

The Waterhole – a place of Solitude in a sea of discontent

Number One

From Chris McClelland in Africa The Riverine Grazier 5th April

The parting of ways of travelling companions at the close of an intimate journey is very much a sad and final moment as individuals return home to distant destinations to become mere memories.

However, when Margie and I and brother Stuart left the group at Jo'burg airport, it was comforting to know that the exhilarating adventures and experiences of the Africa Calls and Kruger safaris would be returning in force to Hay – a story to be relieved and embellished with enthusiasm.

Leaving Jo'burg we drove northwards crossing the border into Botswana and enjoyed a quiet sundowner on the endless and wide open sweep of the Makgadikgadi Pans. Days after our departure we eventually arrived on the Chobe water front at Kasane to undertake a marvellous sunset boat trip down the river viewing the wonderful diversity of wildlife along its banks.

Later in the evening, while passing through the Chobe Safari Lodge, we by chance ran into three persons walking bandy-legged, smelling strongly of pachyderm.

They had not long returned from riding elephants across the border at Masuwe Lodge in Robert Mugabe territory.

Like Livingstone and Stanley we jubilantly greeted the very familiar faces of Robyn O'Brien, John Blomfield and Margaret Campbell without presumption.

Small world isn't it? It was nice to have an evening meal together at the Lodge and catch up on their travels around Victoria Falls before their final journey home.

Our border crossing into Zimbabwe was time-consuming none-sense of filling in forms and verifying 'care de passage'. Feeling like intruders, we were nevertheless relieved to be eventually waved through the final boundary gate only to be brought to a rude stop by a hastily erected police road block 400 metres up the road.

The match-chewing police officer, a mere child of the bush war, mumbled out of the corner of his mouth that our almost new VW Kombi would be a liability on the roads in Zimbabwe. In accordance with traffic regulations it was not fitted with antiquated scotch tape strips on the rear bumper bar.

"No," he said, the state-of-the art reflectors incorporated in the bumper bar to suit South African regulations were not satisfactory here.

"Yes, officer, Sir – we will rectify the discrepancy at our first garage stop!": Grudgingly he let us through without the customary Bribe.

To be continue.