

Between one thing and another we thought we would never get away, what with the snow ice and gales and Maud not feeling too great. For sure we could not travel to London by car because of roads being blocked in Scotland and the north of England; fortunately Aldergrove, which had been closed by snow for a time, was operating again, so we took a Senior Citizens return ticket on the Shuttle to London and with the help of Selective Travel got a special rate at the Regent Palace for Thursday night 26/1/84 (useful to know-£19 instead of £35 for a double room). The room had a sink and facilities for making tea or coffee, but no bathroom; quite comfortable and being close to Piccadilly tube station was on direct line to Heathrow (the hotel, not the room!). Up at 6.30am on the 27th and at Heathrow by 8.45-in good time to transfer our luggage from Terminal 1 to 2 for the flight to Copenhagen by Scandinavian Airways at 11.25. We were surprised that the flying time was only an hour and a half but because of the time difference it was 2pm before we arrived. After we had settled into the room at the Globetrotter Hotel provide by the Airline we took the local bus into the centre of town. There was a biting wind and some snow about but we managed a pleasant walk round the main shopping precincts, Maud inspecting (mainly) the fashions and fur coats, of which latter there a great many; but even if the prices had been right we couldn't possibly take one to Africa-could we?! The cold made us hungry so we selected one of the many pizza cafes and enjoyed one of cheese shrimps and mussels, done with a delightful herb garnish. We thought Copenhagen would be worth another visit in a better season-it's waterways are very attractive; but generally we found prices high. The pizza was only the start of our journey's feasting; at breakfast at the hotel there was raw fish and cheese besides the normal choices; I found the raw fish excellent. Then once on the plane to Johannesburg Scandinavian Airlines gave us hardly any rest from wining and dining from departure at 10am till arrival at Jan Smuts at midnight, which included an extra hour for time difference which was absorbed, thankfully, by a break at Nairobi. By far the best food and service we can remember. And no mishaps with the luggage except a plastic knob on the typewriter got broken. So to the hotel Jacaranda where the man on late duty was a Yorkshireman from Dewsbury Road Leeds! But he knew nothing of our booking and had to search for a spare room. At last to bed.

29/1/84 Got up quite early by mistake-Maud had forgotten to alter her watch for the time difference. In daylight the Jacaranda looked a little fresher-new carpeting and decoration. We sat by the roof-top pool for about two hours after breakfast and allowed the sun and breeze to make our skins quite tender-we should have known better but of course it was so pleasant to relax in the sun, after all the cold. So after that we read the Sunday newspapers out of reach of the sun and apart from a stroll up to Hillbrow and an afternoon nap, did little. The hotel seems full, with a lot of younger people enjoying themselves round the pool making music(?) and having a brai. The newspapers report that over the past two years S A has had 23% inflation and this is reflected in the price of property (comparable houses now seem dearer at present exchange rates than in the U K whereas they used to be cheaper) and in food and clothing prices; strangely petrol is slightly cheaper at 35p a litre, and of course drink is still reasonable (brandy £4.25 a bottle

Pay seems to have risen; routine jobs get about R12000pa while executives run R30000 upwards. Because of recession there are supposed to be fewer openings but there seem just as many adverts for staff in the papers. Notwithstanding the lower price for gold and the effect of drought on agriculture S A still has a surplus on balance of payments. I mentioned that we had a stroll to Hillbrow; in fact we went over the hill to Joubert Park and the railway station; possibly most of the whites go out of town on Sunday but anyway it did seem that the blacks had taken over. All dressed neatly, some elegantly, and the children cute in spottish attire. Many of the women were in their church "uniform"-usually blue and white robes; near the station there were open air gospel meetings. As a white man in shorts I was a little conspicuous! Only round the open air chess board in Joubert Park were there mixed races. Our walk made us a little thirsty but there were no oases-like Belfast the bars are shut on Sundays. After the evening meal in the hotel we watched TV and were pleased to find that there is an English Programme available all through now.

30/1/84 Acting on advice from the airways stewardess our first call on Monday morning was to the SAS office in the Carlton Centre to make a provisional reservation for the return flight-leaving this at the latest possible date of 8/4/84. Not that we had any ideas yet how we would fill the time but at least we were sure of getting back coming up to Easter. At the Centre we also visited the Tourist Board, where the man could do nothing to confirm our Natal Parks Board bookings-just go ahead, he said, there is always difficulty in getting them on the phone! A surprising admission by one public body about another, but only too true, as we discovered when we tried to phone ourselves. Enjoyed browsing round the Carlton Centre shops especially the numerous African craft ones. Shared one ham roll between us for lunch to give our tummies a chance to recover from over-eating; then back to Hillbrow by taxi. In the evening saw the preview showing of Agatha Christie's "The Hollow" at the Andre Hugenet theatre. Small audience but excellent production-enjoyed it immensely.

31/1/84 Woken by a call from de Silva at Gaborone to say that he had been unable to obtain funding from UN or CFTC for the post he had mentioned last year as a possibility. The Department is in a mess! Things generally are not too good-this is the third successive drought year. Having made enquiries about car hire and weighed up the relative stress we decided that we would travel to Durban by train and as the overnight sleeper was full this meant the day train on Wednesday. So we called at the station to collect the ticket, spent a long time getting money at Standard Bank, again shared a ham roll for lunch in the Sterling Hotel bar, and walked all the way back to Hillbrow (equivalent I think to Shaftesbury Square to Balmoral). Maud then rested (she is still a bit shaky) while I tried the local baths for a swim, but they are ancient and not a patch on Castlereagh. After dinner we packed in readiness for our 8am train in the morning, then saw the evening news on TV. Mostly about cyclone "Bomoina" which has travelled in from the Indian ocean across Maputo to deluge the country from Kruger Park in the north through Swaziland to Zululand. The Natal Parks which we hope to visit have all been cut off by the floods! Roads, bridges and native dwellings have all suffered, some being washed away, and lives have been lost. Recorded rainfalls were Piggs Peak 840mm, Mbabane 628mm & Mananga 251

We thought of the young Dane who sat with us on the plane who, having already done a twelve month round the world trip by air, working as a carpenter at some of his stopovers to pay his way, was now going to work for some friends who are running a Norwegian Evangelical Church mission in southern Swaziland. Having painted glowing pictures for him of the country we wondered how he reacted to the cyclone! Also Ray and Elisabeth were to be motoring down from Transvaal to Durban along that route about now; there was a TV picture of a vehicle similar to theirs caught in the floods but we're hopeful it wasn't. Other news concerned the imminent withdrawal of S A troops from Angola and the visit of Mugabe to London (the press here used the occasion to highlight the killings by Mugabe's troops in Matabeleland) During the day we had in fact enquired from S A Railways about the possibility of a trip to Bulawayo by train or coach. The official was quite scathing about the decline in the quality of tourist and other facilities since independence (e.g. they may say they have made a seat booking on the train for you but haven't - and they put anyone on i.e. blacks). But if we insisted on going (he implied) we should make Harare our base. Also in the news is that Trevor Huddleston is visiting the OAU states and, not surprisingly, says that he has received confirmation from all of them that S A is pursuing a policy of destabilisation against all its neighbours. Apart from Botswana, which I suspect is a rather reluctant member of OAU, it seems unlikely that S A intervention is necessary to create instability in the other neighbours. The day has been overcast and there was some rain during Monday night so the temperature is too oppressive; it suits us really.

1/2/84 Got up at 6am and were rudely awakened by a sour-faced Afrikan taxi-driver at 7.20am when he called to take us to the station. We would have been quite happy to have remained somnolent for a while but he quickly roused our tempers; first he let me put all the luggage in the boot myself then came to inspect it and said "it wasn't right at all" and took it all out again and re-packed it himself! It didn't make any difference to the luggage but presumably satisfied his ego. Anyway his boot lid did not fasten - it was broken. Then when we said we wanted to be delivered to Platform 16 at the station (having been taken there yesterday by another driver) he refused and said he could only take us to the main hall (from where we would have to carry the luggage down to the platform). His excuse was that if he drove down to the platform he might get stuck and not get out for a while - he would do it if we paid him another R12! (the fare was normally R4!). So we ceased speaking to him and when we got to the station found, as we suspected, that his excuse was bogus. Nevertheless we had a tussle carrying the luggage to the platform and felt like reporting the driver to the Tourist Board as an example of how not to make friends. It seems to me something in the Boer nature that produces an enormous chip on the shoulder at times, yet we have often been kindly treated by them. Anyway we were in good time for the train and settled down in compartment 4A (all seats are nominated by a list on the platform board) with a young couple travelling to Glencoe near Ladysmith. They were Afrikaans and were obviously happier speaking their language but used English to be friendly. They were to visit their parents in Glencoe - the young man had time off work because of injury in a motor-bike accident when both of them were hurt.

