

A Letter from Africa March 2014

In the March of 1488 **Bartholomew Diaz** reached his most easterly point and started the return journey to Portugal. He had opened up the sea route around the bottom of Africa, and all that meant for Portuguese influence and trade in the East.

He stopped at a desolate spot called Kwaihoek where he erected a stone pillar. En route he also landed in Namibia at what is now called Luderitz and another padrao was erected here.



In the 21st century some other intrepid explorers journeyed over rocks and sand dunes to reach these far off crosses and the following pictures capture these moments including a most meaningful return to Kwaihoek in March 2014 being the same month that Bartholomew landed 526 years earlier.

Seen here are Andrea, Courtney and myself. The “we have made it” stance is due to the fact that the trek involved some 10kms of hiking over sand dunes and beaches.

To the right we have our arrival in South West Africa (Namibia) and Luderitz. You can see that the pathway leads up to the Diaz Cross. This epic journey took me, Bev and Andrea over some 8000 kms of challenging roads.

This was in April 1988, 500 years after the landing.



In between these two dates another group made it to Kwaihoek via the Cannon Rocks side which was shorter but involved navigating many soft sand dunes. These can be seen in the background.

This memorable hike saw the Seller family triumph, aided by Melanie, Bev and myself.

Seen here are Barry and me, then Caryn, Denise, Melanie and Christine, with Lindsay in front. Bev took the shot in 1996.

When you do this hike it remains with you for ever.

This letter has been delayed as I wished to include feedback from the Public Protector's report on Nkandla .This is due for release today and I will cover the details as they come through.

Elections take place in May so the Nkandla Report will be a key document that may influence voters.

The ANC will win again and I wonder why this is so, given their terrible record which is clear to all of us. It is not only incompetence and corruption but the loss of any moral conscience to uplift the lot of the poor, sick and unemployed.

Why do they still vote for the ANC?

I have been considering this for a while and realise that my starting point is not the same as the mass of voters. They suffered under Apartheid and it was the ANC amongst others, who took up the struggle and gave the people political freedom in 1994. The ANC is their family and their only family. So at best we can expect a number of people to not vote ANC and the "born frees" to perhaps look at players like the DA. Of course, there are the millions who are so angry that they may be attracted to the far left views of Malema`s EFF party.

The **NKANDLA Report** is out, and the DA plan to try and impeach Zuma but the damning report is a microcosm of how this Government manages things i.e. unlawfully, with incompetence and maladministration. In any first world country the President and all Cabinet ministers involved would resign (they actually would have done this ages ago). Add to this the fact that they get away with it all but will the Nkandla findings be the exception? (I doubt it).

You need a picture to break up this political monologue.

The four of us spent a week end at an old **Voortrekkers** Wagon and log cabin.

You will know that the Afrikaners were unhappy with the way the Colonial power were running the Cape Colony and started their wonderful trek into the country and formed the provinces of The Free State and Transvaal.



The Trek started around 1835 and this is one of those old wagons in which we slept (3 of us) with me housed in the ramshackle hut next to it. The main activity was a hike to a waterfall after which we enjoyed a braai and some welcome drinks on the rustic patio with a view into the Baviaanskloof Mountains.

I must give you some **economic/political news from SA.**

GDP is down again as the slow decline of SA under the Zuma administration manifests itself in a meaningful way. We will probably be lower than the UK for 2014/2015 and perhaps not even get above 2%.

Strikes in the Platinum mining sector continue but the strikers demand for a 100% or more increase is now diluted to a “demand” (they do not ask or propose) for this increase over 3 years. In the mean time billions have been lost in wages as unions fight each other in a race to the bottom. The platinum miners are probably happy (secretly) to be closed and sell off their stockpiles.

Despite all of this turmoil the JSE moved above 47000. So whatever the political mess, if there is money to be made then business and investors will be there.

23% of the total workforce work for the Government in one way or the other. It is no surprise that 48% of total Government spend goes on salaries. It is estimated that Govt. wages are now higher than in the private sector-perhaps up to 34%. Their salaries have increased by some 6% above inflation over the last few years. Who are they going to vote for?

We know that some 15 million receive ANC (Govt.) grants. Who are they going to vote for?

We also know that there are about 896 chiefs in SA who are financed by the ANC (Govt). These Chiefs have a huge influence on the rural community in old homelands (perhaps 32 % of voters) and who will they vote for?

Every Govt. dept or company is a failure except one and that is the body responsible for the collection of taxes.

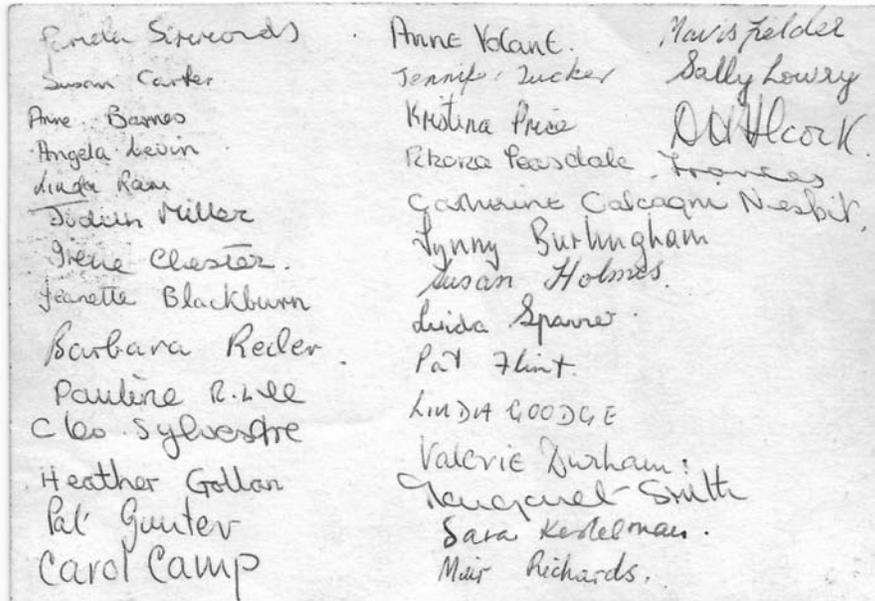
(I cannot take it any more so please let us have another picture.)

OK. Two picture from **1959**.



The picture on the left was taken by Bev, with her first camera-the old Brownie. This is a picture of Bev`s form from Camden Girls School on an outing to Cambridge and the other is the Holloway School (Old Camdenians) 1st team. *(OK so what?)*

Well...the back of the picture has the signatures of the girls which I show below.



It is a big picture to enable you to read the signatures. Some of you will recognise the names. Bev Seller, took the photo but did not sign it. The remarkable thing is that two of the people in both

photos married each other!

Yes, look closely and you will see Pat Flint and second right at the back is Brian Lofts. These are now a couple.

Next to Brian at the end is myself and who took the Camden Girls photo? Yes Beverly Seller who is now my wife.

(Wow-am I supposed to be impressed)

I thought that was a very interesting coincidence.

Now I will end with something quite different. *(Yes I think they have had enough).*

The one on the left is a group of us in Namibia visiting the Cadbury plant as we embark upon a Kudo spitting competition. We



had to hunt for some Kudo droppings and then place them in the mouth and see



who could spit them the furthest. I am the stupid one 3rd from right. It just shows you what peer pressure will do as the guy on the far right is some kind of Kudo spitting winner in Namibia.

The other shot was taken a few weeks ago at our very sexy Addo Elephant National Park. *(Stop before it gets worse)*

Until the next time from a sunny yet troubled SA. Love Bev and Alan