

Mara: 20/20: Wakefield

Monday 6 October

Our pilgrimage began at 4.00am at Bishop's Lodge. David drove us to Pledwick Lane where we picked up another sleepy fellow traveller. Matt, David and I arrived at Leeds/Bradford Airport at around 4.40am and were met by John Hadjioannou; ten minutes on and Peta Moffat arrived chaperoned by George. We checked in without incident and the flight left on time at 6.05am – thence to Amsterdam – Schiphol. Thereafter we had an hour and a half in the fleshpots of the aerodrome and again our flight left just after time at about 10.45am.

The KLM flight was excellent if cramped – eight hours in an eighteen inch square is more than enough; the in-flight service was excellent albeit that the final meal of warm tomato soup, mixed salad and a geo-bar contained more roughage than protein. Our landing at Mount Kilimanjaro was on time. There we stood for an hour, grounded and waiting for one hundred passengers returning to Amsterdam, having decanted twice as many at the foothills of the great mountain. Forty five minutes saw us into Dar-Es-Salaam where we cleared customs with luggage in a record twenty five minutes or so. Mr Shibali, of Takim Travel, our guardian and guide for the next thirty six hours took us speedily (with much use of the horn) to the Summer Sun Hotel. En route I telephone Rossie in Northumberland and received a call from Father Jonathan Boardman in Rome – he was more astonished than I – Africa was not where he expected to find me! We checked, took baggage to our rooms and returned to the bar for beer, peanuts and avocado/chickpea sandwiches. Bed at midnight.

Tuesday 7 October

I was woken by loud banging on the wall – perhaps I'd been snoring? The bedside clock said 8.16 – so I shot out of bed – we'd agreed to breakfast together at 8.45am. Spruced up in clericals I arrived for breakfast to find no colleagues there: 'What was the time?' I asked the waitress: '8.00am' she replied. Back to my room; the hotel room clock was wrong and not my own. Time for reading. At 8.45am we all breakfasted well and the three clergy met at 9.30am for the morning office – next to the pool and with sprinklings of rain.

At 10.30am we left for the British High Commission in the Takim minibus. It was an exhilarating but brief journey – some 2 minutes and 150 yards! The High Commission shares a purpose built building with the European Union and the German and Dutch Embassies. Philip Parham, the High commissioner will leave in January 2009 to become Deputy Head of Mission at the United Nations in New York. He was at Oxford with Tim Livesey (from Lambeth Palace) and Anthony Priddis – now Bishop of Hereford which diocese has the only other C of E link with Tanzania. He spoke movingly of the poverty of the country and of the moral vision of Julius Nyerere, the first president whose integrity has helped the nation to remain peaceful and to progress toward mature democracy. He was realistic about the weaknesses of Nyerere's economic policies and the failure of successive governments to develop the undeniable potential. We set out the history of the Mara link and we had 90 minutes of mutually helpful discussion. We agreed to keep in touch.

We arrived back at the hotel at 12.48pm and Stephen caught up with the Wakefield office before we lunched at 1.30pm. Thereafter the Takim bus transported us to the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St Joseph – 1897 and closed when we attempted to visit it. Next day we saw the Boma, Dar's oldest surviving building, built in 1867, to accommodate the visitors of Sultan Majid. It has fine Zanzibar doors. Next door is another early British colonial house. We moved on, via the main shopping street to the World War I memorial roundabout and then to the Lutheran Cathedral, a rather dark, austere building whose tower we climbed to give us a fine view of the city and harbour. St Albans Anglican Cathedral came next. This was built in the interwar years and is a curious mix of art-deco and modernised gothic with a phallic tower. We were warmly welcomed by two of the cathedral priests and just escaped a drenching in a flash shower. Our afternoon concluded with a fascinating and fun visit to

the National Museum which is in the course of expansion and reconstruction. It is a most incongruous collection with no clear sequence – a coelacanth in formation, a nineteenth century German lamp post, some ancient Rolls Royces and Morris Minors, pictures of local bird life and an interesting piece on the Leakeys and the origins of homosapiens. We had been nourished to survive this through goodies (and camera batteries) from the local supermarket bought with Peta's store of Tanzanian shillings.

Back at the hotel, we freshened up and then said the evening office together in increasingly romantic gloom. At 7.30pm we were together again for supper – bed at 11.00pm.

Wednesday 8 October

We breakfasted together at 9.00am, discovering the threatened teacher's strike in Tanzania and the continuing debate charade between Obama and McCain – Tanzania won against the sheer boredom of the American debate! At 10.00am we said the Morning Office together and thereafter prepared for our departure to the airport at 11.30am. The airport journey was interrupted (as such journeys often are) by a series of minor traffic jams. It was a typical airport road – dual carriageway with lots of large adverts for mobile telephones and factories of various sorts and conditions. The check-in was generally uneventful. After this we made our way to the cafeteria where we cleared them out of food! After we'd finished our cheese pies and doughnuts it was time to board.

Matt and Peta did notice the young lady put on the wrong destination tags at first but she soon rectified this. It was the portent of things to come! We boarded a steam turbo-prop aeroplane which slowly cooled down mid-flight. At 4.00pm we touched down with a huge bump and then my worst fears were fulfilled – all but two of our cases failed to arrive. Matt was the lucky one – his case was there along with the cope for Bishop Hilkiyah. It was an unsettling start. Arthur and Grace met us and remonstrated with the airline staff; the promise was that they would come to Mwanza on Thursday and thence by road to Musoma.

Off we went by Land Cruiser and at Bishop's Lodge Hilkiyah and Martha welcomed us with their marvellous warmth. We sat and drank coffee and mused over the loss of our luggage: Precision Airways were renamed *Imprecision Airways*! Matt and I planned for Thursday while Peta and John went to the Afrilux and sought buy a shirt or two. The excitement of the day increased. Soon after dark the power failed. That evening was an exciting mixture of brightness and gloom, torches and candles. At about 8.00pm, Peta and John arrived. We also met Joyce who was helping to cook *and* Chas (13) and Naomi (11) Hilkiyah and Martha's two youngest offspring. We enjoyed a splendid meal – potato, pilau rice, beans, beef, talapia (fish) and some very pleasant South African red wine. There was an extra sense of romance in the darkness and it was marvellous all to be together again – Arthur and Grace were there too. We retired at 10.30pm well worn but happy.

Thursday 9 October

Matt and I said the morning office at 7.50am and we breakfasted with Martha and Hilkiyah at 8.15am. At 9.00am we set out for the diocesan campus. Hilkiyah welcomed us to his office and then took us round to meet all those who were around. We dropped into the cathedral and then to the vocational centre where we met the administrator, Mike, a teacher and missionary there from Stilgo in Ireland. By 10.00am it was time to move off. We travelled as part of a 'caravan' of five land cruisers of various vintages. All the Area Deans and Archdeacons with some of the diocesan staff travelled with us as part of the convoy – the idea being that people would be able to see parts of the diocese with which they were not familiar. We went to the outskirts of Musoma, past a large new bus station (only at foundation stage) to the site of the new 'Rehabilitation Centre' for those with disabilities – club foot, cleft palate, cerebral palsy and other disabling conditions. The skeleton of the main admin block is well advanced. It will be one of only four such facilities in Tanzania, offering a day-care centre and dormitories for residential care. I laid the foundation stone (or rather unveiled it), blessed the building and offered a brief homily on St Francis and care for those who cannot care for themselves. This was a fairly brisk affair and we were soon off for the 11.00am gathering back in Musoma for distributing mosquito nets,

school books and sheets to disadvantaged children. I ceremonially gave out a few of these supplies and again spoke briefly, talking of Christian care and beginning with Robert Runcie's fight with a mosquito net in Bangladesh.



Once again we moved on swiftly, this time to the Mara Primary School Graduation Day where I was the Guest of Honour, speaker and presenter of prizes etc. This was a great event, brilliantly organised by Madame Apia, the head teacher, who had just returned from Alabama where she had completed a two year course on teaching and school administration. There was dancing, poetry, public speaking and all was of a great standard. The school is something of a miracle and the vision of the bishop. Beginning in 2000 with 15 children and 2 offices there are now 350 children and seven classes. I picked

references to the melting (or not) of the snow cap on Mount Kilimanjaro and then talked about odd rituals at our Oxford University graduation ceremony but majored on Christian education. We finished with an excellent lunch, returning home at just before 3.00pm, giving us 90 minutes for me to write this and prepare a sermon for tomorrow.

Nyamatare was familiar since I remember dedicating the church in 2004, with Bob Cooper materialising with three Lightcliffe parishioners, out of the twilight gloom. It was another fun reception. The vicarage was dedicated and we prayed both outside and in and Hilkieh led a hymn, before we all retired to the church for more songs, introductions, votes of thanks and my homily. We returned to the Afrilux at about 7.00pm and had a beer as we waited for luggage. 'Bwane Asifiwe!' The luggage was delivered. We returned to Bishop's Lodge for coffee and cake. Thereafter Matt and I prepared for the next two day safari, concluding with Compline just before 10.00pm.

Friday 10 October



What a day! Rose at 6.30am and said office at 6.55am. Breakfast with Hilkieh and Martha at 7.15am and then off at 7.45am to drop cases at the Afrilux and join the caravan of five Land Cruises for the Cathedral Compound. Remembering the distances, the roads and that there were four destinations, we kept amazingly to time. We arrived at Sakawa at 10.00am. The church is big and transepted – lots of space and air and vast numbers of people. I dedicated the church in Swahili, banging three times on the door and Hilkieh took over for the eucharist. Good chairs and amazing dancing – I talked about St

Peter's Stanley, new starts, seeds and so on – great event.

Then after quite a swift lunch on to Nyamasanda. This is a lovely place. Looking rather westwards into Kenya from a high vantage point, it is an obvious place for retreats and prayer and I said as much in the sermon; I also compared the deployment of clergy to the planning or re-planting of wild flowers ... A much smaller congregation, because there are other churches here, they are highly committed; the link parish is St Peter's Morley. Again a swift meal and on we went on rougher roads to Kemairi. This is a small church and at present no vicarage. St Johns Warley have given so generously here. I talked of the universal church using the image of the high vantage point and remembering Tony Street's ministry in Chile.

One more meal and we were on the road by 6.45pm, reaching Mogabiri by 7.30pm. More power cuts and a dramatic electric sky, but hardly any rain – we had had that at Kemairi during the service. One more meal still (!) and with the manager, Goodluck – an excellent man – and then Compline. Off to bed at 10.30pm, ready for a fairly early start.

Saturday 11 October



Another packed and stimulating day lay ahead of us. We met at 6.55am for morning prayer and at 7.20am were given a rapid tour of the grounds to view the stupendous panorama from there of the Great African Rift Valley. We breakfasted at 8.00am and received some kind gifts from all – including the anonymous donor and his wife. Goodluck then took us on a tour of model farms. We made our way down into the Rift Valley past Barrick's great gold mine (* see elsewhere). We were shown fields with cassava planted properly in lines and carefully spaced. The variety was also resistant to 'mosaic disease' and the yield is five times what has hitherto been achieved. We were shown too a model apiary where honey is collected with significantly better yields.



We all then planted a tree! After a further short ride we stopped at a plantation where, alongside each other, we saw the mosaic prone plants (looking very poor) and the new improved strain. These are grown together to show the effectiveness of these changes: some thirty two groups of farmers are now influenced by this work. We were then driven further to another cassava plantation owned by a young woman. Finally we went to a farm with one cow provided by Mogabiri. Again this strain of animal yields much more milk. The owner promises to offer the first two female calves back to Mogabiri; young bullocks may be sent to the market two years on. We stayed here for tea and bread and I spoke briefly of our encouragement and of our hope that this would be still more influential in the future.

We moved on from the farm to dedicate a new church at Kemange, a suburb of Tarime. It is a spacious church with a relatively small congregation. There was further excitement

amongst all the locals since the next day there was to be a parliamentary by-election in Tarime. We were joined for the service by Deaconess Helen Hoskins from Australia who is the African Vice-President of the Girl's Brigade. She brought with her a troop, Helen is based at Bunda and I met her on my last visit. I preached on giving, grace and the generosity of God. All Saints', Featherstone had given generously to build this church and also sent a gift of a silver chalice.

Finally we moved on to Kowak which is fairly nearby. This is the sight of the earliest Anglican church in Mara (1939) of our growing centre for the projected diocese in Rorya. There is also an expanding theological education centre where I dedicated and opened a new dormitory. We also saw the new diocesan offices and bishop's house. This was a significant gathering preceded by some powerful rain. I spoke briefly about theological education. We ate there and then made our way to Musoma, calling at the cathedral where there was an overnight 'singing event' preceding next day's celebrations. We returned to the Afrilux at 7.30p, and at 8.15pm met for a snack. We retired at Compline at 10.30pm.

Sunday 12 October



The day of the great service. We said the office at 7.40am and breakfasted together at 8.00am – then off to the cathedral at 8.30am. Huge numbers of people were thronging everywhere including three more bishops – Victoria-Nyanga (the neighbouring and mother diocese), Rwelo, and the Assistant Bishop from Western Tanganyika.

We began a little late at 9.15am with a bopping song and then followed a long series of introductions which ended with my vesting Hilkiyah in his cope and mitre – the mitre is a little large but all in all, Hilkiyah looked splendid – the cope is magnificent.



There were perhaps twenty to thirty choirs from link parishes there and so the service was duly extended by powerful singing with rhythmic dance: the service lasted for three and a half hours in total. I was much taken by surprise when Hilkiyah announced that I am now an honorary canon of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Musoma; he duly handed over my licence! We signed the covenant before the people and I preached about 'us belonging to each other'. I used the image of the ubiquitous banana plant. The service was followed by an excellent lunch in the nearby hall.

At 2.15pm or so we were taken by Land Rover (!) to the Afrilux and at about 3.15pm we left for a boat cruise on Lake Victoria. This was marvellous in every way and at certain points exiting! We were taken to the point at which the Musoma/Mara River inlet meets the main lake. The waves were three feet high and the boat pitched wildly.

We saw two iguanas, kingfishers, sea eagles, shag-like seabirds and caught splendid views of two nearby dhows. One of the jewels of the journey was a visit to Kenesi village on the other side of the inlet; we spent 45 minutes walking through the village talking to people and Matt gathered a group of children as if he were the Pied Piper of Hamelin! We saw a boat being built and peered

through the windows into the impressive six-year old Roman Catholic Church. After a couple of tangles with water hyacinths in the propeller and one mechanical failure we arrived back safely at Musoma beach at about 6.45pm.

Returning to the Afrilux for 30 minutes we were then chaperoned to Arthur's house for supper. It was a lovely evening with a delicious meal cooked by Anna his wife. We met Amon, his older son, Emmanuel and Salestica who are effectively foster children and 5 year old Mary whom they have just adopted. We left at about 9.15pm to to prepare for Monday's excitements!

Monday 13 October

Morning prayer at 7.10am, then breakfast at 7.30am; a hearty breakfast for the three of us – John had a separate programme at Kowak. We were collected at 8.00am but did not leave the Diocesan Offices until about 8.45am because various things were being sorted. the journey to Kwikerege began on the main tarmac road but only for a mile or two. We then struck south on some of the roughest roads we had yet experienced this time; it was real safari stuff at times, further made so by the presence of the extraordinarily large *maribou storks*, which I (or Matt!) misheard as *karibu* – more of that later! We arrived at Kwikerege at about 10.15am, only fifteen minutes late. This was undoubtedly the poorest place we had yet visited. The soil is sandy and poor and all the cassava accordingly less healthy. The house in which we ate lunch (the evangelist's house) is bare brick inside, a rough concrete floor and a table with six chairs moved in for the occasion. The church is small, but attractive with (unusually) four pillars helping to support the roof. Unfortunately, the altar platform is unnecessarily shallow allowing for no one to celebrate West facing. It was the first time I have ever been involved in a North end celebration and concelebration to boot.... I preached on transformed suffering and used the pillars as a visual image. I began with St Stephen's Lindley, the link parish.



We left Kwikerege at about 1.45pm and arrived at Nyakiswa at about 3pm. Another small church but a less poor village (although the priest's house is just as basic). The event here was characterised most individually by a tremendous thunderstorm which even inhibited the choirs from singing! I preached on the church as a gathering place for the faithful and a sign of heaven using the two churches at Rastrick and the mango and sisal trees as images. More food and more presents and we departed at about 4.45pm, arriving in Musoma on the stroke of 5.30pm. We spent the time debriefing

with John (see separate paper) and talking of future policy; it was a very good interchange. Peta and Matt then sorted the gifts for parishes and I caught up with Marlene and the office, despite appalling problems with the telephone. Supper was at 7.30pm in the hotel. It was a good supper, a mild (very mild) korma curry. We reflected on the day and on the day to follow. Peta retired at about 11.15 and the other three at midnight.

Tuesday, 14th October

Afrilux breakfast: pancakes, omelette, banana etc. It set us up for the morning, although there would be more to come rather later. We set out at about 9.30am for Butiama, the birthplace and final resting place of Julius Nyerere; it was good to be doing it on this day as it was the 9th anniversary of his passing. The roads were good – first of all South on the Mwanza highway towards Bunda, then, after quite a distance, left on another tarmac road to Butiama. The Nyerere estate is significant and Julius himself

developed it wisely, planting trees and landscaping the area around his house. First we visited the modern and modest mausoleum built over his grave. Hilkiah asked me to pray and I did so, with the permission of a key member of staff who had come down for the day from Dar-es-Salaam (the keeper of his household there). I gave thanks for his visionary leadership in Tanzania, in Africa and internationally as one of the outstanding statesmen of the developing world. We photographed the house, garden and mausoleum and then moved down the hill to the museum; exhibits of some of his possessions and other desiderata made for a fascinating thirty minutes. This journey had been a surprise as indeed was the next phase....One of the most memorable pieces here was a reflection of Nyerere looking back on his career. He wrote:

‘Those who receive the privilege of education have a duty to return the sacrifice which others have made. They are like a man who has been given all the food available in a starving village in order that he might have the strength to bring supplies back from a distant place.

If he takes the food and does not bring help to his brothers, he is a traitor.’

These are the words, of course, of a former teacher, a national leader and a visionary statesman. So to our next stopping place...

This time the roads were pretty atrocious. They took us by a wandering pathway to Buhemba. This whole day took us along a most circuitous route. Buhemba is the location of the diocese’s most extensive agricultural station which is under the leadership of a charismatic director, Ezekiel. Here the farm includes more than one thousand acres with a good number of cattle and a growing herd of goats. At present, there are between 20 and 30 but the immediate aim is to breed 100 and then in the long term 500. Goat milk is very nutritious and useful in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. There is an extensive children’s playground, paid for by a lady who had dropped into Wakefield Cathedral wishing to support a small African charity with a small legacy from her father. This helps integrate the institution with local community. The set-up at Buhemba, including the plant and a small house for clergy to use for rest and retreat is impressive. We concluded our visit with coffee, pop, pancakes, eggs and bananas. This was the ‘elevenes surprise’ although it arrived and was most welcome at 12.30pm!

Soon after we set off to Mugumu. This road was even more appalling and quite tiring for driver and passengers alike. Mugumu was great fun. Almost exactly four years ago I had laid the foundation stone for the vicarage. Now I was able to bless it and declare it open. This I did and it was followed by lunch in the vicarage and later speeches and celebrations outside with a particularly noisy PA system. I introduced my colleagues. This time they had been transmogrified from being those who ran a farm to those who operate a national park – safari director, gamekeeper and park ranger. (At the beginning they had been footballers!) The Mugumu people were still ore welcoming than others and this was a very happy occasion.

At 5pm we set out for Issenye. The roads were much better and we were there by 6pm. Issenye is a stunningly beautiful place: Serengeti is a Masai word which means ‘unending’. The plain lives up to this and Chairmareho mountain in the background sets the scene further. The sunset was good from the rock knoll near ‘Bill Jones’ rest house where we were staying, but not as stunning as some. We had a really good meal, followed by an excellent discussion with Hilkiah and Arthur. We talked for an hour and a half. We began with discussion on what we might ask the anonymous donor to contribute towards for the future, focussing on power for Kowak seminary, a replacement vehicle for the bishop and support for other sixth form college facilities at Issenye or a secondary school in Musoma. Next we discussed the use of the CESA college in Cape Town for training. We agreed to look to other possibilities in England. Our third topic was the projected visit of Hilkiah in 2010 – a very positive response to this, including, if possible, an Arsenal match! Then we touched on teaching on condoms. The clergy do not publicly either encourage or discourage the use of condoms. Their main line in counselling people is to encourage them to talk to the medical team locally. Finally we talked about

homosexuality and problems in the Anglican Communion. It is clear that all but one of the Tanzanian bishops attended the Lambeth Conference. There is an acknowledgement of the common fact of homosexuality in Tanzania and not as something that could be ignored. It is, at present, illegal but he quoted the High Commissioner for Tanzania in London (a Muslim woman) who praised the Anglican Communion for discussing this in public, since it is an issue with which all societies must come to terms in a just manner. All in all, our discussion was excellent, illuminating and a very important move forward in our relations as partner dioceses.

We concluded our discussion at about 10pm and at 10.25 the generator was turned off!

Wednesday, 15th October

All the clergy, including Hilkiyah, met for Morning Prayer at 7.30pm. Breakfast was at 8am and we set out for Nagusi Secondary School at 9am. The school has been partly funded by the anonymous donor and is partly a *quid pro quo* for the state's gift of Issenye Primary School to the diocese some sixteen years ago. It is an impressive and ambitious project and the state is fortunate to have received so much support from the Church. We greeted a couple of classes and then returned to the far end of Issenye village, near the pump and beyond the school, to bless the foundation of the Church. The school provided four choices of choirs (Anglican/Lutheran, Mennonite, Seventh Day Adventist and Roman Catholic). It was again a very good occasion – further exchange of presents – and the final diocesan task. We returned to the school for coffee and then bade farewell to Hilkiyah, Arthur, Grace and our faithful driver, Daniel, to whom I gave a crucifix. Our hosts left at about noon. Then followed a good tour of the school for about an hour led by Joseph, the headmaster and Lawrence, the biology and agriculture teacher (an excellent person). Before lunch I caught up on this diary. At 1.45pm we met for lunch – again very good with more variety – and then followed a debate with Frank (Kassandra's son), and some other teachers. Oner led off with a fierce anti-Western tirade but we held our own. Thereafter more rest time (I caught up further with this) and then a walk down into the centre of the village.

It was very good to walk down in civvies and explore the village as an ordinary European. We enjoyed talking to Lawrence and Joseph and Peter (a member of the local church who I had met earlier) who turned round on his bicycle journey to join us. We looked around the village chatting with some of the locals and then Lawrence suggested we had a beer in one of the bars. The was fun too and somehow felt authentic. We returned by car to the school. On arrival we met in three groups of 8, letting the students ask questions at will. They touched on religion, politics and notably on similarities between our two countries – food, landscape, and customs. Thereafter we had dinner with the headboy and girl and their deputies, again with Lawrence and Joseph. After supper Peta explained the safari and we planned the following day's programme. We retired at 9.45pm, prepared for an early start.

Thursday, 16th October

An early start – a tiny snack at 6.55am and then the assembly at 7.15 with all the school out in the open around the flag. The flag rose but then fell to the ground – all rather comic, but dealt with great composure. Peta introduced us as and each of us spoke – mine was a sermon on rivers/water, incarnation and the Wakefield-Mara partnership. Matt gave an excellent outline of his own education and applied it very effectively to Issenye school and their own experiences. John gave also a superb word on the richness of the land, the roots of humanity here in Tanzania and God's great goodness towards us. He spoke of the children as the future of Tanzania and one of the sources of its great richness.

After the assembly, we went forward with Joseph and Ezekiel (another teacher) to Iharare Primary School. It dates from 1976 and now has 552 pupils, but its facilities remain rudimentary: there are far too few desks and virtually no windows. There are concrete floors in only some of the classrooms; they all remain very dusty. There are some good staff there but the school cries out for resources. The football field has no goalposts; the girls' netball pitch is pure dust with a bent loop attached to a thin

piece of tree which leans backwards at an 80 degree angle. The basic loos are shared by staff and students. It is all pretty appalling and the more so since the Ministry of Education supplies too little cash, much of which lines the pockets of the local education officer's budget. It is amazing that the spirits of teachers and children alike remain so high. What could we do to help?

We returned to eat breakfast at just after 10am – it was a good breakfast – chapattis, boiled eggs, peanut butter and honey. The morning office followed and at 11.30 the other three joined a mathematics class. I was given a group of about 11 children for a question/answer session. It was a direly slow start, but eventually it got a little better. When I brought it to a halt at 12.30pm 7 of the children followed and I could not stop the questions! They asked to pose for a photograph and inquired about corresponding with people in England – sadly, not an easy or recommended exercise. Once they left we had a beer and then lunch with two of the teachers Isaac and Matinde; they both teach maths. Matinda brought her 16 months delightful child, Rose, just after lunch. Rose was not taken with fair white faces! Matt and I then walked over the football pitch to view the Serengeti towards Ngorongoro and we all had rest time, hence my catching up with this.

At 4.30pm, Lawrence took us down to the Issenye School Agricultural project. On 10 acres of school land on the Iharari road, in the past year has been developed a nursery for trees and also a fruit and vegetable farm. Bananas, paw-paws, carrots, okra and kale are already growing. Acacia, flame, eucalyptus and other varieties of tree are being nurtured as seedlings to produce up to 3000 trees on the school site. These trees can attract more rain, provide timber and fuel and can offsest carbon. The project is moving ahead very fast. There is a spring nearby and a small reservoir. We visited the spring where many people were filling their water pots. We then returned to the school and drove out on the road to the pump. The pump needs some immediate maintenance but the provision of electrical pumping gear, a solar generator, pipeline and tank at the school must be one of our priorities. This would save fuel, student and staff time and energy and would avoid much illness through the use of polluted water. After this visit we dropped in briefly on Benjamin, the local councillor, known well to Bill Jones; he seemed very jolly about the visit and was only sorry that we could not stay for tea.

On our return, we finished our modest supply of gin and then had supper alongside Joseph, Ezekiel and Lawrence who gave us yet more presents – more Masai blankets; people have been very generous. After supper we packed and off to bed at 10pm.

Friday, 17th October

An early start to our safari at 7am. Joseph and Ezekiel bade us farewell and John, our guide, set us on our way in the Takim Travel land cruiser. We made our way back through the villages to the reserve and thence to the gate of the National Park at which we arrived at about 9am. We used this as a comfort stop while John registered and paid the fee. We had a banana which we had brought with us – we had had excellent omelettes and bread before we left Issenye school. It would be tedious to catalogue all the animals we sighted. Suffice to say that we saw many giraffes and often close up, also numerous elephants, countless zebras and wildebeests; the zebras were hugely plentiful. The highlights were a lioness drooped over the branch of a tree and ostriches mating with remarkable vigour. There were water buffalo in profusion which I did not remember from my earlier trip and hungry vultures hung or flew around at various points. At 12.30pm we doubled back to the Serena Lodge, in the Western Grumetti corridor, where we had a very good lunch. At 1.20pm we set out again and sped our way through the 'golden plain' to the Naabi Gate when we stopped for comfort and to check out. Our route took us on, over an utterly appalling road to the foothills of Ngorongoro past scattered Masai people. We arrived at the Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge (where I had previously stayed) and took in the amazing view – more comfort too! We left the conservation area at 5.40pm and were at the Ngorongoro Farm House by 6pm. We checked in, visited the shop and met for dinner at 7.15pm. It was an excellent evening, following showers, good loos, gins and tonic and a lovely meal. Retiring at 10pm we prepared for another early start.

Saturday, 18th October

The Feast of St Luke! The alarm woke us at 5.50am and, after an excellent breakfast, we set out for the crater at c.7.10am. The rim, around which we travelled almost a three-quarter circle was well shrouded in cloud. As we descended from the jungle-type vegetation there, we opened up into glorious sunlight below. It was a very good morning crowned with us seeing two male lions resting in the savannah; the first was only about 200m away and got up briefly to stretch. Through the binoculars we had a really splendid view.

We saw more bird species for the first time, including the beautiful crested great crane. As ever there were plenty of wildebeests, a number of hyenas, a zebra carcass (probably killed and scavenged the day before). We stopped for a comfort break at the lunch area by the hippopotamus pool – plenty of hippos – and later we even saw three grazing on the grass. Lunch was in the woodland and the vervet monkeys did not disappoint – one came in the car three times and made a good effort at snaffling my lunch. It panicked Peta; she shouted and I threw my lunch up in the air, miraculously catching it all again in the cardboard box! We left the crater at about 12.15pm and set out on the long, long journey to Arusha, passing Lake Manyara with a marvellous view over the Eastern branch of the Rift Valley. We dropped Peta off at about 3.45 when again we had a comfort stop and a welcome iced coffee. Once through Arusha, we arrived at Kia Lodge at about 5pm ready for a shower and change and transfer to the airport at 6.20pm. The check in was fairly swift although bizarre with the duty free shop apparently available to all. The flight was good but long.

Sunday, 19th October

The transfer at Amsterdam was good except for a panic with the duty free which all turned out all right in the end! Back at Leeds/Bradford airport ten minutes ahead of time. It was good to see David and Janet Hadjioannou waiting there for us.

+Stephen Platten, 19.10.08