

Daughter Eileen wrote to me in October, profusely apologetic over the lighthearted manner in which she had dismissed an affliction that had which dominated my life last year. I quote:

“How are your piles? Have they gone yet? I was very unsympathetic when you announced that you had them, I shall not laugh again. They did not tell me that one of the side-effects of childbirth was compaction of poo and piles, I'm having an awful time down there especially as I also have stitches and the worst bruises I have ever had in my life. What a mess.”

“Andrew is grumpy (though apparently not as grumpy as Andrew no. 1 at that age) but fine. He is growing fast, increased in weight from 6,11 to 7,11 last Wednesday.”

Which note was the first written confirmation that I had been safely presented with a Grandson, also called Andrew, on October 7th. The email photos which the proud father, Dominic sent within hours showed the dominance of D's Celtic genes; Andrew is the first to be born into the Clegg family for sixty years that has not inherited my father's nose. Looks like red hair as well but the first lot, as I recall, drops out.

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This year I left Dar to come back to do a two year job in the Ministry of Education in Namibia. If you make your living wandering around Africa, you get quite used to making good friendships and then suddenly parting, but it is never easy and it always involves much meditation on what is best. By coincidence, shortly before I travelled, I accidentally discovered, on the internet, this poem that Robert Frost wrote some 70 years ago.

The Road Not Taken

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

May Christmas and the New Year make all the difference to you.

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Clegg News - 1999

The Great Caldron Mountains, as mountains go, are newcomers. They date from some twenty million years or so ago when a large part of what is now Kenya was forcing its way below the Maasai Steppe of northern Tanzania. The Caldron volcanoes formed as natural safety valves for the release of the frictional energy of these colliding land masses. Only one is still active, the sacred Ol Doinyo Lengai to the west. To the East is the highest mountain in Africa, the largest single mountain in the World, White Mountain or Kilima Njaro, whose permanently snow-capped peak floats lightly above the clouds.

Next to Kilimanjaro is the dark, steep Meru. The last great eruption blew out the north side of its caldera sending the crater lake crashing down the valley. You can now walk into the side of the mountain now and look up to the eagles circling around the crater edge a kilometre, or so, vertically above. There is a new crater in the middle, a small burst pimple; dormant but not extinct. In early January, I decided it would be quite nice to climb Meru.

Before you can climb Meru you have to get to it, and to get there quickly you fly. It was a new aeroplane, they told us reassuringly, as they had crashed the old one last September landing at Dar airport. No survivors they said. This one had 14 seats and one engine. But it was a big turboprop engine. I sat behind the pilot who took it quickly up to 13000 feet, switched to autopilot, swivelled ninety degrees in his seat, took out the Koran and prayed. Ramadan. Thank Allah for autopilots.

The copilot fortunately was a non-muslim. He was in fact a sixteenish-year-old Australian with trousers longer and wider than was required by his legs, (like my son Dan used to wear before his mobile phone phase), and he took us down into Arusha where we were met by a representative of Bobby Tours who took

us straight to a souvenir place to spend a lot of money. The mountain, he explained, would wait. We shared a coffee

He then took us to meet Mustaq, the patron of Bobby tours, who took us into a darkened back room, offered us half a coconut, and took our money off us. Outside he introduced us to Goddess, our chief porter and cook. At this point I realised my first error of protocol; I had nothing for the porters to carry (except food which was all taken care of). I had thought that one slept in ones boots. My companions were two World bankers, an economist and an investment adviser. Would they, I wondered, be sleeping in their boots? At the park gate we met all the other porters and the park guide called Augustine with his gun which was needed, he explained, to deal with marauding buffalo. The luggage was quickly assembled and Goddess raised one of the food boxes onto his head and set off up the hill in his flip-flops.

There was a little dustbin outside the gatehouse. It had a typewritten label stuck carefully to it with selotape. 'Big dustbin' it said. Some of the trees on the way up were also labelled but their Latin name was used. Linneus, evidently, had never been called upon to name dustbins (*Calathus magnus quisquiliarum*).

The path was at first dark and wet with tall evergreen trees set about with many mosses and long strings of Usnea, thriving in the pure moist air, that Goddess harvested to be used later as dishcloth, panscrub and tea towel. The clearings were full of the wild relatives of the English herbaceous border, Back-Eyed Susie - one, a beautiful vermilion steaked with white veins - climbed up the Red Hot Pokers and the Rose of Sharon. Overhead were 20m examples of that ugly tree with Ash-like leaves and hairy branches

that I recall grew next to the toolshed of my childhood.. Enjoying all, the big black and white Kilimanjaro swallowtail. Underfoot were old elephant droppings; but it was the dry season and they were all down in the valleys. Sadly gone for good were the days when the black Rhino wandered this Eden; so much has happened in Africa in the last twenty years. But the most dangerous of all, the Buffalo, remained, and the droppings were fresh. We had spotted some grazing the short sweet grass near the gate, looking like a herd of over-size Aberdeen Angus waiting to be milked.

We arrived at the first hut in time for an early supper for which my comrades changed and I undid my boots. We sat down to Goddess's hor d'oeuvres (popcorn), and a beer which they were selling at a markup of 500%. I began to get cold.

'What you need', the man at Taunton Leisure had said, 'is polypropylene underwear'. Now, I'm not an expert in underwear but I had thought that polypropylene was what drainpipes were made of and I had a feeling that this might not be all that practical. However at immense expense, I bought some, and I now decided to try them out having not, of course, brought any pyjamas. I need not have feared; some enterprising Norwegian had had the idea to shrink the drainpipes to microscopic size and then knit them into panties. They were astonishingly warm without being sweaty and I slept wonderfully.

The second hut, a few hours walk away, was just under the peak called Little Meru which I scrambled up. At the top and the clouds suddenly parted to reveal spread out below, the vast grassland of the Maasai Steppes. For those who enjoy looking down from a great height upon landscapes, totally and utterly devoid of any interesting feature whatever the view of the Maasai Steppes from atop Little Meru, cannot be beaten. Up there I met a group of Austrians from a climbing club, one

of whom was a kidney transplanter from South Africa, currently implanting Viennese kidneys but who was planning next year to do a bit around Leicester.

It was full moon. Later that evening the cloud over Kilimanjaro dropped a little revealing the breathtaking moonlit snow-covered peak floating free in the upper atmosphere. But the enjoyment allowed was brief; bed at seven they ordered. The following morning they would get us up at 1am for a 2am start and so we must sleep in our boots and pack everything we needed before dark.

Meru has two advantages over Kilimanjaro. The first is that from the top, in the pristine dawn, you have the most spectacular view of Kilimanjaro which is much more interesting to behold than, by all accounts, to climb. The second is that Meru is rugged and fierce place with new and spectacular views at every turn. The summit is the remaining bit of rim of the volcano which you reach by traversing the fine volcanic ash which blows in the wind and plugs up all your exposed orifices. At the top there is a little book in which you can write some appropriate aphorism. You get to the top, write an appropriate aphorism in the book set there for the purpose, look down vertically into the pimple crater a kilometre below you, photograph the sun coming up behind Kilimanjaro and then you come down for breakfast.

Below the second hut it soon became obvious as collective knees and thighs started giving up that we were not going to make the gate by 5pm and neither, it turned out, were the Austrian party, because one of them had got stuck on the way down with altitude sickness. No problem, everyone said, they will send vehicles up to the first hut to collect us, all seventeen of us. Now, 17, I began to realise was, in Tanzanian terms, only one pickup full. I noticed Goddess had done the same calculation and was setting off on foot.

'happy, clean and sober' environment. Although I sense a slight contradiction in terms in these aims, I will go along with them as long as nobody bothers me. The only remnant of real Africa that I detected here were the cats, which sat meekly in their windows all day, and then at night came out to indulge in the kind of normal nocturnal activities that normal cats indulge in at night.

The 'Body Corporate of Eagle Rock' through its agent, the body corpulent of Erna who lives six doors down at number 53, have just given me the minutes of its latest AGM in which I read that all this feline nocturnal indulgence has proved too much for the collective sensibilities of Eagle Rock. A decree has come forth from the Body Corporate that every cat should be spayed or castrated and the 'neutering certificates must be handed in before the end of November'. Erna explained carefully that the neutering ruling did not apply to me as I didn't have a cat. I thanked her for her consideration.

So the glorious nights in Eagle Rock have fallen silent. The cats still come out but now they sit quietly outside my window amid the trees around the little stream that flows every ten years. They eye each other from a distance of ten feet or so, with a *recherches du temps perdu* look in their eyes, knowing they ought to be doing something but not knowing quite what. A far cry from my Dar ceiling.

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There is a farm about an hour from Windhoek in the Khomas Hochland which has a few camping places around its dam. In November I went there with Mike who runs the sister Project at the University.

'Don't worry about the baboon, she just needs a hug', said Marissa, the farmer's wife. She was right. Until you have looked in the eyes of an unhugged baboon you have not seen real

misery. So, of course, I obliged. Then she (the baboon) gently raised Mike's trouser leg in order to rid his hairier parts of noisome ticks and fleas. Her rather too close together eyes smiled perfect happiness. Her mother, Marissa was a rather angelic Afrikaner and the need for frequent hugs had apparently developed after she (the Afrikaner) had produced twins. This kind of activity always produces a bit of jealousy on the part of the older children and this is especially so, it seems, if your older one is a baboon.

Another of the children was a springbok who was having teenage problems. She had just come into season and was looking for a sensitive fellow springbok. To her, of course, fellow springboks were two-legged creatures without fur, (except for a bit at the top) and she wandered slowly around the camping places trying to attract some interest. There was no expression at all in her eyes. As their purpose was not to attracting hugs, but to spot things that might want to come along and make a meal of you, it was probably not surprising. You don't need expressive eyes for that.

Then there was the Rottweiler, a large dark brown saliver-making machine that put its paws on your shoulder and deposited affectionate globs of it all over your face. We felt truly loved. But we were especially loved by the little dog with the kink in its tail. Mike said it was part Jack Russell. You can always tell a Jack Russell, he explained, because it only used three of its legs; the fourth was a spare. In Africa, it is usual to have two spares and I wondered briefly why African Jack Russells have not evolved a fifth leg. Mike was right though, it ran three-leggedly around the camp site cleaning up our braais. Then it slept contentedly in a warm corner under our fireplace until it was time for sunrise with meusli and yoghurt.

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they are a sort of old branch gray in colour) but because the inside of their mouth is black. Which means that once you have made a positive identification it is usually too late.

So I potter vigorously around the hot forest for about an hour and then try to swallow at least one beer before my pulse has dropped below 150 so it quickly reaches the more inaccessible parts. Then I shower and fall asleep. Ans and Kick wake me up when they think it is time for me to be fed. Now I've moved to Namibia I've found a hill but not a Pugu.

Postscript. Here in Namibia, to my concern, BBC reception fades to nothing about 15 minutes before Alastair Cooke. This led to the discovery of http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/letter_from_america/default.stm which allows me to phone up for the latest Letter whenever I want. Streamed audio, another 'how did we manage before...' invention.

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Another thing I miss here in Windhoek is the music that I did in Dar. We did two concerts a year in the beautiful old (well, 1890s) Lutheran Church in the Centre of Dar which had exceptionally good acoustics that always brought the best out of the choir. But we did not only perform in church. May 7th was Schuman Day, the European National Day which is vigorously celebrated all over the world except in Europe. The significance of Schuman Day 1999 was that it was my last gig in Dar. Over the years the choir has gradually built up its reputation as a performer of National Anthems and so we are in demand for the standard embassy functions in which ambassadors give long unmemorable speeches about what a wonderful place Tanzania is, and then some minister replies with a few words delivering the government's Search and Replace speech toasting the leader of the country on which ever ambassadorial soil he happened to be standing. After each event we sing the ap-

propriate anthem.

This means, of course, we can do the Tanzanian one with our eyes closed (which, interestingly, makes no difference to the extent to which I have control over the proceedings). It is called 'Mungu ibariki Afrika', which is Kiswahili for 'Nkosi sikel' Afrika'. This is always done first and is followed by a European one which usually has some twenty seven verses. But we sing the condensed PC version.

But E-day brought a whole lot of problems. One, of course, was that the guest's speechmakers had obviously had some difficulty with the search and replace exercise from the week before (April 30th - Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands) as you may imagine if you recall events in Strasbourg in April of this year. The minister, having some misgivings, in the New Tanzania, of proposing the health of someone dismissed on corruption charges, was commendably up-front about the whole thing and told us all he had really no clue who we should drink to, so we could choose for ourselves.

Our anthem problems, however, began much earlier when the EU man in Dar, a genial Great Dane called Christiansen, approached us to do the European one. We said we didn't have either the words or the music so they got onto the EU Flags and Anthems Directorate who said they didn't either, but they would fax a few pages of Beethoven instead. I tried the EU Flags and Anthems web site and downloaded the real thing as arranged and performed by Herbert von Karajan. To no avail; the sound file, of course, was in some kind of euro format that was unreadable by any software available anywhere else. And the anthem and flag site, of course, had neither the words nor the music for the anthem. (Neither did it have a picture of the flag, just an explanation that it had twelve stars on it, one for each of the fifteen nations of the EU)

At our first practice it was pretty obvious that the words we had got from Brussels did not fit the music we had got from Beethoven (not in any of the three languages they had provided). This is because, although the words were genuine Schiller, half of them (the bit beginning 'Seid umschlungen, Millionen'), Beethoven had set to a totally different tune. Long discussions with Brussels (has anyone ever had a short one?) yielded no further advice so we took unilateral action and reconstructed Schiller to fit the Beethoven, not by writing new words but by shifting round a few lines here and there to alter the scanning. The general view of the choir (who it has to be said are mainly Dutch and Danish) was that the Schiller was improved in the process. I took the neutral view that any change to the Schiller would probably be an improvement, particularly if it shortened it.

Nobody noticed of course. And I was presented with a nice key ring containing a suspended Euro as its centrepiece. The Euro is large heavy coin with a map of EuroEurope on it; this means that it lacks the coastline of Norway, Europe's most distinguishing feature, has a hole in the middle where Switzerland ought to be, and has the island of mainland Greece at the bottom.

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I also miss my reptiles and insects. I had many large cockroaches in my house in Dar and I came to recognise some individually; particularly the one that had lost an antenna (this is serious for a cockroach because you sense where you are going by rubbing your antenna against the wall and so this little friendly one was sentenced to life in a perpetual one-way-street). I also had many gekkos in my house; particularly memorable was a nice friendly little one who lived under my microwave and popped out every time I started cooking something to nod his head up and down like an Indian shopkeeper. In April, just after

the big rains have started, they tend to congregate on the living room ceiling mainly for the purpose of copulation. If you do it hanging upside down by your toenails it is important to have a certain respect for gravity, something of which most gekkos seem largely ignorant. The regular plop sound of falling copulating gekkos is a cherished memory of Tanzania.

What I don't miss, however, is the mobile phone. I had a mobile simply because the unmobile ones didn't work too well. I once went to get a new battery for it and the petite and nubile young lady behind the counter found me just what I wanted, for which I paid, under (rather pathetic) protest, the equivalent of 30 pounds, and then, as I was leaving, told me quietly that if I came back sometime next week she would give me something nice, free. An interesting kind of loss leader that, even in Tanzania, I had not come across before.

Naturally, I thought little more of it.

Until I tried to charge up the battery. I gave it 12 hours and then unplugged it. Five minutes later the phone beeped and instructed me to recharge the battery. I gave it another few hours but still it did not work. So (with the loss leader returning unasked to my mind) I took it back to the shop. The shop was full of young men who desperately needed a mobile as a fashion accessory but could not quite afford it, and were taking aeons to make up their minds. I quickly prepared myself psychologically for the Tanzania Wait.

But it was unnecessary. 'Knew you would call' she said with the Tanzania melting smile, handing me another battery. She did a neat line in used batteries. I did not ask her what proportion of customers failed to return. Bit of a let-down though.

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The guide books are silent on what you should do when you wake up to realise that hippopotamus is chewing grass about a foot from your left ear. He (I assume it was a he though they seem surprisingly difficult to sex) and I were separated by tent material but I do not recall whether the information booklet that came with the tent mentioned whether it was hippo-proof. Following a long African tradition, however, I did nothing.

I had become aware that he was around; several hours ago as I was going to sleep he had come out of the water at the other end of the campsite (which is one of the world's finest, a few kilometres on the Zambian side of Victoria Falls) had begun grazing the very short grass, which he obviously found preferable to the water hyacinths that filled his river. I noticed that he was wearing a garland of water hyacinths over his bottom. I was lulled to sleep by the reassuring munching noise.

By 3am, however, after five hours munching, he had reached me. A light behind him projected a shadow of his head on the tent fabric which got slowly bigger and bigger as he got closer. Until you have been within a few inches of a hippo's head you have no idea how enormous it is. By this time I could not only hear the regular munching but also the bubbling noises of the internal fermentation and the periodic hissing sound of methane release valve at the back. As these were all rather comforting sounds my main worry was simply whether he had actually seen my small tent, and what it might be like being underneath two tonnes of fermenting farting hippo. In the event he just placed a back foot briefly on the corner where my hand was. Outside, six inches from my nose, was an immense leg with three toes, (like that bit in the kitchen in Jurassic Park). Realising I was at the wrong end of its alimentary canal, I judiciously closed the zip, having had previous experience of the efficient muck spreading of a whirring hippo tail. He munched on.

My neighbour, I then noticed, had been sitting outside his tent watching it all. My neighbour was a mercenary turned pastor who was in Zambia, he explained, because he had developed such a deep affection for the Zambians when he was here killing them in the name of Smith's UDI, that he had now returned to convert them.

In May I packed all my Dar stuff into the Landrover and drove south west to a new contract in Windhoek. Having paid my last, and nineteenth, speeding fine on the road to Iringa I finally left Tanzania for Zambia and the potholes of the Great North Road. It was on this journey that I met the hippo and it would not have happened had I not been forced back to Livingstone having been refused entry into Botswana by a customs officer who was not interested in exercising the discretion he had, to let me import my landrover into the country free pending the completion of customs details later. At least he was not interested in doing so without some reward, but I was reluctant to let the proceedings get as far as the quiet transaction in the back room. So I returned to Livingstone and the following day drove to Katima Mulilo on the north bank of the Zambezi along a road which had been at one time tarred but now was so bad they had started to grade it. A metaphor for development I thought. At a conference in Swaziland last year, a UDSM friend, Funja Osaki, and I, presented a paper about carefully tarred educational projects (mainly DfID) that were now only evident after the occasional regrading.

So I have exchanged the fecund wilderness of my lively bit of UDSM campus for a sanitised corner of Southern Africa called Eagle Rock. It is a community of small town houses surrounded by a big wall topped with a lot of wires carrying a high voltage. It is a place dedicated to maintaining, within its walls, a

I asked the guide if I could join him and walk down to the gate which was only, I reckoned, a brisk 90 minutes away. No he explained; Goddess knew how not to get trampled by a buffalo and I didn't. So Goddess walked in comfort and I joined the sixteen. It started to rain.

The journey from the hut to the gate takes an hour in a landrover going pretty fast over the rocks, through the dust and under the overhanging trees. And they did only send one; a landrover pickup 17 stander. One hour of bumps squashed immovably between a metal bar and a kidney transplanter was a memorable, if not wholly satisfying end to the climb. At the gate Goddess was smiling, relaxed, untrampled, on the grass, waiting for us.

I never did find out what they put in the Big Dustbin.

Age brings with it the comfort of routines, though in Africa, routines are seldom routine. Nevertheless Sundays in Dar gradually became a routine day. Sundays start with Alastair Cooke, whose every Letter from America is more fascinating than the last - not bad considering he has been broadcasting them each week now for over fifty years (since he was forty). On February 7th, he was celebrating the contribution to civilisation of Samuel Morse, painter, born over two Centuries ago now, in America and who, in common with so many of his age, developed private amateur enthusiasms for particular sciences or technologies often to the great benefit of his fellow men. Morse gave us his code and, by demonstrating that it was possible to transmit instantaneously, the message 'What hath God wrought?' from Baltimore to New York, gave birth to the information age.

The Morse code officially ceased to be used in radio communication that week.

Then I go to Pugu. It is on the edge of one of the last little bits of ancient coastal rain forest that has not been burnt down to create poor bare earth for a few straggling cassava and bananas, not for the poor and needy of Pugu village, but as Shambas for the landcruiser-driving senior government officers who are seeking to maintain links with the soil they no longer need.

I go to a restaurant kind of a place built and run by Ans and Kick, a Dutch couple who have put down roots here a little too deeply. It is made mainly out of bamboo and coconut palm leaves and the first thing everyone does when they get there is remove most of their clothes. Most just swim and lie around and change nappies. I have found, rather oddly, that I can run in the hills, something I have always wanted to do but until now have never been able. I had to be content to watch, enviously, the crowds doing it all the time when I lived up in Swaledale. So I remove my clothes, along with everyone else but then put on running stuff and off I go. Nobody takes any notice. I'm just another oddity about the place.

There are leopards in the hills, and pythons and mambas. I have not seen the leopard but one has been seen near the restaurant and I am sure it has seen me. I have not seen a mamba specifically but I hear a lot of - and see a few - generic snakes each run. I'm not too worried about pythons as they tend to prefer babies of which there is a regular supply around Pugu. Leopards are generally regarded, along with buffalo, as the most dangerous to humans of all the African animals. Although not very big, they are apparently expert disembowellers which they do before you notice. I am relying on the received wisdom that they don't usually do any serious disembowelling unless they are cornered or injured. Mambas worry me though because I have only ever heard of one person who has survived a mamba bite. They are called black mambas not because they are black (in fact