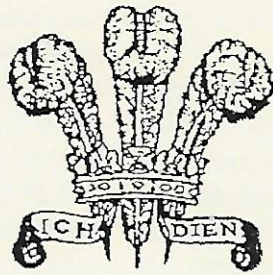


Oxford University
Rifle Club



Kenya Tour
1994

Oxford University Kenya Tour

by A Reynolds (Adj) and D Lowe (Captain)



Before the "off" the touring party displayed leisured calm - about the only time they did.

Having only 8 weeks to organize the tour was perhaps not the best way to make all the preparations for it, but at Easter the invitation from Maj. Peter Okeyo came and the countdown began. Having managed to squeeze in a few T-shirts and the odd change of under-pants (naturally adhering to the medium to dark brown dress regulations!) amongst the 50kg of .22 ammo and the long range targets we were to take, we set off to Heathrow commandeering many parents and their Swedish APCs. Trying to be one step ahead of the game, Andy Adj was sent on ahead of the rest of the team by a few hours on the British Airways flight—to smooth our way through Kenyan customs—not as many people suspected, that OURC was so high ranking these days that the adjutant should travel separately! Fore-warned may very well be fore-armed, however without the help of Charles Gushuru I am sure we could have been stuck at the airport for years.

So, having arrived in one piece, we said our good-byes to one-another, before being whisked away to the homes of unsuspecting Kenyan shooters. Some of us then tried to catch up on lost sleep, others decided to have a look around Nairobi practising the ever essential bargaining positions, especially number 145, and a few of the team went on Safari. As for the night life, I think I can get away with saying that it was wide-ranging: from the high society dinner at the Karen Club, to the "dancin' all night" at Carnivores, and for two of the team, experiencing the delights of having their house broken into. The concept of "fight crime—shoot back" was taken one step further, with "fight crime, shoot first" !

After our two day break, the effects of the flight and the altitude had worn off. But our team medic, Mark Goodwin, was still reporting widespread symptoms of jet-lag, caused not so much by the time difference, as by our slow switch to Africa time. A classic example of this was Captain Delboy's brainwave that we should arrive an hour before we were scheduled to start shooting at the Stoni Athi range at 10am on Thursday 30th June: time to tighten the bedding and all that.

This proved to be one of many *faux pas* that the Laurel and Hardy (Capt/Adj.) duo managed to come up with. Having left Nairobi, bleary-eyed, we careered across the Kenyan countryside until we reached the wilderness that is Stoni Athi, to find, well, not a lot.

Seeing that we were going to have time on our hands, until the shooting got under way, the captain and adj. took the opportunity to inspect the field. It was, needless to say, stony.

Gradually as the day wore on, people began to arrive and by lunchtime it looked that we might actually start; so we had a break for lunch—not wanting to rush into anything. After a truly unsurpassable couple of hours at the Small World Country Club, the international match got into full swing around 4pm — and as the last shots at long range were fired the sun slipped below the distant horizon and our first day was over, or was it. To spend a night under the stars listening to the gentle chirping of the Kenyan wildlife *al fresco* would have sufficed, I'm sure—but we were grateful to the officers who gave up their beds when it was noticed that there was a distinct shortage in the tent department.

The next day, Friday 1st July, was the first day of the 56th Kenyan Open Target Rifle Meeting. This began three days of early mornings and much lugging around of kit. Luckily the range was adjacent to where we eventually set up camp. So you could fall out of bed five minutes before a detail and arrive in plenty time. Taking a leaf out of the new NRA rules on range safety, you were not able to set up on the point until about two minutes before the time that the detail was due to start. This ensured that there was a mad dash to get ready and then ...well let's just say that the phrase "hurry up and wait" was bantered around after this little exercise. The other benefit from having the range so close to where we were staying was that the loos weren't too far away. Although having said that, there were times when even two steps seemed to be a million miles! Whilst on the subject of toiletry, VIP will never mean the same again!!

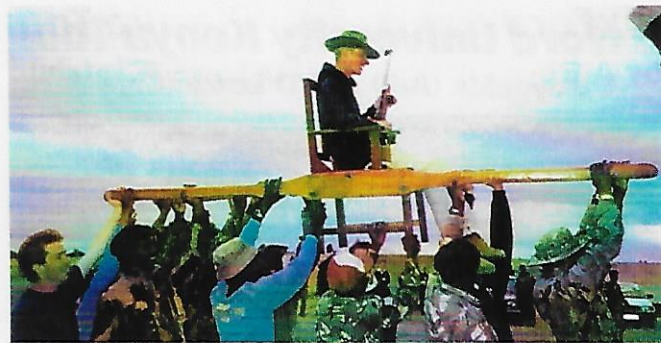
As for the shooting, we were astounded by how well everything went. It was slightly frustrating to have lost the international match by a point, but looking back, it was our first shoot in Kenya, and it was a prelude to three days of excellent shooting with Oxford enjoying dizzy heights – and I'm not just talking about being 5000' above sea level.



Alex Pilgrim at Stoni Athi – no trees to give unwanted turbulence – or shade.

The team won the Staff Officers Cup and came second in several other team competitions that ran concurrently with the individual competitions. Nick Mace (Queen Elizabeth Coll. & Pembroke) and JT Miller (Charterhouse & Pembroke) came second and third respectively in the Elected Members Cup. Andrew Reynolds (RGS Guildford & St Johns) and Lucy Summers (Bradfield & St Hildas) came second and third in the Stuart Wortley Trophy and Lucy went on to become overall Ladies Champion. Matt Charlton (RGS Guildford & Brasenose) came second in the AO Roberts Memorial Cup and Derek Lowe (RGS Guildford & Merton) in the Drummond Trophy. Nick Mace also came second in the Universities Cup and third in the Grand Aggregate with 589.60 ex 600.

In the Championship of Kenya (Kenya's equivalent of Queen's) the course of fire comprised 2 & 7 at 200m, 500m and 600m; 2 & 10 at 300m, 500m and 600m and 2 & 15 at 800m and two shoots at 900m. Unlike the Queen's, the stage 1 score was carried forward as well. After the first shoot at 900m, the top 24 were announced and they competed in the final. Six of the finalists were from Oxford—James Carswell (Mill Hill & University), Matt Charlton, Lucy Summers, Derek Lowe, Andrew Reynolds, Nicholas Mace. Four points down, lying in second place, Andrew Reynolds fired 70.3, scoring 455.43 and clinched the title by two points ahead of Benson Matetai (Kenya) and Derek Lowe.



Doesn't matter where it is, that first ride in a chair is something else – Andy Reynolds enjoys!

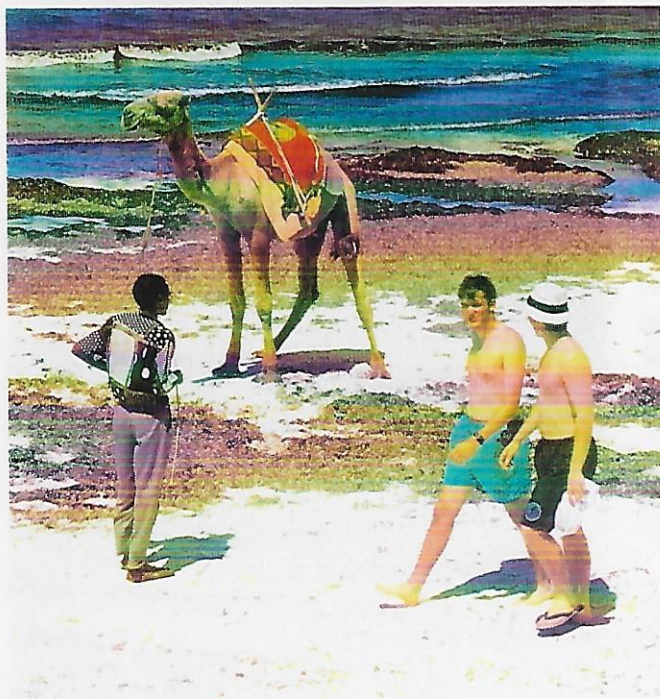
After packing all our gear hurriedly and surviving extensive celebrations a very hung-over Oxford team was woken before dawn to load up our team van and hit the road. Next stop the beach, 500km away—how simple. After an hour and a half's driving we were back where we started from, having had a slight detour to get petrol. So surely now everything would be OK?? But no!

We did plan to take things slowly, but taking three hours over lunch might have been stretching things just a little, regardless of how beautiful Voi Safari Lodge was. The time was 4pm and dusk was around 6.30. Then the event happened that the captain had feared all along: we finally came a cropper by being run off the road. That in itself is not much of a problem, the problem was the hissing sound that then ensued. Yes we had a flat. By the time the team had got their cameras out, not only had the tyre gone as flat as a pancake, but we now had an audience.

With much coaxing we managed to lift the bus up and fit the spare. We were on our way as the sun set behind the distant mountains, all was quiet in the bus. Not through tiredness or awe at the breathtaking scenery. No—it was through the certainty that exuded from everyone that our spare was about to give up the ghost. So with a "psss" from the tyre every now and then we wound our way to Mombasa. There we found that our tyre pressures were variously 18, 24, 34 and 42psi: not a good combination in any order when the minibus is overloaded and doing more than 50mph down a bumpy road. With a few adjustments and patching up the torn tyre we set off again, heading North to Watamu. The roads had not been too bad up to then, but now they were beyond belief. It had been printed in the national newspapers that Japanese tourists were mistaking the pot holes in the road for the Ngorongoro Crater. They were huge. So two hours of slalom driving then followed before we reached the blissful Hemingways. We arrived at

10pm, 16 hours after leaving Stoni Athi, to see our tyre finally split and melt into the sand.

Hemingways was like another world— peaceful with a beach that stretched for miles and food that would rival most top restaurants mixed with excel



*Exciting opportunities were passed up!
"Yes, I know the bus's tyres are naff, and no, I am not going to make him an offer."*

lent weather and an ambient temperature of 85° + . We had a well deserved rest there before our return journey. It certainly was not as bad as the journey down to the coast—at least the hour we were towed didn't use any petrol. Our Chinese driver didn't know any English or Swahili, so conversation lagged a bit in his cab: "You English?" "Yes..." 90 second pause... "You English?" "Yes, ...still", and so on. We arrived at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport after some spectacular driving by Alex Pilgrim just in time for flights home.

Whilst we can be nothing but grateful to our drivers, I'm afraid they don't escape having a little fun poked at them. Memorable moments surely have to be when Alex Pilgrim engaged fourth gear in trying to go backwards; she then lifted the clutch while trying to increase revs using the brake pedal—funnily enough the van stalled, three times. This rates quite highly, along with Matty C's 'the hand-brake feels very hot', having realized that for the past 100 miles we had been driving with it on. Thanks to them and Tamsin O'Connell for putting up with the back seat drivers.

Thanks to Peter Okeyo for all his organizing; Brian and Shelagh Hawkins, Parminder Saimbi, Guru Gbaley and his brother and Bruce Stark for accommodating the Oxford team. Thanks also to John de Havilland of the Lovell and Green Trust, the Royal Grammar School Guildford Parents' Association, Merton and other Oxford Colleges for their financial support.

In conclusion the team would like to recommend Kenya and in particular the Kenyan Open Championship to any team thinking of going. The Kenyan team's friendly sportsmanship makes them rightly popular at Bisley and the generosity of the hospitality and welcome on their home ground will not soon be forgotten: we have yet to hear of anyone else using helicopters to arrange their guests' accommodation! There were times when things didn't run as smoothly as they do here in the UK, but I think that we enjoy a pretty pampered time here and sometimes things are taken for granted. The most important point about Kenya was that everyone's main objective was to enjoy the sport and have a good time (something that is often overlooked at Bisley and the DCRA meeting) and both hosts and guests succeeded in this. The weather was ideal for shooting — no rain and a temperature of low seventies made a change from the unbearable temperatures we can get here. Beware the altitude and light though: 900m at 5000ft is a long way from 1000yds at Bisley; and Stickledown at 7pm is not a patch on Stoni at 6pm!

Oxford's next major tour will hopefully be to Southern Africa in 1996, although with a Guernsey man on the team a quick week-away might be on the cards some time. Thanks again to all the team for putting up with being cajoled by the Management and to our Kenyan rafiki—Kwa heri ya kuanana !



Memories are made of this - or a close approximation

