war, but at Feira we were told that this was impossible in this country. I bought a tent from Ben Moore who was at the mine then. It was a very light one and at night with a lamp in it it was like a shadow pantomime. Still it kept the dew off, also safer than none although any animal who wanted to get in had only to lean against hand that would have been the end of it.

I picked up my first bout of fever on the way to Feira. I was very sorry for myself. Scott lent me his machilla and took my bicycle. He also doctored me and got over it on arriving at Feira. We could not get a cook at the Ayreshire so Scott said we could feed with them. Early every morning we used to hear Scott call whiskey, we thought it a bit early to start but found out afterwards it was his boy he was calling. Before they left us to go back I asked him what we owed him. He said nothing so I said come and take what you want out of our scoffbox. He took 1 half lb. tin of butter. Talk about good chaps.

We heard our first lions on the way to Feira but they did not come near us. We stayed a fortnight at George Watkins hotel. Good food. We slept in our tent. He was a good chap and when we went he said he would send the bill on to Abercorn. I told him he had better take it then while he had the chance. There was quite a nice crowd at the hotel. Someone said could anyone walk on their hands so Cleaver said he could so this cove betted him he could not walk round the hotel without stopping. The bet was a quid, Cleaver did it.

We got a cook Zakaria and a pot washer, Jepeth. The Mandala manager was named Black and he gave us all a trip on their steamboat up to the gorge. It was a most interesting trip. There were quantities of

crocks and hippo. In those days cattle were crossed at the river from North to South. The paddlers in very fine canoes, their songs across the water were very fine. I have never heard finer native songs. Sheckelton was the Police Constable there and Ropesoled Jones the Native Commissioner. They had a drum and fife band which played every night.

One day the Portuguese Bome chap asked us over to lunch at Zumba. We all went over and I never had such an enormous lunch in my life. The 7th course was sucking pig. We had to eat everything else it was an insult. I had to borrow a machilla to come back in. It was quite impossible to walk after it. Of course it was as hot as hades. We left for the north with our carriers on our 1st ulendo by ourselves. 70 Miles up the Longwa we came across our first farm. Two brothers Grey, they gave us a very good lunch. They were a very good-looking couple.

After we crossed the Longwa a few miles farther on, we began to get into the game country. My first shot was at a leopard at 300 yards. I am glad to say I did not hit it as I know more about them now and had I wounded it, I might have had a bad time. I had been a marksman at home which did not mean a lot. My first buck was a hartebeest at 500 yards. I stepped it out. At that time I thought it was easy but soon found out it was a fluke and 200 was quite far enough. One fell over game in those days. Also lots of guineafowl and other game birds. Cleaver got 9 guineafowl in one shot. We wanted them for the pot as we were short of meat. He chucked them down on the ground as we waited for the carriers. One got up and flew away.

The next white man we struck was Dr Broomfield. We stayed with him 3 days and he could not do too much for us, loaded us up with pork, vegetables and limes when we left. He was a wonderful revolver shot. We met a white postmaster on the road going south a day or two after leaving Broomfield. I forget his name.

Our next port of call was Fort Jameson, the then Capitol of N E Rhodesia. A few miles before we got there, we struck a farm belonging to Cooper & Hardy. We bought some butter 1/6 a lb and a sucking pig for 2/-. I knocked the crank of my bicycle against a stump and broke it so I had to walk. When we got to Fort J Timler, who was the only person who was any sort of mechanic, had an old crank so it was fixed up, thank goodness. One could not get spares in out-of-the-way places in those days.

We had some fever between Feira & F J Cleaver had it more than I did. I had bought a hammock on board ship to sleep on deck in the red sea which came in very useful to make up as a machila when we were sick.

The night we arrived at F J we went to the hotel for dinner and in the billiardroom we were accosted by a large man who wanted to know all about us. He was Crowther, the Government Printer. With him was Timler. They lived next to each other in semi-detached houses. Crowther took me in and Timler took Cleaver. We all fed together at Crothers. He was a wonderful cook, He spotted our sucking pig. He cooked it the next night for dinner and was it good!

The next day we went up to see Judge Beaufort. Crowther introduced us. The Judge was Acting Administrator at the time. We had been asked to try and get a plough at F J to take on to Abercorn with us. We thought there might be a spare one at the Boma. The Judge tells a story of being accosted on his verandah by two bearded men who demanded a plough. A good story. I forgot to say that we had grown beards after leaving Feira. I suspect we thought we would look more impressive with them. As nobody seemed to have them when we got to F J we took them off the next day.

C P Chesney was Police Constable and was very kind to us. We dined 3 or 4 times at his house and Mrs Chesney was a wonderful hostess. We went to quite a lot of people's houses and everyone was most kind.

We spent 2 days at the Government farm to see how they grew things there. There was an old chap there who showed us a lot of things. He had a wife. I have forgotten their names. Either he or she had a wooden leg. After a fortnight, we got our new carriers and started off again.

The next Boma was Nawalia, Philip Hall N C. He also did us proud. There was Prof. there Maddon from Oxford. He was studying languages. He was thrilled as he had just found a new cigarette. It turned out to be the Flag. He was quite annoyed when we told him we had smoked them in the Boer war. Just before we got there, I shot a wilderbeest. I did not know what it was so I asked Hall. He said it was on the £25 licence. This was a bit of a shock but he said he would let me off as of course we did not know anything about game in those days. Very good of him, I thought.

We then had to climb the Machingas on the way to Mpika. What a climb, we thought. On arriving at Mpika, we found Chomley. He could not put us up as his spare room was full of fleas. Quite a common thing in those days. He of course fed us as everybody did in those days. He lent us a messenger to take us on a couple of days as he had made a new road.

The day after leaving Mpika, just as it was getting light, Cleaver was in front and I was at the back of the carriers. We could just see a large herd of buck just off the road. We wanted meat for the carriers so I blazed into the brown. Something fell so we both went up to see what we had got. We found one dead Zebra with two shots in it. We neither of us knew that the other had shot and we had both hit the same thing. Now the Zebra was on the £5 licence. I knew that and as I knew the messenger would tell Chomley. I wrote and told him I would report it at Abercorn when we arrived. This I did and was fined £2 but as I did not take a licence out that year, it just paid the ordinary licence. Good old days.

Our next place was Kasama Cookson Police Constable. Ham Esterman, a trader there with Barnshaw, were the only two in Kasama at that time. Ham said it was his birthday so he and Barnshaw were doing themselves at 11.30 a.m. on Dom out of cups, the only drink they had on the place. They put us up at the Mandala house which had a rest house there. David Ross was out shooting that day. He was expected back that night. He turned up at about 6 and did us very well.

We got rid of some of the carriers and took on some new ones. One of our old ones, quite an old boy, had stubbed his toe badly. He was carrying a 60 box so I gave him a nice soft load to carry but no, he would not give up his box. Rum chaps they were in those days.

Abercorn was our next port of call. 45 Miles south of it we decided to go on ahead of the carriers. We just took our titivating tools and a change on bikes and went into Abercorn that day. Weggerly was a Native Commissioner and asked us to stay with him. That night when we had our baths, two boys came in and insisted on bathing us. I asked Weggerly if this was the custom of the Country. He said oh! no but as he had no sponge, he made his boys pour water over him in his bath.

In Abercorn at that time, Tamberlika Marshall Police Constable Mrs M Usher Postmaster Gibson of Mandala, MC Fee skipper of the GOODNEWS on the Lake. Tambelika was out when we arrived in the district so we did not see them that time. We stayed three days then went on to Blyth's place Jerico 28 miles over very hilly country. We were delighted to get there as we had quite enough ulendo by then.

All the loads were sent to Kasama. Later on I had a good many women carriers. They carried their 60 lb loads often with their baby's on the top. They seemed quite happy about it and were earning good money for those days.

Joseph Edward Hughes was the instigator of the river route. Kabundu Clerk dispatched loads from Kabunda. I never met him but knew him well on paper. Some of the canoes were very large with 10 to 12 paddlers. Some small paddlers with perhaps two loads. Some were upset by hippo, but not often. I remember one with a stove on it was sunk and the stove was never got up.

My wife and family were with me at the beginning. My 4th child, my son Guy, was born there on the 1st of April. I telephoned the news to Husbands and Charlie Simpson at the Chambesi. Of course they did not believe me but did in the end. Mrs Ernest Clark was there for the occasion as one could not get a Dr. She belonged to the L M S at Kawimbe. Dear good soul. We had lots of fun on the telephone. Sitting at my office table I could hear Husbands and Simpson talking to each other. One would say to the other I bet Lobb is listening so I used to say ller. It was a bad spot for mosquitoes and hyenas and at times lions.

When my son was 2 months old, I sent my wife and family to Port Alfred. They had a wonderful trip down the river to Kabunda. My eldest daughter was 6 so it was a great feat of my wife's to take that lot down in a large canoe with a thatch above. A big mosquito net. Cooking on the journey had to be done in the canoe. She took two native servants with her. These looked after her very well. She told me she was looked after much better than if I had been there. My second daughter fell over the side on one occasion. A paddler was in after her before you could say Knife. There are lots of crocks in the river.

They got to the Chambesq that night. Simpson rang me up as soon as they got there and Mr & Mrs Simpson looked after them well as they

always did to everybody who stayed with them. Most kind people with 2 small daughters.

I used to go into Kasama some week-ends to play golf and stay with Husbands. One Sunday after 9 holes, my feet got so sore I could hardly walk, so I went to see Dr Harold and found my feet were full of Matakania. I had them removed by a medical orderly. For two months after that, I had some taken out of my feet every night. I could not walk and crawled on my hands and knees to my office. I even got two in my fingers.

Charlie Simpson said there was a bean in the bush that the natives used to poison fish with. He said it was good for killing fleas and advised me to try it. I pounded it up, fixed it with boiling water and poured it all around the place. This had the desired effect and I got rid of them. The camp natives are full of them and drop them all over the place.

When the Navey finished on Tanganyika, they came through the depot. They stayed the night and the officers dined with me and we had a hectic night. My wife was in Kasama that night but my two small daughters were with me. As we had a sundowner party before dinner, my eldest daughter came out and said we were making such a row they could not go to sleep. One of the chaps took her back to bed and in 5 minutes they were asleep and did not wake again. What he did I don't know but it had the desired effect. Next morning, they took a photo of the three of us. I never saw such a sight. Talk about the morning after the night before. I admit I did not make a very good job of their hair.

The motor road was being made up at that time and Teddy Campbell the Southern Rhodesian jockey had a camp about a mile from mine. He was good fun and told me lots of Southern Rhodesian racing stories. I had lots of people through the depot, some by road, some by the river route. It was never dull after the family had gone. Tambelika Marshall and Mrs Marshall came through from the north. It was his 50th



birthday so we had a great evening. I was lucky enough to have some fresh bream and guineafowl. Tom, their very good cook, cooked the dinner. There was plenty of game and birds about and with fresh fish and a goat, I lived like a lord. We had a pet hyena. He got into the kitchen one night and chewed up some pots. I had a deck chair on the verandah with a skin on it, It took it down the road for about a mile, ate the skin but left the chair. Teddy caught it in his camp later on. Elephants used to go for a village 2 miles north of us. They killed a native in their gardens.

Old Jimmy Nesbet came down to build a brick store later on. Towards the end I was transferred to the Rinderpest Control so was not at the depot when Von Lettaw passed it on the way to the Chambezi. Capt. Husbands died of flu in 18 at Kasama. A better chap to work under would be difficult to find.

Lionel Smith, Gerald Morton, Baird, John Deacon, Mrs Munro and son, Mr & Mrs C W Blyth, daughter and son. Mr & Mrs Gordon H Lobb and 2 daughters, Scot Brown cinemetagraphoperator to the Kelsea Expedition.

The day war broke out, our boys told us that Scot Brown and two other white men had been interned in Tabora. This turned out to be true. They must have got it by bush telegraph and drums. All Scot Brown's photos were taken from him so we never saw the photos of the races taken by him or of some taken of me driving my tandem in a dog cart I bought from the Fife Boma that at one time belonged to the Government.

At that time the only way to travel up to Northern Rhodesia was to trek. They employed carriers to carry all the camping equipment and their personal belongings. They travelled with another man who possibly knew the route and the way to travel.

After father's partner was killed, he took up partnership with C W Blyth who was married to Aunt Grace who was one of my mother's six sisters, she also had two brothers who went to America. The Blyth's went to England on holiday and brought mother back with them as she was rundown and needed a holiday.

Father was engaged to a girl in England when he came out but she wrote and broke it off. He wrote and asked her to reconsider but before he got her answer my mother appeared and he fell in love with her, so he was on tenterhooks till he heard from the girl in England that she would not marry him.

Their first farm was on the border of what was then German East Africa, now called Tanzanier. ather built a house with a thatched roof. He made a small golf course and after they had been married a little while, father's mother died and left him some money so they went back to England on holiday and when they returned they brought three horses with them. Father loved horses and always boasted he could drive tandem through the bush at a gallop. No mean feat. To get the horses up to Abercorn they had to travel through the tsetse fly area so mother made a mosquito net stable for the horses where they were kept in the day time and they travelled at night.

Mother had twin boys before I was born but they were premature and didn't live. Just as well as she didn't even have so much as a nappy pin. Everything in those days had to be ordered from Engalnd and used to take six months to get to Abercorn. Aunt Grace was a nurse but not a midwife. She was with mother when the twins were born, neither of them realising that she was going to have twins till mother realised there was another one after the first arrived.

After their trip to England in 1910, she fell pregnant with me and I was born in July 1911. Father always said it was fortunate that I arrived before a consignment of whiskey which arrived from England after I arrived, as the Dr. who delivered me was a boozier so the results might have been different if it had been the other way around.

Father also built a small race course so that when the farmers had a get together they could have races. Though they all lived quite far apart, they seem to have had plenty of fun when they got together.

In 1914 the First World War broke out so there was war between the English in Rhodesia and the Germans in German East. All the women and children were brought into Abercorn and the first night they were put into the goal to sleep. I don't know what happened to the prisoners but the whites were eaten alive by the bugs, lice etc. in the goal so refused to stay there and had to camp in the open.

At first, father was put in charge of all the cattle and they had to be moved around the country to avoid being taken by the Germans and most of them got diseases and died. Later on, father was put in charge of a depot on the Luapula River south of Kasama. All supplies were brought up the river by canoe and transported north to the troops by land.

According to father, the river Africans were very dirty and a bad tribe and he used to have a lot of trouble with them. In fact at one time the gigger fleas which enter your feet and lay their eggs in bags under the skin, were so bad that he couldn't walk and used to crawl to work on his hands and knees.

We lived in a cottage near the depot and after Guy was born on April 1st 1916 or 1917, father sent us all down to Port Alfred for a year. I was five or six, Billy was two years younger, then came Jack two years later and Guy a year after that. Mother had to take us down the river by canoe to Ndola which was the nearest rail head, we had to camp on the banks of the river at night but mother always said the Africans took better care of her when she was on her own than when father was with her.

I think the canoe journey was fairly smooth except the day mother found, when looking for the potty, Jack had sailed it down the river! Mother took a "boy" down to Port Alfred with her for the year. She was to stay there. The other women she met down there tried to entice him away from her but he was homesick or couldn't be persuaded.

When the war ended, the Germans were close behind the women and children so it was fortunate the war ended. There was fighting on Lake Tanganyika too. There was a fair sized steamer we captured from the Germans and it used to travel up and down the lake twice a month and when it called into Mpuingu with passengers and goods all the people in Abercorn used to go down to the lake and stayed and had dinner on the Reember as the boat was called, we used to have a good dinner and danced and had fun. It was 27 miles from Abercorn to the lake and there was a drop of 2000 ft in the 27 miles, so it was very hot on the lake but the climate in Abercorn was beautiful, never too hot or too cold.

After the war, all the farmers were moved away from the border and it was made into a Rundipest guard area. The Government gave the farmers new farms and ours, which was named Ntugela, wasn't I gathered from father, good for cattle but it was fertile, he planted coffee as all the other farmers did but it was too far from any market, Broken Hill was the nearest railhead and that was 600 miles away.

We always had beautiful vegetables and fruit. Had we been nearer to a market, I'm sure we could have done well. But the only transport between Broken Hill and Abercorn was a weekly lorry which brought the mail and passengers who had no transport. The road was just a track through the bush. In the wet season the lorry sometimes got stuck in the mud and had to be pushed out with the help of the passengers, Black and White.

Mother learnt to be a farmer's wife. When they killed a pig, she used to make sausages, bacon and hams. Of course they had a few cattle so had the milk and butter and cream. Father grew wheat and mealies so

they had their own flour for bread and cakes etc. Chickens supplied the eggs and sheep gave us mutton. Of course mother made jam, marmalade, pickles, chutney etc. There was a spring a distance from the house that produced lovely cold pure water so one time when father was away, mother organised the Africans and dug a trench to bring the water from the spring past our kitchen door which was used for drinking, bathing, watering the garden etc.

We had a large strawberry bed that produced large baskets full of strawberries for months. One year we had them for nine months. Of course mother made jam. It was a lonely life, our nearest neighbours were 25 miles away. We used to go into Abercorn.