

A Letter from Africa

Feb 2015

I have a lot to talk about, with so many pictures, that I fear it will be too much for you. I will do my best to edit as much as possible.

I suppose I should start at the beginning.



I think this picture captures a moment shortly after entry into **2015**. It was an impromptu event that was enlivened by the inclusion of some karaoke. Although some were reluctant participants at first, the spirit took over (a fair bit digested) and all did their bit. Even wearing odd hats to decorate the scene. Actually the hats have some meaning. My camouflage bush hat was given to me by Coates Inks in London on the eve of my transfer to Jhb. in 1972. The riding hat on Andrea's head is her own from the 1980's.

We have from back: me, Bev, Di, Stuart, Roddy as Santa, Jenny, Andrea and Courtney.

Late last year we were fortunate to attend a talk by **Zelda La Grange**. She wrote the book that dealt with her time as Nelson Mandela's Personal Assistant entitled *Good Morning Mr. Mandela*. She came across as a very intelligent and a- political person and when I had the chance to talk to her later she answered my question by stating that Mandela was too sick to realise that the ANC was no longer listening to him. Her eventual outburst on social media reflected the exasperation felt by many as Zuma refers to the arrival of the Dutch in 1652 and links this to our current electricity crisis.

We went to see *The Hobbit* in **3D**, being a format I had not experienced for many years. In fact I started to think of old films like the very first showings of 3D or **Cinerama**. How the West Was Won in 1962 with people like Peck, Reynolds, Fonda, Wayne, Stewart and Tracy. Then I recalled the Saturday midnight showing of *Dr. Zhivago* at the Odeon Leicester Square with fellow **Camdenians** at the end of a long day around 1965. Big names featured again with Sharif, Chaplin, Christie, Courtney, Guinness, Richardson and others. I am looking at the Programmes as I write this and thus why I may seem so knowledgeable about the names (we have kept all our old programmes).

We went to the **Kirkwood** area for a night and visited the **Cheetah Project** along the way.



A bit of time in a canoe and stroking a Cheetah made for a memorable time in our little riverside cabin on the



lemon farm.

I am writing this on the lap top which has a battery back- up. This is fortunate because the power has gone off for some 2 hours which in turn affects water pumps and some areas are now receiving brown or emulsion like offerings out of the tap. In some cases no water at all.

We are back on line.

Over the years we may miss out on something but get the opportunity much later to fill the gap .I guess we have all seen old people doing things best left to the young. But I vividly recall our F1 evenings in Mondeor/Jhb when I finally bought a second hand **Scalectrix** set and we all participated in many a session.TV only arrived in SA in 1976 and so social events were our form of entertainment. In the same vein and ignoring any hint of foolishness on my part I also had the chance to take part in **Paintball**. My excuse was that I was a member of a group of Courtney`s school mates and Andrea. I include a picture of us all .It was great fun and I would gladly do it again. Andrea took this picture that included our referee.



I have to refer to the **SONA**. This means State of the Nation Address. I imagine most of us saw the fiasco unfold in Parliament with constitutional issues such as media freedom and separation of powers uppermost. Of course the EFF trampled on the respect due to the body parliament even if the individuals deserve no such deference. The fact that the ANC did not allow the Provincial address by the DA in the Western Cape puts them into the same camp as the EFF. In the meantime, of course, the poor get poorer and service delivery suffers.

As you may know our Post Office has been on strike for around 5 months and although now



back at work it did mean that the Xmas spirit was spread as cards trickled through into mid Feb. This picture is of a recent batch from Australia, England and Canada and the picture with accompanying letter found their way into the local Herald newspaper .After this we still received another card from England (thank you Ruth) and you will also see a book that was posted in Sept 2014 being a Birthday gift for Courtney.

When we have visitors to Lovemore Heights we try and get them to "sign in".

We were pleased to have book lovers Isabella and Rhoda to lunch and they kindly agreed to wind their way to the bottom of our garden where the "book" resides. As you will see it involves leaving your mark by hammering in a 5 cent piece into a tree!! This area of the tree and stumps are covered in old shells for decoration purposes. We provide the hammer and 5 cent pieces



and the value of the Rand is such that we do not fear that burglars will dig up and steal the tree.

And now we come to our week in **Cape Town**.

Our prime reason was to attend the **wedding** of Chemelle Fortune and Ben Seller. Chemelle`s Uncle conducted the service in the garden, attended by 60 guests under a blue sky. The reception took place at the nearby Milnerton Golf Course with a glorious view across the bay to Cape Town and Robbin Island.



But like so many weddings it was an opportunity to meet up with others and recall old memories. Let the pictures tell the main stories.

We have a lot of wedding pictures but this is one of the four of us in Brian and Helen`s garden.

As the reception went into and out of a power outage, we were left with this evening view across the Bay. A splendid wedding in a super venue with lots of hard work by some dedicated people.



We managed **30 holes** at the lovely Milnerton course although my left leg suffered when



walking the last round. Whilst the faces are in heavy shade we see here Greg on the left with then 3 Old Camdenians being me, Barry and Brian. Greg operates out of LA, London and Northern Ireland but was in town for his brother`s wedding.

We managed a few drinks on the patio of the clubhouse under a sunny and mostly wind free day.

We took the opportunity to visit the **wine areas** but included the tasting of chocolate (bean to bar) and cheese that made a great fit with wine. A good lunch at Avontuur with coffee in Somerset West at Bill and Lynn`s house finished the day. For me the key spots were Fairview and the Spice Route with Spier`s a disappointment.

Lindsay took this picture in Paarl. We have me, Barry, Lynn, Bill, Denise and Bev.



We were also very lucky to be in Cape Town at the same time as another Old Camdenian being Richard **Brown** who regularly holiday's in SA with wife Jo.



We caught them on their last day and drove out to Constantia to have a chat and a very pleasant lunch at a nearby restaurant. We never have enough time to discuss the issues of the day but we will pick up where we left off when next we meet up whether SA or Yorkshire.

An interesting side story was the chat with 2 waiters. The first at The Spice Route was a guy from the DRC who was trying to complete his medical studies but was frustrated by red tape (3 year wait following his entry into SA as a political refugee) And then in Constantia, a Zimbabwean who did not see his home country returning to a state that would make him go back whilst the man from the DRC would return "home" as soon as the political situation allowed him to. These were two intelligent and charming people who deserve to do well, but in SA we have an unemployment rate of around 40%.

We are on the last page and I will finish with some news about **Courtney**'s new school.



High school has started at a fast pace with lots of academic and sporting activities.

Along the way she has found herself on cricket fields, athletics tracks, water polo pools and netball courts. She did well on the track and has found a place in the 2nd water polo team with netball trials

continuing. Collegiate have a strong presence in the pool but academic prowess rightly trumps most of the sports.

On top of this comes the school band and the addition of the trumpet to her work with the euphonium.



This week we have the budget speech where we go beyond words and get down to the real issues of how we are doing as a nation and how we are going to pay for it all. The rating agencies will be watching and listening and most of us are preparing ourselves for the inevitable increase in taxes to pay for the bungling and corruption that has seen billions disappear.

I am fighting back a desire to say more on the political front but I will show great willpower in closing and wishing you all a memorable 2015.

Love

Alan and Bev