

## A Letter from Africa Feb 2013

We have lots to talk about including The Blade Runner, Mamphela Ramphela and AFCON plus all the other happenings in sunny South Africa.

But I would like to start with a **Draft from the Past**.  
Let us turn the clocks back to 1958!



The place is Rothsay on the island of Bute. We see here 4 senior scouts from the 20<sup>th</sup> North London group who were camping in Scotland. The four are Terry Wyatt, me, Frank Callaghan and Keith Gray. The rest of the scouts were at the camp in Tighnabruaich in the Kyles of Bute.

We had rowed over to Bute to have a look around and made our way to Rothsay. We were close to the better known island of Kintyre, made famous by Paul McCartney.

We reached the Kyles via a long train ride to Glasgow and then by tram to the ferry point on the Clyde.

I show a picture of a tram from that time and the interesting memory I have of it was that the driver had to stop the tram at one point and then place a metal rod into the lines so that the tram could turn a corner.



The journey was to take a different turn however, as we boarded the wonderful paddle steamer called the Jeanie Deans. She was built in 1931 and was a mine sweeper during the war. She was eventually moved to the Thames but was broken up in 1967.

The Jeanie Deans took us out of the Clyde and glided us through gentle waters offering

spectacular views of the area. This whole journey was so much part of a bygone era that links up with the charming appeal of steam trains when life was that much slower.

We arrived at Tighnabruaich - Gaelic for "House on the Hill", being our splendid base for the next two weeks.



Well that was all very interesting?

By the way, as an Islington lad from Tufnell Park I discovered that the name originates from around 1005 and was the old Saxon word Giseldene meaning Gisla's Hill.

Tufnell Park was named after William Tufnell in 1753 and this explains the gate posts that still survive in Tufnell Park Road, being the entrance to the Manor House.

A change of subject and back to the present and South Africa.

**Politics.** (do we really have to? Sorry but yes. There is no escape from it in SA).

We had the very forgettable State of the Nation address the other day but the big news is of a new player in the form of **Dr. Mamphela Ramphele**.

She has excellent credentials and is well respected, coming out of the black consciousness movement of Steve Biko.

She has launched a new political platform and is now canvassing support with a view to forming a formal political party that will contest the elections in 2014. As she says, the country cannot afford another 5 years of misrule, corruption and incompetence (my words but her meaning).

Her condemnation of the way the ANC governs is not new as we have all been saying it for some years. The trick is to know how to change matters.

The ANC enjoys huge support from the poor and badly educated rural communities and Mamphela will have to capture a chunk of this somehow. She is a very articulate and intellectual person and one wonders if this demeanour will resonate with the masses.

Key will be the people and resources she can muster around her which may even be in the form of other parties aligning themselves in some way with her movement which is called, in English, "Build".



Another **Draft from the Past** picture of 1996.

This shows the Seller family from Jhb plus me and Melanie with Bev taking the shot.

We have just trekked across the sand dunes to reach the Dias Cross. Bartholomew (we are on first name terms) sailed this way in 1488 and the cross at Kwaihoek marks the most easterly spot of his African journey.

We are all smiling but have still to undertake the return hike over the dunes! In the background can be seen the route we need to take.

Only serves to prove that there is no gain without some pain.

The **AFCON** cup has come and gone and a lot of people did not notice. They were giving tickets away outside our stadium but still only managed to half fill the stadium. I think this was in part due to the fact that those receiving free tickets then went off to try and sell them.

The playing surfaces of some grounds have deteriorated badly since 2010 and the usual ticketing process shambles occurred with little or late marketing of the event. I did not attempt to attend as my ears and mind would not be able to handle a repeat of the WC when both were blasted by the constant din of the Vuvuzelas. Nigeria won.

**The Blade Runner, Oscar Pistorius.**

Of course we should highlight local PE girl Reeva Steenkamp, as she was the victim of this shooting. The bail hearing is due for completion today but what seems clear is that an unlawful killing has taken place.

This might be a pre-meditated crime or a tragic accident involving the death of someone who did not pose a direct threat to one's own life. Both, I think, are crimes.

I watch CNN, SKY and BBC etc. newscasts and know that this has attracted global interest where Pistorius is seen as an icon figure.

But the speed and political attention applied by the SA authorities needs a comment or two.

WE have had a series of crimes against women and children and the outcry in South Africa reached fever pitch with the horrendous gang rape, mutilation and murder of a 17 year old girl. It is common to read of rapes involving children of 3 years to women of 90 years. The Government was under pressure to show that they took this matter seriously as the culture of black South Africans is very patriarchal, which affects the thinking of police and other justice members. Flowing from this is the belief by rape victims that they are treated with little respect and that their cases are poorly handled with little or no arrests or convictions actually happening. At this time the Reeve Steenkamp killing occurred and I guess this was the perfect time for the police to show South African's and the World a new and serious face to crimes against women. In this politically charged atmosphere a fast and enthusiastic case was prepared .It is clear that this was poorly handled by the police (again) with much bungling. It is difficult to see why Pistorius should not receive bail. We will know today or Friday.(R1000000 bail granted). But a crime seems to have been committed and the world will watch, and the new prosecution team must be in top form to avoid being embarrassed once more by the professional and costly defence team. Of course the right to bear arms again makes the front pages in SA as it does in the USA.

**The ANC continues to dismantle SA.** Slowly, brick by brick.

The manifestations of their shocking governance are seen in the mass demonstrations across the country and the killing of people on mines and farms. People, who have nothing, resort to violence as a measure of utter frustration. The mines are seriously looking at downscaling in troubled SA in favour of other countries where the politics, labour laws, red tape etc are more business friendly.

I read/watch/listen to the media and can see the bricks being removed in so many ways. One has sympathy for those who choose to ignore the press, because it only has bad news. But one day they may open a newspaper to see that the house is no longer there! Better, I think, would be to constantly campaign for a new order, before it all blows up in our face.

It is not too late to turn the country back into the wonderful and desirable place it should be.

**At home** here, there has not been too much to report as we did so much in late 2012.

We had a lovely visit from the Browns of Wakefield fame and our regular group of breakfast/lunch eat outers have taken in La Boca and Blue Skies Country House this year so far, with The Coffie Shop in Central next in line.

Bev continues to work out at aquarobics, which is working well and I still have the weekly 18 holes at Walmer Golf Club.

Andrea is still at the same company and Courtney carries on her fine academic results at school plus making netball, swimming and athletics teams and of course being a keen member of the band.

Our dams in PE are at 93.3% which is great and the Rand sits around 13.7/£1.GDP is expected to be about 2.4%. The balance of trade continues to be in a state of unsustainable deficit. Over 100 rhinos have been poached so far this year. The toll fee gantries on the roads built for the 2010 WC have still not been opened as mass objection to the rates and legal challenges delay the process. The Government (ESKOM) tries to raise electricity prices by another 16% pa for 5 years.

The ANC is seeking all ways possible to raise money to pay for the millions of people who receive state hand outs and we have moved from a budget excess to one of deficit as billions of Rands have been "squandered" over the last few years with little to show for it.

Somehow they need to try and calm the waters of a disillusioned population who are, possibly, worse off now economically than under Apartheid.

I will end here and try and gather good news items about South Africa for inclusion next time as the country does have a super other side, although clearly millions have left, despite this, as the balance of pros and cons has shifted.

So from this lovely part of the world we wish you good bye for now.

Please tell us your local news to provide a more international perspective to our own circumstances.

Love Bev and Alan