

A photograph of a dirt road winding through a hilly, scrubby landscape. The road is reddish-brown and appears to be a mix of dirt and gravel. The surrounding vegetation is dense and green, with some trees and bushes. In the background, there are rolling hills and a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN

BY MOTORBIKE

MIKE ANTHONY

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Foreword to my African Adventure	1
1	Dubai to Salalah, Oman, 4 th – 13 th October 2016	3
2	Salalah to Bebera, Somaliland by sea, on to the Ethiopian border then back to Dubai, 14 th – 25 th October 2016	15
3	Dubai, to Iringa, Tanzania, 26 th October – 2 nd November 2016	28
4	Iringa, to Sparkling Waters Resort near Rustenburg, South Africa, 2 nd – 8 th November 2016	42
5	Sparkling Waters to Cape Town then back to Dubai, 8 th – 14 th November 2016	53

EDITOR'S NOTE

*What follows is the contents of a blog that Mike wrote and uploaded during his journey from Dubai to Cape Town by motorbike, in the company of Alex Richter and (in South Africa) his son, Geoff. As a blog, it's written, for the most part in real time; Mike **didn't know what was ahead of him while** he was writing it, which at times was probably just as well.*

*I have added in some emails, text messages, maps and assorted bits and pieces to add a bit of extra colour to the story. The maps are from Google Earth and I have tried to pick up as many places mentioned as possible without the maps becoming too confusing. All photographs were taken by Mike, Alex or Geoff apart from a couple borrowed from the BBC Somali language web page. The article about Thomas Bain is from Wikipedia. **"Circling the Great Karoo" by Nicholas Yell is published by Springbok Press and is available on Amazon.***

FOREWORD TO MY AFRICAN ADVENTURE



It has been suggested that I introduce myself and the others mentioned in the story that follows so here goes.

At the time of writing and making the journey I am a 66-year old civil engineer and diver employed by an international consultancy firm in a site supervision role. Since I was 25 I have been in charge of construction sites in one way or another, either as a contractor or as the supervising engineer; I even worked directly for the Client once. I am married to Margaret and we are parents to Geoff, Richard and Helen. We have six grandchildren so far. I started diving aged 28 in Jeddah and I am still doing that mostly with BSAC 406 in Sharjah but with some works dives as well. The last 20 years have seen me working away from home in the Middle East earning the money to pay for the properties we live in, the university educations and the weddings.

As far as motorcycles are concerned I have had my license 50 years now and currently own four in England, two in Cape Town and one here in Dubai. Bikes have always been my passion and I have usually owned at least one. I used to race vintage Nortons back in my 20's in England; sadly, these all had to go and the racing had to stop when I became a father. Latterly in the Emirates, I started with a fast road bike, a Honda 600 four which was a rocket sledge compared to the old British bikes that I used to ride and was my education into modern machinery. Some wadi bashing was done with this machine but clip-ons and rear sets are not for this sort of riding. So, I graduated to the off-road/on road, GS (in German), type of machine as successfully marketed by BMW for some decades now. The Cagiva mentioned below is similar to this type of machine and has seen quite a bit of action in the wadis and mountain tracks of the UAE and Oman.

Persons mentioned in the blog are Hans with whom I have spent many crazy hours in wadis and mountains and drinking beer. Heike, now back in Germany, is a diver and motorcyclist who used to ride with us and dive with me. She accompanied Americans James and Terry and me on a modified 2,500km Garden Route ride half of which was off-road in South Africa. She also did the ride from UAE to Germany via Iran with Hans and Horst. Billy is an Egyptian living in the Sinai and a long-distance motor cyclist. He recently travelled the length of south and north America all the way to Alaska. In February 2016, he and another biker travelled from Cairo to Cape Town and from his GPS track, I did quite a lot of the planning for this trip. Ian is one of those running the Sharjah Wanderers Diving Club and we dive together. He is also my editor.

As I got older and the various cycles of boom and bust in the construction industry came and went I conceived the idea of riding a bike back to England. I negotiated the time off and in the last days of April 2009 I set off from Sharjah by sea to Iran, then via Turkey and the Balkans into Europe and finally to England. This 9,000km journey on a 2000-model BMW R1200GS was recorded on a website, now lapsed, although I still have the original text and pictures. I recorded all the details and the costs and had a spreadsheet and a file with words of advice for other would be travellers that wanted to do a similar trip. This led to several meetings and advice sessions with various people who went on to do their own journeys. During one of these I met Alex who also did a similar ride back to Eastern Germany in late 2009.

In the event, I did not get laid off in 2009 but have managed to survive until now when I am retiring after 46 years of toil. So, I decided on one last big adventure which you can read about in the following pages. Actually, I am hoping that in my retirement I can do a few more tours, certainly going to Europe and visiting various people who have gone the way of retirement or who have just left the UAE.

Mike Anthony
Dubai, UAE
November 2016

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN BY MOTORBIKE

Chapter 1

Dubai – Muscat – Duqm – Salalah



The Long Way Down

Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Tuesday, October 4, 2016

It's a long story but we are still in Dubai and will set off for Muscat tomorrow.

What started as just me riding the F800gs to Johannesburg and there meeting Geoff for a ride to Cape Town morphed from last Easter time into a substantial rebuild of the 1993 Cagiva with the plan that Alex Richter from Germany would ride this and eventually take it to Germany. Initial plan was just to blueprint the bike and fix a crankcase oil leak. This turned into replace all bearings and seals in the engine and gearbox. New larger 21" front wheel, 18" rear wheel, rear shock, MZ longer travel forks, bigger screen, new ignition parts etc. Whilst the engine was finished earlier the last of the parts did not come until a week last Saturday and so frantic building began then.

Of course, this was happening in a workshop without air-conditioning after a 10-hour shift on site so it was very debilitating. For some reason, late September here is still very humid and in the mid to high 30's.



Making the pannier attachment frames



The Cagiva motor in the flat earlier

Anyway, by last Thursday the motor fired up and on Friday the bike was finished but not tested fully. Friday night Alex flew in from Germany having been the week before in the States. Saturday, we moved the bike to the test station and got it registered. By lunchtime it was to a contractor's workshop and there three of them laboured until half past midnight to install pannier frames. Meanwhile I got the carnet and the Certificate of Tourism organised and braved the heat and humidity in Naif, Deira side, to get a new battery.

Sunday was a public holiday and we spent that in another workshop until 10pm. I ripped the engine out of the Cagiva to repair an oil leak, whilst Alex changed the oil in the BMW. This turned out to be not so simple as the bash plate required re-engineering as a result of my off-roading trips. The watchman wanted to sleep so we adjourned to the Belgian Bar. Yesterday it fired up and sounded to me normal even if the carburetors were a bit off tune so Alex took off down the road and after several laps came back reasonably happy but it was then we saw the oil leak. This time I think from the barrel/base area of the rear pot.



Alex in the workshop of Aqua Diving with the ill-fated Cagiva before we decided to leave it behind

So then we made the decision not to take the Cagiva and after some phone calls and visits we ended up buying a 2014-model, 6,000km, just serviced F800gs Adventure from BMW. Of course, that had to be registered etc so it was about 3pm the next day when we got our hands on it. I shot off to weigh in the Cagiva carnet and get another for the Adventure whilst Alex rode back to the flat to load up. It was gone 5.30pm however before we met at the garage on the Kalba road in a sandstorm. As there was no chance of making Muscat much before midnight we turned around and went back to the flat.

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

Now it is Wednesday morning and for sure we will finally depart this morning!

At Duqm

Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, Oman

Friday, October 7, 2016

We reached Duqm via the coastal route from Muscat yesterday spending the night of the 5th at the villa of Bernd and Kerstin, friends of Alex in Muscat. The trip to Muscat from the UAE was across the border at Jebel Hafit and down Route 21 to Nizwa. I was going to go via the mountains and the Rustaq loop but time was against us. We had rain at Nizwa briefly which was a surprise and then some more when crossing through the Sumail gap. Our hosts were very hospitable and a pleasant evening was spent.

Yesterday we got away by 8am and managed to avoid the traffic and find the new expressway and the loop over the mountain for Quriyat. Then it was a 2-hour run down the coastal road to Sur. We got a complementary coffee at the Sur Beach hotel! Alex was complaining of a headache from his new helmet. This has a liner but with that removed it was too loose.

I reckoned that a Muslim skull cap might fix the problem but instead an Omani cap was purchased which seemed to do the trick. Thereafter the run down the coastal road past the through the many fishing villages to Maseirah Island filling station (and several others) was without incident and to be frank in the later stages when the road cuts inland somewhat boring. Duqm is as confusing as ever especially in the dark trying to find the hotel.

Today we have it all to do to reach Salalah before nightfall so an early start is vital. I certainly do not want to be doing the last part of that winding coastal road in the dark as yesterday.

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

OK that was this morning. We are now at Salalah after almost nine hours in the saddle and have managed to get ourselves into a hotel apartment. These are located on the west side of the city conveniently as it turns out just around the corner from my ex-colleague Syed. Syed took us to the Oasis club at the port for dinner and there we met David from Wetherby who has arranged a meeting for us with a Somali man who is the Agent for the dhows. So fingers crossed for tomorrow.

The run down from Duqm is a single-track road running inland from the coastline and apart from the odd village is pretty much empty of anything being dry, almost featureless stony desert. We pulled in for petrol in the middle of nowhere and consulted the GPS about midday. We saw that the routing turned sharply inland in a further 16km but that there was a connecting road to the coastline. This worked as advertised and turned out to be the road that Hans and I had travelled last February in the opposite direction. This road runs along the shoreline and the mountains immediately adjacent and is very beautiful. Several pics were taken but with cameras, so an upload later.



The Omani hat



The way down to the coast road



Ashkana fishing port

At Salalah (1)

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Saturday, October 8, 2016

After a good night's sleep in our serviced apartment hotel which we have discovered is almost empty of other guests we managed breakfast at the cafe on the floor above. But definitely the B team on duty here, I mean how can you get boiling an egg wrong?

My ex-colleague Syed graciously took us in his car to meet the man at Dhofar Shipping. He seems to be the man to speak to and so we will go back and have a chat with him tomorrow to see what he has discovered about a ship being loaded with cement and a dhow that is loading general cargo. It is a question of where these vessels are going. Last week two dhows went to the island of Socotra. Seems dhows go regularly to Berbera, Bossaso and Mogadishu. The last two are out of the question but Berbera we already considered it being a mere 200km south east of Djibouti. Snag is there are no tarmac roads. Anyway, we wait to see what tomorrow will bring.



*The beach, west end of
Salalah town*

So late morning we adjourned to a mall sumptuously decorated with marble and the usual glitzy shops but with very few people by Dubai standards. A few things were purchased and coffees whilst I struggled with trying to contact Etisalat, my Dubai phone service provider. It looks like they turned off my data roaming. This has never happened before; I have 12MB left and I owe them less than Dh100. But how to contact Etisalat?

Next we headed for the museum and checked the maritime heritage and other historical stuff. This was interesting. I think we saw some frankincense trees in the garden.

And finally, back to the hotel from where we walked to Lebanese restaurant where the food was excellent and the bill came to only Dh70 for the two of us. No beer though! Freshly pressed orange juice was awesome.



*Said Bahamburah of
Dhofar Shipping*

At Salalah (2)

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Sunday, October 9, 2016

Breakfast was a little better this morning, the mango juice is really nice.

We went by bike to Dhofar Shipping and there was the man with good news. The dhow that he was speaking about yesterday is definitely going to Berbera in Somaliland. We meet again at 9am tomorrow and go with him to the port where we will be introduced to the Captain. I gather we do the deal with him directly. About \$100-125 each he reckons. We whiled away an hour or so drinking tea and generally chatting then hit a money changer. We both have dollars but mostly in big notes. So I tried to change \$200 into smaller denominations. He rejected the first two notes that I gave, only new ones he said. I hope that this does not apply everywhere.

We found a café and refueled for Dh11 each. Then it was back to the digs as all locks up at 1pm until 4.30pm here. So back at the ranch we got the maps out and looked at the problem. We started on Day 4 so we were late getting here and likely this dhow will not finish loading until the end of Tuesday. After that it sails for Berbera. We reckon that riding from Berbera via Hargeisa then across the land border heading straight for Addis will just about put us back on the original schedule.

Still at Salalah

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Monday, October 10, 2016

Today we went with Said of Dhofar Shipping to the Port and after exchanging greetings with the Royal Omani Police we went into the port and boarded the dhow. This was being loaded with flour.

Introduced to the Captain the next problem was a translator as he is from Gujarat. Syed came to our rescue again and we gleaned all details necessary for us to survive on the dhow for the next four days on the way to Berbera. It will sail when the loading is finished and we think that this will be by tomorrow morning. So, we await a phone call.

Next we went to the Customs building. But I had not brought the "Trip Tickets" with me so a quick dash back to the hotel procured them and the Customs stamped the top of the second page. The Omanis were not interested in the carnets when we entered Oman but they have stamped the bikes out. Lunch was next at the Oasis Club where we bumped into the ever-helpful David Wilson. It was his advice that led us to Dhofar Shipping who have sorted all the arrangements.



The dhow that will take us to Berbera



Syed and Mike inside Salalah Port

We travelled 30km towards Yemen after leaving the Port and there had a look at a rather asthmatic blowhole where the waves crash against the cliff below and a shower of water comes up. It was not on good form today. It was a lot more energetic when Hans and I passed this way last February.

Next we hit Lulu's hypermarket and bought blankets and pillows and some tinned food which we are going to need in the coming days. We are just back from the city centre and the Dhofar Shipping office again as we had to pay for the port crane to load the bikes plus some admin charges. It was there we met three crazy botanists from the Czech Republic and the university of Brno who are on their way tonight to the island of Socotra. They will be teaching in the schools there assisted by local translators. We hit the Oasis Club again for dinner and adjourned to bed.

Early on Tuesday Morning

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

I just had to go to reception to get them to reactivate the internet, so we are now back on line. If things go according to plan we will be offline for the next four days at least, possibly some days longer as we travel by sea then overland in Somaliland.

We failed to get visas for Somaliland on account of they do not have that many diplomatic missions. Alex almost had one via London but I failed in Dubai. So hopefully they will sell us one upon arrival. After that in theory we should be able to ride to Hargeisa. However, all the posts that I have been able to read talk about tourists coming eastbound from Ethiopia either on the buses or via a hired car. And they end up paying \$20 a day for a soldier to accompany them. So just how this is going to work with us on motorcycles and going westbound we are unsure.

The Czech guys told us of a colleague of theirs on the ground in Ethiopia. She is some way to the south-east of Addis. She has been telling of roads being closed by the army due to conflicts. Meanwhile we await a telephone call to go to the port.

Well there were several phone calls. The first had the dhow 80% loaded and the captain saying that the owner was sending more cargo and there was going to be no room for the bikes. Black depression set in. The next phone call told us to bring the bikes to the port and get them loaded. So we did and they got loaded. We met the owner and he told us no charges. Result! We tied the bikes down and the crew were busy covering everything with tarpaulins. It was at that point a question of whether we were sailing today or tomorrow morning. Next thing in a telephone conversation with the owner we were told that the dhow would be sailing late Thursday as the Captain (another one) was returning from leave in India and would not be here until 4pm Thursday.



Alongside

Thus we are stuffed for the moment. We adjourned to the Oasis Club carrying the bare necessities and had a couple of beers. HMS Daring, a Type-45 destroyer, arrived today so the club is full of Royal Navy chaps. The good news is that an internet search brought up a UK government website showing where the conflict zones are in Ethiopia; they are away from our route.



Bikes being craned on board



Captain Omar Farooque

At Salalah (3)

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Wednesday, October 12, 2016

Yesterday, after the disappointing news that we were stranded here for the next two days we were contemplating what to do whilst sat in the Oasis Club. Our previous saviour, David saw us and offered beds in his place. So it was, we got a lift back into town and are now staying in a very posh villa. David has gone to work. Alex is still sleeping and I am catching up with the news in the Telegraph on-line. Problem is today we have no wheels. But we are not far from the hotel apartments that we were at before, so the cafe is within reach, also Lulu's and perhaps a car hire place.

Later in the day. We went and hired a Pathfinder and took a drive around the hills to the north of the city. Very green up there with many sleek looking cows, fat camels, goats and donkeys just wandering about eating the grasses. The villages look to be quite poor for the most part, no sign of any marble as in the city. But plenty pastoralists camping out and lots of life. We visited a "waterfall" which turned out to be a small rapid in a river. We sat in the pedal boat and watched an egret fishing. After that down to the sea by Taqua and where the river got to sea level where there were more egrets and moorhens in a reed bed. Given that this is for the most part an empty desert country with very little vegetation this river with its valleys and trees and wildlife was truly amazing.



In the hills to the east of Salalah



Local housing



Alex and a frankincense tree



In the hills above Taqua

At Salalah (4)

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

Thursday, October 13, 2016

We have just received instructions from the owner of the dhow to get to the ship by 3pm so, inshallah, we are sailing today. This being the case we will be offline certainly for the next four days until we arrive in Somaliland and for as long as it takes after that go find an internet connection.

Sad to say this invitation did not work either. We managed via the good offices of a colleague of Syed to get to the emigration office inside Gate 1 which is the container terminal. There via helpful translators it became apparent that a paper application presented by the Omani agent of the dhow owners had to be available along with our passports. We called the Captain and he said that he was coming. That did not happen so Alex went in search with our man from the Port. Two Somali guys arrived. One was Yasmin who is the nephew of Mukhtar the dhow owner. Same flash style, decorated Land Cruiser, handmade shirt and 20 Omani Riyal notes in bundles projecting from shirt and trouser pockets.



*Dining at the Crowne Plaza
Wednesday evening, David in
centre*

Yasmin spoke good English. He explained that the new Captain was due at the airport at 5.30 and that the dhow would sail in the morning. Meanwhile his Omani agent - needed for the paperwork - was finished for the day and matters could only start again tomorrow. He took my number and promised to call later in the day. He didn't.

We got a lift back to David's and pulled out Alex's computer and looked at my original planning spreadsheets. If the dhow sails on Friday 14th and takes four days to get there. If we can get from Berbera to Hargeisa in the two days after that and then across the border into Ethiopia. If the reports of civil unrest in that country do not delay our passage, then it is theoretically possible to arrive at Johannesburg by the end of 2nd November. Geoff's bike hire and the South African tour is supposed to start on the 1st. But any more delays here will have me asking them to crane my bike off the dhow and I will ride back to Dubai. Alex meanwhile opts to stay on whatever but then he does not have to meet Geoff in Johannesburg.

So, we see what tomorrow will bring.

Syed from Port of Salalah on Oct, 17 2016 at 11:26AM Oct 17, 2016 at 07:26AM

Hello everyone, Mike and Alex sailed last Friday (i.e. on 14th October 2016) around 4.00 pm from Port of Salalah, they would reach Berbera latest by 19th Oct evening or say 20th morning. Mike is out of network, so expect to hear from him on late Wednesday or Thursday. The dhow is around 20 years old and is owned by a Somali businessman, it's a 16 member crew (captain included), crew is from India. Should I manage to make contact with any one of them i.e. Mike or Alex, I will send post an update here.

Syed from Port of Salalah on Oct, 19 2016 at 8:55AM Oct 19, 2016 at 04:55AM

Hello Everyone, Just made contact with Mike via satellite phone, Mike and Alex are doing fine and are expected to reach Berbera Port by 10.00 pm tonight. (i.e. 19th night)

Syed from Port of Salalah on Oct, 20 2016 at 2:53PM Oct 20, 2016 at 10:53AM

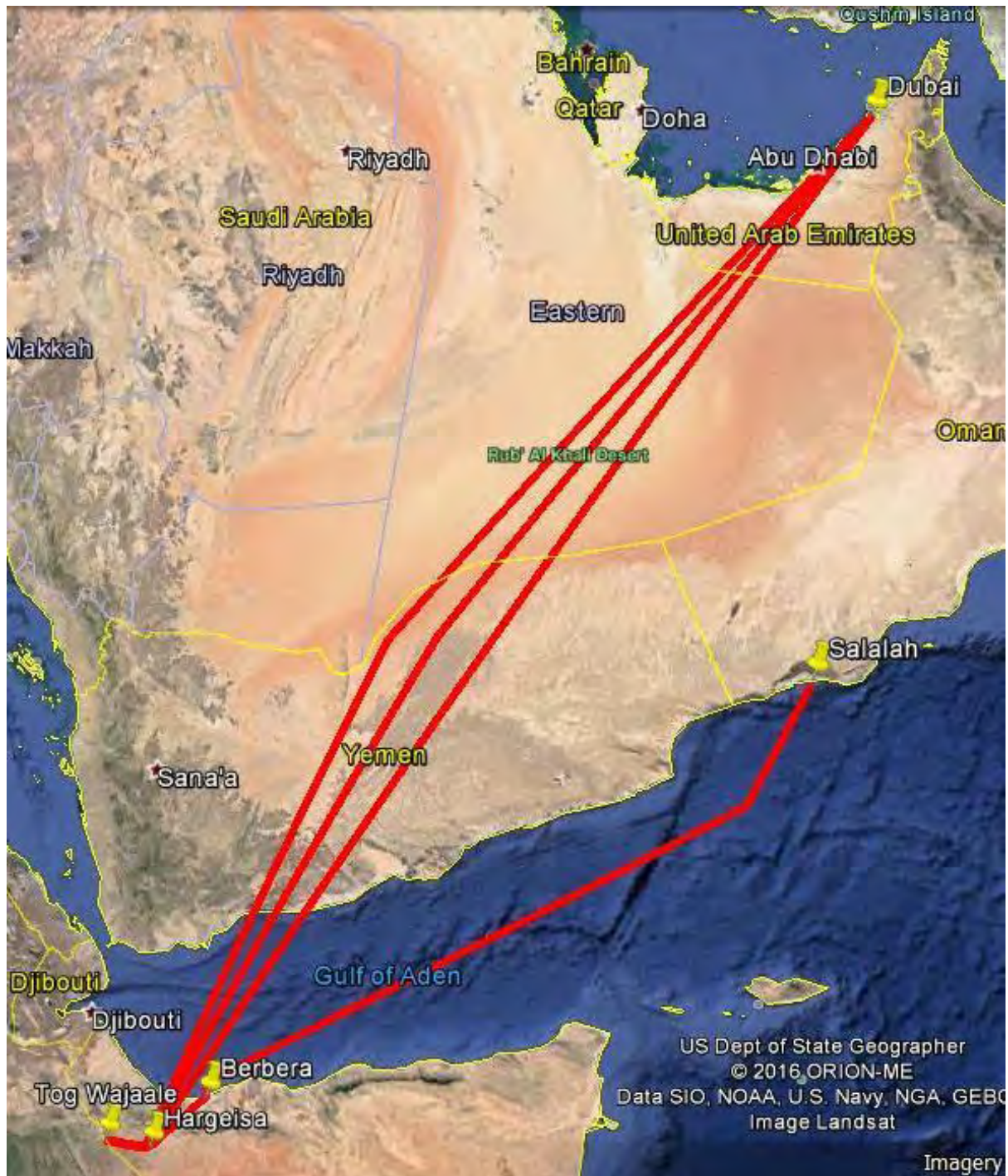
Received a call from Mike today morning, they have reached Berbera Port.

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN BY MOTORBIKE

Chapter 2

Salalah – Berbera – Hargeisa – Tog Wajaale – Hargeisa – Dubai – Hargeisa – Dubai



Sailing for Africa

Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, Oman

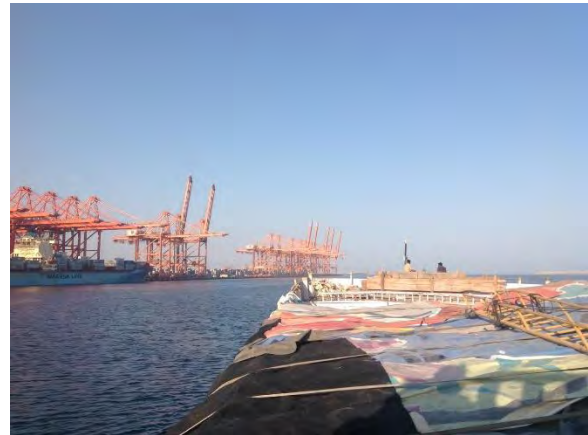
Friday, October 14, 2016

It is twenty past four in the afternoon on Friday the 14th October and we are finally on the dhow and the ropes are being cast off. Now moving slowly astern to escape the other barges as we were rafted up four deep. So, after nine days in Oman we finally get away. We have heard variously three or four days for the trip to Berbera.

We spent most of the day hanging about but finally our Somali man woke up about midday and started responding to his phone and Syed took us to the Port. We waited quite some time more for an Omani who acts as the agent to take our passports away and generate some more papers. When he returned, things moved quite swiftly and we got stamped out. It would certainly help if one spoke Arabic in Salalah. You might then begin to understand what is going on.



Captain Omar Farouke



Leaving the Port of Salalah

At Sea, 205 Nautical Miles from Berbera

Gulf of Aden

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

It is 8am on Tuesday 18th October. Now it is the fourth day since we sailed and we will arrive at Berbera about 10pm on Wednesday which is tomorrow night. The dhow has been doing a steady 5.2 to 6.2 knots, I think depending upon tidal streams either assisting or delaying our progress. The dhow is about 40m long and has two Mitsubishi six cylinder diesels which have been running at a steady 1,250rpm.

Well one of the tachometers shows this, all other instruments displaying the engine parameters have died. Steering is by the usual spoked wheel. This drives a chain which leaves each side of the wheelhouse, then round pulleys, changing to ropes and then another couple of pulleys to operate the rudder.



The wheelhouse

In the wheelhouse they have a big magnetic compass, a GPS and a radar - this last they only use at night. Aft in the main cabin where we sleep with the Captain and another man there is a VHF marine radio, an Icom M710 HF transceiver, another GPS and a Samsung chart plotter. Cargo is mostly bagged flour, also some dates and spaghetti.

Crew is 16 persons. Cooking by Salou happens in a cupboard on the port side shielding the gas rings from the wind. We get three meals a day. Usually an omelette and chipatis in the morning, some rice and chipatis accompanied by a savory vegetable curry for lunch and similar in the evening but two different dishes. We are glad that we bought some spoons and our own mugs or we would be eating with our fingers. We have a new system since yesterday where our food is put on the side rail as a table and we draw up some chairs to it. Otherwise you have to sit cross-legged on the floor which my old joints cannot manage.

There are the usual long drop toilet boxes one either side at the stern but also a more conventional western style toilet in a small room which even has water flushing. Here one can have a full body wash in some privacy.

There is some work carried out, general house-keeping and cleaning but for the most part all lie about and sleep or play cards in the cabin. Meanwhile the dhow plods on doing about one kilometre every six minutes.

There are two captains on board, Omar whom we met first and Hussain whom we had to wait for from India before we sailed. The latter appears to be the more senior but he speaks little English, Omar has a bit more. He is 46, has three sons, three daughters, one wife and one grandchild and earns \$680 a month.



Playing cards in the cabin

His 20-year old son is on board. His 23-year old son has a child and his 18-year old eldest daughter is married. We understand that these guys come from Gujarat. There is also one Somali man who like us is a passenger.

Today's excitement was being overflown by a C130 Hercules aircraft at low level and shortly after listening to the same plane talking to a vessel asking if it wanted any help. They identified themselves as coalition forces, so clearly military and on pirate patrol. A passing ship had clearly the message "protected by armed guards" painted on it. Later the trawling line hooked a fish so we ate that for dinner. The satellite phone rang and then they were shouting for Mike. Turned out to be Syed back in Salalah asking how we were and when we expected to get to Berbera.

We are looking at a state of enforced idleness each day punctuated only by the odd passing ship, dolphins and yesterday we spotted a whale blowing. We spent some hours yesterday with Alex's computer re-plotting the route from Berbera to South Africa. With the eight days spent hanging about in Salalah waiting for the dhow to sail and what will be five and a bit days at sea we have lost a lot of time and we cannot now make it to Johannesburg to meet Geoff on the first of November. But if he drives about two hours west he can meet us near Rustenburg at a resort where Alex has stayed before. At which point we are only one day behind the plan and we can easily make this up on the very much slower daily progress planned to Cape Town. This is all in theory of course and depends upon on us not getting delayed at Berbera where we have no visas to enter Somaliland and getting well into Ethiopia on the coming Thursday. We may be requiring an armed escort, perhaps not.

At Sea, 78 Nautical Miles from Berbera

Gulf of Aden

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

Wednesday 19th October 10.30am. Well we were on course for an arrival at Berbera by 10pm this evening but I detected a change in the engine rpm. Checking, I found only 1,100rpm and the GPS now says arrival 4am on Thursday. Given that nothing will happen onshore until they open for business Thursday morning anyway this is no problem, indeed we would be better out at sea doing 4.2knots that lying sweating on the dhow alongside in the harbour.

Today's problem is that Alex's bike has a flat battery. I find it difficult to believe that having the GPS in its cradle and charging from the bike battery would flatten the latter so we may have a bit more of a problem. The gell batteries that are fitted are prone to die if you let them go flat. So I hope that is not the case. But the bike was hanging about in the showroom at BMW and logically was not doing a lot before that? Mine has a more conventional acid filled battery and I have always kept that charged. They say no problem as they have spare batteries and jump leads on board. I tried checking with my voltmeter but that too is dead; it is very easy to move the on/off switch and it has been left on. For the moment the charger is connected and the light is on and there is 22 hours to go so the bike battery should recover.

We had a clothes washing session. The washing is on the roof above the cabin tied on to the lines to stop it blowing away- no pegs!

Landed in Somaliland

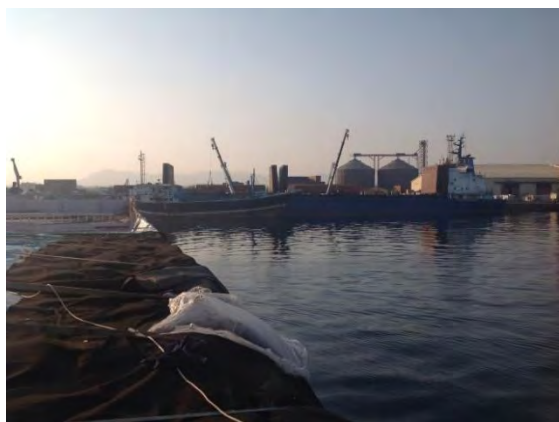
Hargeisa, Woqooyi Galbeed, Somalia

Thursday, October 20, 2016

Hi from a hotel in Hargeisa. We docked about 7.30am this morning at Berbera and before very long a Somali immigration man asked for us and took us onshore.

We had to walk along a causeway which got us sweating nicely. In a crowded building we paid over \$30 each to the "Ministry of Finance" and got a receipt. Then we went even further towards the town and saw a lady with a bank of computers and there we got Somaliland visas stamped in to our passports. Then it was back to the first building to see the head of the Customs. He was out so we adjourned to the cafe next door for a spell. A Bavaria turned out to be strawberry flavour which was somewhat of a disappointment but at least it was cold.

We saw the head Customs man who explained that the Agent had to write a letter so we could get the bikes out of the Port. They were not interested in the carnets. So we left the port with the helpful immigration man and via a taxi ended up at the office of the Agent. A suitable letter was duly written.



Coming into Berbera just after dawn



Wrecks in Berbera port

At which point Walid, the agent for Samo shipping, was driving us. Back to the port to start getting signatures. We needed five in all and Walid was driving us all over town chasing officials in their private houses since all stops at midday until 2pm. We had to pay him of course but he sorted it and a crane to lift off the bikes. The dhow crew gave us lunch and we had a photo session on the dock and said our goodbyes. Walid smoothed the way past all the gates and showed us where the Mansoor hotel was some 3km to the north. Here we parked up and had a quick swim in the sea followed by a shower and climbed into the bike gear. It was about 2.30 when we left.

It is a single-track road heading towards Hargeisa across a sandy plain but with scrub and small trees, goats, camels and donkeys and once out of town the surface was good and the crazy cars were left behind. They drive mostly on the right, but cars which are all Toyotas of one model or another, have left and right steering wheels which is somewhat confusing. Unfortunately, the good sections of tarmac are interspersed with sections full of potholes which initially caught us unawares so we had to slow down from 115kph. My left-hand pannier fell off twice, strange it has never done that before even off-roading quite seriously in Oman. The major wadi crossings are concreted for the most part but there is a lot of sand as well so care has to be taken.

We passed through five or six police checkpoints where the visas got us through with no problem. It might have also had something to do with the Police all out of their tree on qat as well. We arrived at the east side of Hargeisa as it was going dark and suffered an agonisingly slow journey across town in the dark with atrociously surfaced roads, sand, pedestrians and slow vehicles everywhere. I was doing minimum revs in first gear for the most part.

Thus, the Lonely Planet Guide is wrong. You can get a visa upon arrival. The costs quoted must apply to the airports as ours only cost \$30. Also, all this talk of armed guards for \$20 per day is wrong too. The visa was sufficient to get us past the checkpoints. Tomorrow we hope to set off reasonably early before it gets too hot and get across the border into Ethiopia. And basically, press on as hard as possible to try and make up all this lost time in Salalah and on the dhow.



One of the crew sleeping on the dhow

A Bit of a Setback

Hargeisa, Woqooyi Galbeed, Somalia

Friday, October 21, 2016

Here we are on a Friday in a Muslim country (meaning that everything is closed) and back at the hotel at Hargeisa. We left this morning heading for Tog Wajaale where we checked out of Somaliland and continued down the dirt road towards Ethiopia. They let us through the rope barrier and pointed out a building by the side of the road which was immigration. The man there took one look at my Ethiopian visa and said that I had to go back as it was expired. Not possible to extend it, have to get a new one in Hargeisa. So back at the hotel we have worked out where the embassy or the Consulate is and will go and check what time it opens tomorrow. I felt really sick at that point, another day lost.

We just had a visit whilst sat in the hotel lobby from a local man who must have been some kind of policeman. He first asked where we had been today. We explained about the visa problem. He was principally upset as he claimed Alex had been videoing the police at the checkpoints.



*Alex just stamped out of
Somaliland*

He also claimed that we did not stop at the checkpoints which was definitely not the case. All of yesterday between Berbera and Hargeisa they wanted to see the Somaliland visa. Today they mostly inspected us and dropped the rope and waved us on. He also claimed that we were speeding. I protested and told him the roads were very dangerous with many potholes and we were doing 80kph or less. Mind you that is significantly faster than most of the cars and lorries although both kinds have overtaken us. He showed me some video of a car bouncing along an empty road, there was no sign of us, so I am not too sure what that was about. Anyway, he eventually became satisfied that we were tourists and, inshallah, we will be across the border tomorrow. Meanwhile the hat camera stays hidden.



A tortoise hiding

Re-planned Things

Hargeisa, Woqooyi Galbeed, Somalia

Saturday, October 22, 2016

The day started with a visit to the Ethiopian consulate which is behind a guarded gate next to the Ministry of Finance building. There was a smallish queue so I got inside only to be searched whilst the Somalis were generally unmolested. At this point a man asked me what I was doing there and then said visas only for Somalis here. After some argument, he let me proceed to the next checkpoint where another queue had formed but now there were several more people ahead of me. They gave me a hard time at this checkpoint confiscating my phone and my bike jacket. But it was getting hot anyway by this time.

Another searching and to the end of a queue in front of a closed gate which opened at intervals admitting people singly to another patting down. Finally, around the corner to a bank of seats. There must have been 50 people there. Next we had a talking to by an old policeman. I asked what he was saying. Make sure you have your pictures and a photocopy of your passport. My pictures were in my bike jacket so I had to go and get them which provoked more activity from the security boys.



The Mig-17 monument

I sat down again wondering how long all this was going to take with Alex outside guarding the bikes and no way to contact him. Then my luck changed and I was singled out and sent to talk to a man in an office. He explained that first I had to get the British Embassy in Addis to write to the Immigration Dept. They would then send him a fax and then he would issue me a new visa. The snag here is that both of these establishments in Addis are closed until Monday morning. Depressed I left to rejoin Alex outside.

We adjourned to the hotel and sat in the shade exploring various scenarios on the phone and the Internet. The hotel owner came and had a chat, followed by one of his managers. All were trying to be helpful but in practice nothing could be done. We had some lunch and discussed the idea to overfly Ethiopia along with the bikes and land some place further south. In this way, we would by-pass the problem and also save some distance and catch up with the plan.

So we took a taxi to the airport and eventually got past the security layers to meet with Mustafa of Ethiopian airlines. We agreed to bring the bikes the next day so he could see them. On the way back we called by the Fly Dubai office and there priced various options of flying ourselves to Dar es Salaam etc. Back to the hotel. After dinner Alex had the idea that I should just go back to Dubai and get another visa arranged. Brilliant! So, an online booking has me on a 7.35am flight tomorrow arriving about midday. I will then go straight to the Consulate and make an application. Last time the visa was ready the next day, so that will be Monday. And the flight back leaves 4am Tuesday reaching here 6.30am. We will then crack on for the border.

Well that is today's plan but as you have read, things have a habit of not turning out as planned on this trip.

SAMO SHIPPING AGENCY
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20/October / 2016

KU:MAAMULAHA KASTKA BERBERA
KU:MAAMULAHA DEKEDDA BERBERA
OGG: TALIIYAH TOLBA TAARIYADA

UJEEDO: CAYDAYN LAHAANSHIYO

Modane maamule waxaan halkan kuugu cadaynaynaa in labadan nin ee doonta sk-al-mukhtaar la sooday ay yihiin dalkiisayaal waxaanay wataan laba mooto oo ay istiimaalayaan waana sidan hoos ku xusan magacyadoodu:

1.	TRAFIC PLATE NO	39947
	OWNER	MICHAEL GEOFFREY ANATHONY
2.	TRAFIC PLATE NO	18430
	OWNER	MICHAEL GEOFFREY ANATHONY

chief/ps
Hob
Si daye
20/10/16
SAMO SHIPPING AGENCY
Berbera
20/10
20/10/16

The Gate Pass to get out of Berbera Port

Back to Dubai

Hargeisa, Woqooyi Galbeed, Somalia

Sunday, October 23, 2016

Well so far so good. No sign of any staff at the hotel desk at 5am although the retired botanist lady from Utah was there struggling with her phone so as to turn off the alarm. I am confused as to why a single retired academic woman from the States would want to come here and initiate learning programmes into classifying plants. Her third time here and she is really struggling she said and was ready to kill her assigned assistant. The only thing the Somalis are interested in is which plants their livestock can eat and they certainly know that already.

A man appeared so I asked him where the taxi was. We went outside, he found a car but of the driver no sign. Perhaps he is in the mosque? After some more minutes he had another idea (dawn had not yet arrived) and looked at the car again and then hammered on it. The driver was sleeping inside!

We got to the airport. At the first security gate they stripped off all the black plastic film from the windows before loading in two more men into the back seat. Many searches later I am upstairs at a place labelled Gate 2.

Alex remains in the hotel, he said something about visiting rock art today which features in the Lonely Planet guide. The Fly Dubai aeroplane has just parked outside the building so we will not have far to walk.

Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Later in the day, now back in my flat in Dubai having been to the Ethiopian consulate direct from the airport. I will pick up my passport with the new visa at 2pm tomorrow. The people there were a bit nonplussed at my story and asked why did you not get a visa upon arrival? I told them that the hut alongside the dirt road at Tog Wajaale only did stamping in and out.

My daughter, Helen and her husband, Jamie, are here so we will go for dinner shortly after I have shown them my worksite.

Update from Dubai

Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

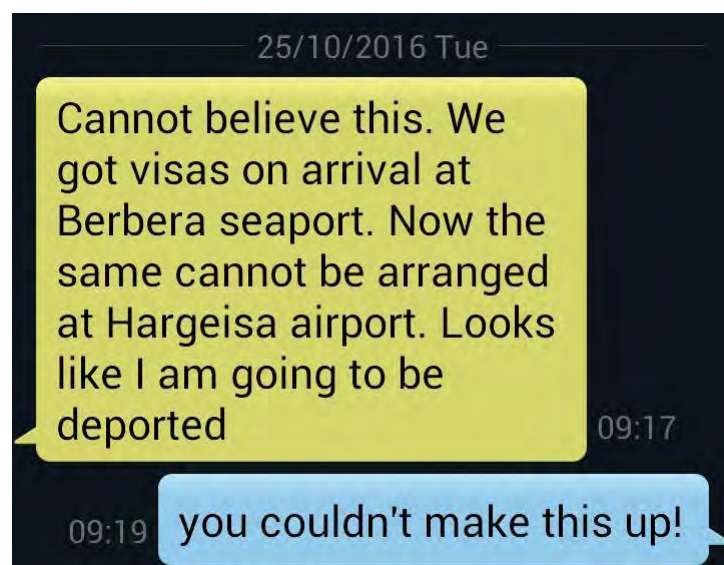
Monday, October 24, 2016

I now have the new Ethiopian visa in my passport and I shall be presenting myself at 2am tomorrow at Terminal 2 Dubai for the 4am, 3½ hour flight back to Hargeisa. Assuming I can get a taxi, I should make it back to the hotel where Alex is by 7.30am local time. And as soon as possible after that we will head for the border.

Helen and Jamie are staying in my flat (half-term in England) so I was able to take them to my worksite today and show them round. Considering that I have been away for 24 days there was a disappointing lack of progress. The news that the "bubble" (the acrylic French window for the diving pool at Nad Al Sheba in Dubai, my current project) is finally on its way to the UAE from Rome and will dock in Jebel Ali about 22nd November is good albeit is delayed somewhat. So I don't need to rush back. We have to reach Cape Town by 13th November as Geoff has a meeting back in England on the 15th. Alex has to get back to work as well. But I could hang about a bit longer and investigate storage and shipping. Ultimately both bikes have to go to England but it would be a lot less expensive if I had owned the Adventure that Alex is riding for six months before it gets imported to England.

To be further discussed but with both bikes in Cape Town, legally registered in the UAE and running under carnets, assuming that some place can be arranged to store them, another adventure up into Namibia might be on the cards during 2017.

I was trying to use my computer to re-plan the routing but part way through the process my computer decided to update to Windows 10. It has been doing this for the last two hours already but it is making slow progress. Don't you just love it when Microsoft screws up your day? With any luck the clearly very substantial update process will make it more useable. Bring back DOS or if we have to have Windows, maybe XP. I understood how to work computers then; it's getting all too complex now.



Disaster Big-Time

Flight FZ662, Hargeisa - Dubai

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

I am writing this on a return flight on the same plane that I flew out to Hargeisa at 4am this morning.

Logically if we got visas on arrival at Berbera seaport on the 20th then I should have been able to get one at Hargeisa airport this morning. But no. So I got deported. I am just hoping that the calls I made and the text messages I sent got to Alex. Unfortunately, his mobile phones are not working in Somaliland although my phone with the Etisalat chip is. It all got a bit heated with the airport, the Operations Manager trying to deal with the problem upon my behalf. There was a fairly ugly scene in the Immigration office where the old woman in charge this morning was shouting and carrying on and prodding me quite hard and when she wasn't, a man with a uniform and a beret was pulling at my arm trying to drag me away. Prior to this I noticed that all other foreign passport holders were either carrying or obtained locally a printed form which they then presented along with their passport to get their visa issued.



Alex's guard riding pillion

Some kind of e-visa perhaps or an invitation letter. Anyway, they were forcing me round the arrivals and the departure lounges, past security so many times that I must be radioactive by now! In the end the row spilled out onto the apron area where the plane was already loaded with the door closed. The Ops Manager boarded the plane and spoke with the Captain. Next thing they told me to board. The crew have my passport.

Just flying past what looks like Salalah – yes, it is. I can make out the orange coloured container cranes at the port. Interestingly from this height you can see that the green covered hills that were driving about in are but a short belt of green and then only in the valleys. Further inland it is arid desert country. The plane overlies the sea from Somaliland to Oman and then turns north over Oman approaching Dubai over the desert.

Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

OK update as I am now back on the ground in Dubai. You could not make this saga up, could you!

With access to telecoms, Alex and I exchanged information. Looks like the lack of an invitation letter from the hotel or an actual visa paper to be presented to Immigration at the airport was probably the cause of this morning's difficulties; we must have got a good deal from the lady at Berbera Port.

Also, Alex sent me a picture of a guard riding pillion with him yesterday. He has organised an invitation letter from the hotel and is on with the job to get me a visa locally that can be lodged at the airport. He sent me a telephone number which was the Director for tourism and so we were able to have a conversation. On the strength of that I have booked myself onto the 4.40am flight tomorrow that gets to Hargeisa by 11am by which time the paperwork should be at the airport.

A paper is being obtained to avoid hassles at the checkpoints as Alex had some problems yesterday. And so we try again but meanwhile the time is ticking by and shortening the time in South Africa.



Alex and a local lady friend

My second son Richard has decided to join Geoff in South Africa for the first week that Geoff is there as even looking at things optimistically Alex and I cannot make it there until the 6th at the earliest by now. Let's hope nothing else goes wrong.

Before I landed and we rejigged things again I was running a scenario where I was going to get the hotel to courier my riding gear and tools and then jump on a plane to Johannesburg and hire a bike there, leaving the problem of how to retrieve my bike from Somaliland until after the holiday. It's still in the back of my mind but we continue with the original plan albeit delayed a week for now.

From: mikeant@emirates.net.ae
[mailto:mikeant@emirates.net.ae]
Sent: Wednesday, October 26, 2016 1:01 PM
To: Ian Hussey <ianhussey61@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: Adventures of a Boats Officer

Back inside Somaliland, got through the airport this time. We are just having some lunch then we make a dash for the border

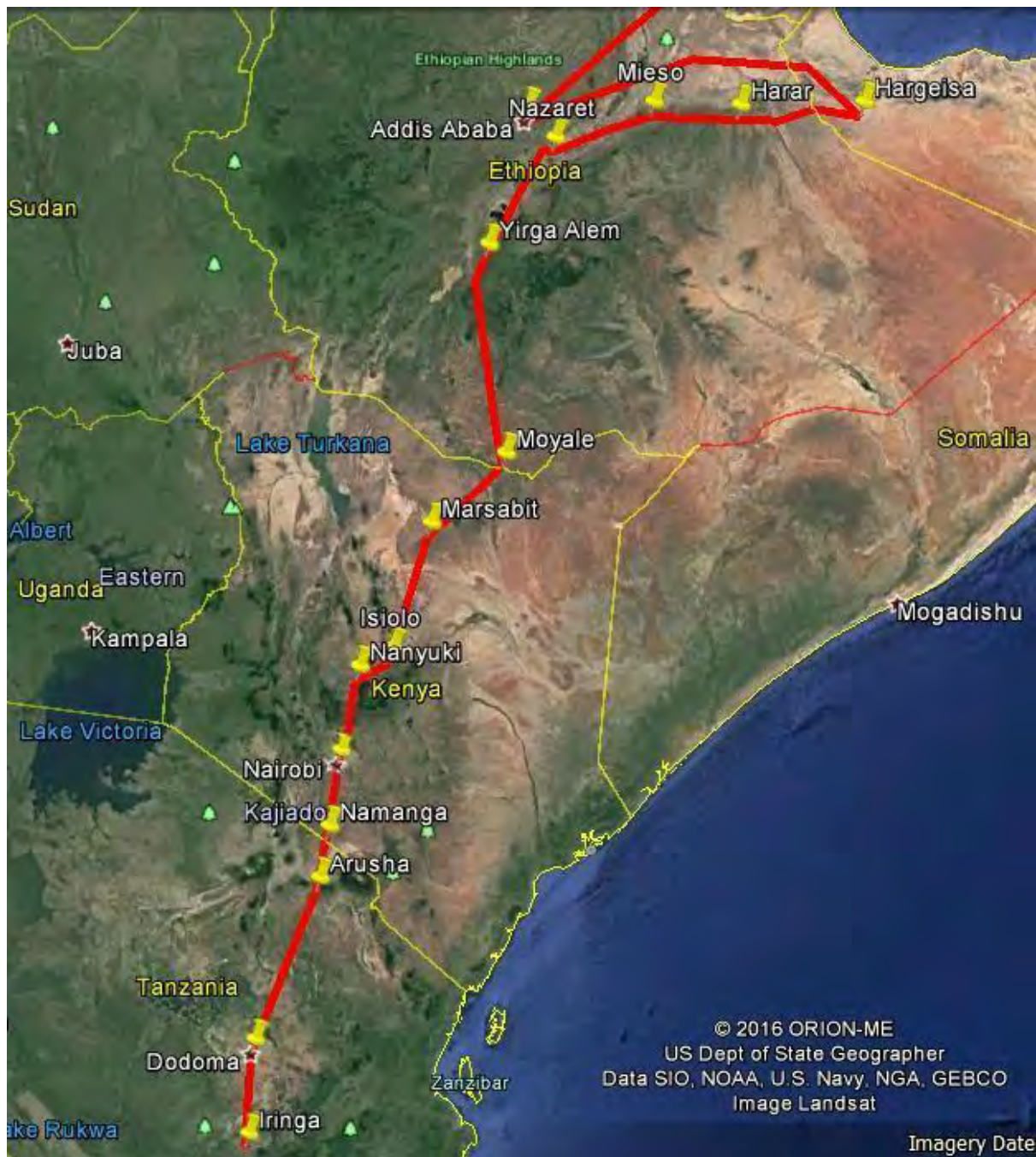
Sent from Mike's iPhone

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN BY MOTORBIKE

Chapter 3

Dubai – Addis Ababa – Hargeisa – Harar – Nazaret – Yirga Alem – Moyale – Nanyuki – Arusha – Iringa



Finally, We Got Into Ethiopia

Harar, Harari Region, Ethiopia

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Following yesterday's deportation from Hargeisa, Alex organised a visa letter from the ministry of sports and tourism so the appropriate paper was handed to me as I was queuing at Hargeisa this morning at 11am having started today at Dubai. It was an expensive flight at Dh2,700 but I got away without having to pay for a return flight which is something the DNATA man said might happen. I flew Ethiopian Air this time changing planes in Addis. The visa at the airport is double the price at \$60 but I got one. The deputy minister was waiting with Alex and a taxi and we went initially to the Ministry and thanked them profusely, then back to the hotel. After some lunch, we loaded up. My GPS came on and said it could not find the maps. So I changed the map chip over as I had the UAE one in. Since then it has refused to turn on. Alex's GPS was working but it has gone on strike since. The gremlins strike again!



Tourism Director and his deputy in Hargeisa



Storks at the Somaliland border



Entering Ethiopia



Mountains in Ethiopia

Anyway, we pressed on as fast as possible to the border and entered successfully into Ethiopia. Immediately we noticed that the road is better. We got searched by the Customs I think just a few hundred metres from Immigration. Then about 11km further some military guys stopped us and they took everything apart. But once past this checkpoint we were unmolested thereafter, we were just waved on. Immediately the countryside was seen to be greener. We arrived at Jigjiga which is the first town along the road, and here was traffic, dual carriageways and roundabouts.

After Jigjiga the road climbs into the hills and goes through a pass and starts getting quite sinuous. Would have been a brilliant ride if the sun had not been directly ahead and the road being intermittently full of animals; I suppose it was going home time and they just drive them down the main road. There did not appear to be very much at Babile so we pressed on to Harar by which time it was dark.

Alex managed to find a hotel where we have the bikes in an enclosed yard. We have the best room in the house with two beds and an attached bathroom. No towel or hot water to the wash hand basin or toilet but the shower without a head drops a trickle of cold water. A lot of glass is missing from the window so we cannot shut out the heavy disco music. If I am tired enough (and I must be), I can probably sleep through it. Once I fell asleep during a Simply Red concert in Hong Kong.

We walked up to the Main Street and both of us failed to get any money from the ATM's so we walked a bit further and got a 3-wheeled taxi to a restaurant. We paid in dollars.



First beers since leaving Oman

Thursday, October 27, 2016

Now it is 6am on the 27th. Actually, I slept really well until a persistent hammering woke us at 4.30am. Someone was banging on the gate. Alex shouted at him and he stopped and eventually the howling dogs stopped too and I slept until dawn.

With both GPS's dead, life is going to become more difficult but we have maps and compasses and 3G for the moment. Next we have to wait for the Forex to open to get some Birrs and buy breakfast and petrol and the rest of the hotel bill. It might be a bit rough but it was more comfortable than the dhow and I am not complaining about \$24 for a room and two beers.



Bathroom at the Harar Hotel

At Nazaret

Nazaret, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

Thursday, October 27, 2016

Hello from quite a nice hotel in Nazaret. Bungalows spread around a garden with the bike parked outside. We got separate rooms as there are no twins but for \$14 each we are not complaining. Unfortunately, no internet so you may be able to read this by tomorrow evening if we have the net then. Alex is some kind of genius. He discovered from the net how to do a software reset in both **GPS's and they are** working again.

Breakfast was in a local cafe and scrambled egg and bread and coffee went down well. By 8am the Forex was open but not quite functioning. Eventually I managed to change \$200 into Birr. And shortly afterwards we set off. Filled the tanks and rode to Mieso. Pretty much all of this is in the mountains and as far as progress is concerned was very slow due to the tight alignment, many villages and livestock wandering about. Traffic was light and was easily overtaken. The scenery was stunning, but you cannot look at it too much riding a bike at 70% of your limit on mountain roads. We went up to over 2,500m and the air temperature was as low as 16°C. It was a bit chilly! Notable were several wrecks where lorries and pickups had collided and left the road.

By Mieso we had descended to about 1,300m and now it was 32°C. The road alignment straightened out and initially we were doing almost 120kph for a while. Here we saw a new railway constructed by the Chinese and we tracked that for quite a while. All was fine until Awash when we were obliged to pull in at the customs checkpoint. A very nice official speaking good English interviewed us starting with "this is a first time for us", meaning that nobody resembling us had ever passed this way before. He was though anxious to promote a good image of Ethiopia as well as being a bit curious about us. But in the end he was satisfied that we were genuine tourists and kept the photocopy of the Somali language BBC article on us from Hargeisa.



*Lake, southbound
from Awash,
Ethiopia*

After Awash we hit traffic, lots of heavy lorries and deformed pavements due to underpowered and overloaded trucks and a few hills which had the trucks grinding slowly, cutting deeper grooves in the tarmac. After the Awash river bridge there was a speed hump every kilometre; this section was a bit of a pain. And so we arrived at Nazaret, this time just before it went dark.

I must just mention the plumbing and electrical arrangements in Ethiopia and in particular the bathrooms. This is a half reasonable hotel and my shower and wash hand basin have water. But the shower was cold. This because the cylinder switch was not on. I discovered the switch to turn it on is under the cylinder inside of the shower. No UK Electricity regulation here (no German TÜV GS as well)!

It is but 20km to the main road going southbound to Kenya and if we make Yabello by tomorrow evening we should cross into Kenya the day after. Anyway, that is the plan so we see how things go. We just had a discussion about this, seems Yabello is 200km from the border with Kenya at Moyale. Billy's track had him going to Moyale then returning to Yabello. Maybe the border was closed for the night? Is Yabello the closest place with decent accommodation?

About 360km North of the Kenyan Border

Yirga Alem, Southern Nations Region, Ethiopia

Friday, October 28, 2016

We are still in Ethiopia. Started off this morning from Nazaret and headed west for Mojo. There we ran across the newly constructed Chinese railway that goes from Addis to Djibouti. If you check the map you will see that Ethiopia is landlocked. There was a big container terminal at Mojo. Then we ran south through flat farmlands and lakes. The main problem initially was traffic, heavy lorries but mixed up with Toyota Hiaces and 3-wheeled taxis. Ethiopia has 100 million people and they all seem to be walking along the roads driving their goats, cows and camels. Some 220km after we started, the tarmac ran out or at least started to become seriously absent. If it was present at all it was full of holes. We arrived after 300km at a town called Dilla where we were pleased to find a petrol station. My left-hand pannier box was very loose so we had to repair it, it just needed a nut so we added that and tightened both boxes. At Dilla the "road" turns south and runs through more jungle. After 40km we arrived at Yirga where we are now.



Yirga in the Ethiopian Hills

I battled my way through the village and the evening traffic but then saw no headlight behind me. A boy on a small bike told me Alex had stopped about 200m back. His front wheel was punctured. With an hour to go before darkness descended we called it a day. Luck was with us however as another 100m ahead was a tyre repair shack and just beyond that was this hotel. So we put the bikes in the hotel yard, removed the wheel and then the tube and the tyre man put a patch on whilst chewing his qat leaves. We reassembled it all as it went dark. It was a thorn causing the problem.

There was however no power in the village so it was head torches and candles by this time to get showered and changed and walk to the next hotel which had a generator. There was a derby match on the TV between Manchester United and Manchester City. We ate and then we joined three other guys who were construction supervisors looking after the building of schools and other amenities. Frazier (named after the boxer, Joe) spoke excellent English. He is a civil engineer, another was a mechanical engineer and the other a supervisor (Inspector of Works I think). We consumed about five or six beers each during this international exchange and unbelievably the bill for dinner and five beers came to a mere Dh19!

Saturday, October 29, 2016

I am writing this at dawn on Saturday 29th. Breakfast will be available at 8am where we were last evening. There is another 35km of dirt road until the tarmac and then it will be 320km to the Kenyan border at Moyale. Hopefully we make it to Marsabit by this evening. Maybe there will be power and the internet to transmit this. By the way, dirt roads as in the manner of smoothly graded tracks as in South Africa are easy to ride on, you can do 120kph, but here the surface is so full of holes that 60kph is pushing it. Added to which there are wet muddy patches where 40kph is more prudent. Good thing that I have had plenty wadi bashing training with you Hans! Fortunately, traffic densities are low and there is plenty room to overtake.



Ethiopian scenery



A river along the road

Petrol costs 16.5 to 18 Birr or nearly Dh3 per litre and this hotel will be 310Birr, Dh153 for the night. Beer is 12Birr a bottle. The Muzain has been singing for the last hour but he must have battery power as the mains is still off. However, it is now 6.30am and it is light outside. Looks a bit wet and shrouded in mist to me.

Moyale, Marsabit County, Kenya

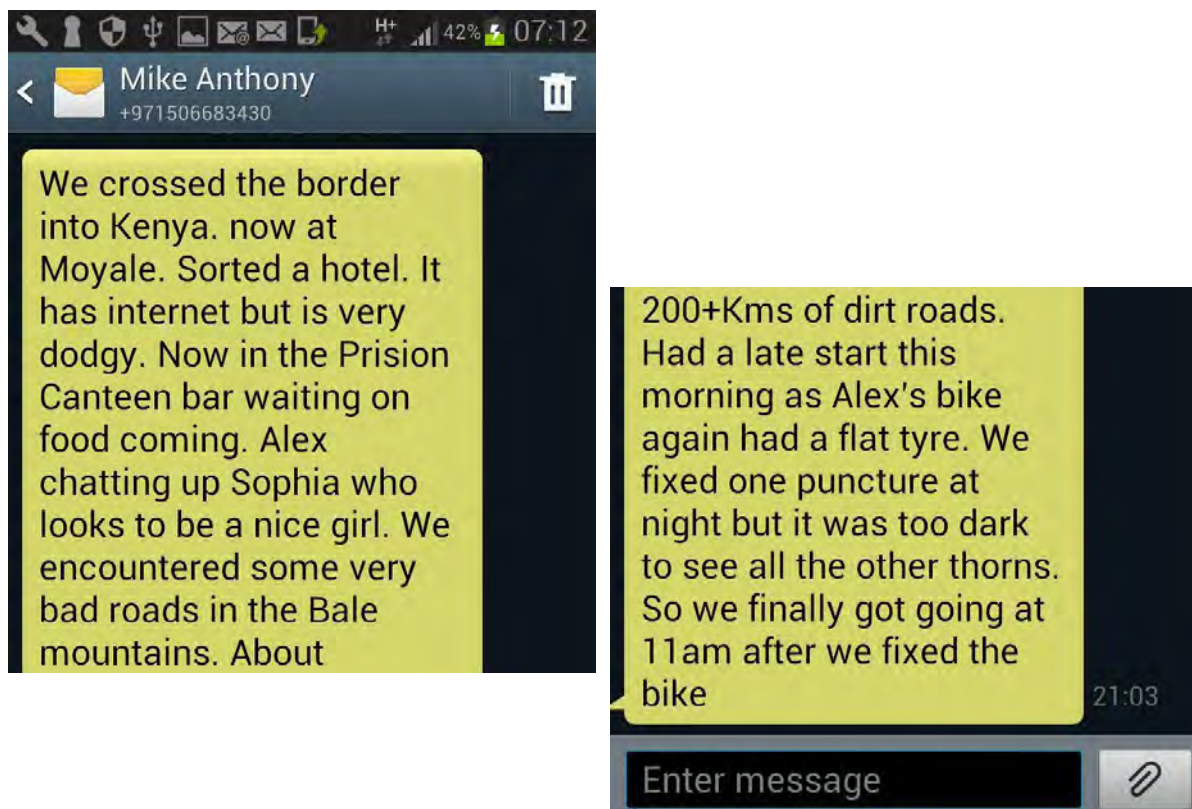
OK final sign off at the end of the day from Moyale just across the border into Kenya. After last night's puncture repair was successfully concluded we were dismayed to discover Alex's front wheel was flat again. After a detailed examination, we discovered multiple thorns through the tyre that we failed to spot in the darkness. So we painstakingly examined all our tyres. Only Alex's front wheel was affected.

Thus, it was 11am when we set off from Yirga on the next 40km of dirt roads. Just what you need to shake up your liver! By this point we had travelled over 200km on dirt roads, some were really bad. The smooth tarmac duly turned up as forecast some 78km from Dilla. But it turned out to be intermittent over the first 10km or so. Thereafter all was good, the traffic apart from the villages and the towns was very light. And so by 2pm we had arrived at the turnoff for Yabello. Here we paused to tank up and refuel ourselves with coffee.

We met a man at a coffee stop who lives in Moyale and advised us that the border post would close at 5.30pm. So we got back on the bikes and cracked onwards as fast as possible on an excellent road that even had road markings. We were doing 130kph on a new and almost completely empty road for the next 200km across scrub covered country with small villages along the way consisting of round huts.

We got checked out of Ethiopia relatively painlessly but the customs had gone home for the weekend at 4.30. I had visions of being stranded in no-man's land. So we thought we should just go for it as they were not interested in the carnet upon entry. We rode down a dirt road which led to a bridge and the last Ethiopian man asked if we were finished and just waved us on.

So we arrived in Kenya, sorted immigration and then by good luck the Customs man who might have been interested was just knocking off but he opened up again and stamped the carnets. Thereafter we hit this hotel, got a man to show us where the local bar was and ate and drank a bit. The bar was a very dim drinking hole. Mostly men but some ladies. When we first went in all the TVs were tuned to English football at maximum volume. But they had a kitchen of sorts and food was arranged. My chicken must have been running round a mountain it was so tough. There was a man who claimed to be a clinician or doctor whose best friend ran the bar. So he was talking to me whilst Sophia and Alex were getting acquainted. And so we passed some time and consumed some alcohol and were entertained.



At Nanyuki

Nanyuki, Rift Valley Province, Kenya

Sunday, October 30, 2016

I am happy to report that I am sat at a very civilised bar with the musak at a subdued level, almost empty. We are booked into a lodge. My room is a rondavel and is the epitome of comfort, at least compared to what we have experienced so far.



Mongoni campsite

We started this morning at Moyale on the Kenyan side of the border. It was B&B so we got some sort of breakfast. Actually, it was not a lot and Alex probably went hungry but it partially filled us. The coffee was Nescafé which was a bit of a disappointment after the Ethiopian coffee. Engines started by 8.15am (which is a record so far) and off we went towards Marsabit. This road is relatively new, probably by a Chinese contractor supervised by Gibb (Africa). The first 20km wound through hills and over rivers. The main activity was walking to and from a water supply. The herds of cows, goats and occasionally camels were still a feature but much less than further north. Further south the landscape changed to stony desert, the Dida Galgalu plain. Not a lot was here, not even vegetation.



Ewasonyiro River, Kenya



The signs for the Equator

We went through some hills after that and saw monkeys and ostriches and more trees. My fuel level was low due to an incomplete filling at Moyale **and the bike's fuel light came on.** When this happens, numbers start to appear which give an estimated distance before the tank is empty. **The bike's computer adjusts this distance as it receives data on the ongoing fuel consumption.** As I watched the numbers, they grew to be more than those on the kilometre posts, counting down to Marsabit so I thought I was going to be OK. This turned out to be a mistake and I ran dry 30km short of the petrol station. So the computer lies! No problem, we have a tow rope and Alex's Adventure version of the F800gs which has a 30-litre tank. Mine is the standard version with a 20-litre tank but it looks like the last 2.6 litres is not useable. We refuelled bikes and bodies at Marsabit and cracked on for Isiolo.

By this time, we had done 510km on almost empty roads mostly at 125kph in between stops for photographs. So we decided to reach the equator which is at Nanyuki. This is 1,950m above sea level, so it is cool. Climbing out of Isiolo we passed over 2,566m. This was rich farmland and on the lower slopes there were forests. Further along the road approaching Nanyuki it was more developed and we had traffic to contend with.

I can recommend Tusker Malt which is a local 5% brew. Nice taste. We just asked for the menu, so a pause here!The food was amazing, we both had steaks. The owner came to talk to us, he is Kenyan/English. We gave him the story. He was interested! Some research indicates that Arusha in Tanzania is probably viable by tomorrow late afternoon. Maybe a bit further.



Mount Kenya

At Arusha in Tanzania

Arusha, Arusha Region, Tanzania

Monday, October 31, 2016

It was a bit of a wrench to leave the comfort of the Mongoni lodge in Nanyuki, Kenya this morning but we mounted up anyway and hit the road. The first part of the journey south was a winding road with some medium amount of traffic. Not long after that we refuelled, and after about 150km I guess, we hit a dual carriageway. Two or three lanes of light traffic. Despite notices to drive on the left unless overtaking this was ignored by all so after we worked out what the local habits were we just carved through the traffic passing mostly on the inside. This led to Nairobi and hopefully the eastern bypass.

Despite having the route showing on the GPS and we went that way, if we had been in a car we would have still been in the jam. The roads near the city that we travelled on were all under construction and were choked with traffic. Finally, we escaped to the south heading the last 150km to the Kenyan/Tanzanian border at Namanga. This last section had almost no traffic and the border is a tad confusing trying to find out where to go for immigration and customs on both sides. It took over an hour until we got away. Lastly today was a 107km dash down an almost empty road. A few villages and checkpoints at which we were waved though. And so to Arusha which is a sizeable town and the Arusha Crowne which is \$70 for a twin bedded room.

The restaurant that we were going to go to has been closed for over a year, so we went to the local supermarket and bought cold beers and brought them back to the hotel and had our meal here. We were in bed by 9pm.

At Iringa

Iringa, Iringa Region, Tanzania

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

I need a map to describe where we are but it is 680km mostly south from Arusha where we started this morning. Thus about 800km south from the Kenyan border. And it is 400+ km to the border with Zambia at Tunduma. The snag is there does not appear to be a town of any significance until Mpika which is another 400km past the border. And 800km plus a border crossing is not viable- well it might be if you had a car with two drivers and were prepared to drive in the dark.

The day started with normal tarmac roads and the Masai and their cattle and goats. Alex got some good pictures of the cattle and the herders heading down the track to the water hole. We continued on tarmac passing through villages. Mostly the buildings are fairly primitive but new tin roofs are everywhere. Flat grassy plains with a sprinkling of small trees. 150km south of Arusha we pulled in for petrol and cracked off again only to find the road changed to a red dirt and wound its way up into the mountains.



A reservoir lake between Dodoma and Iringa

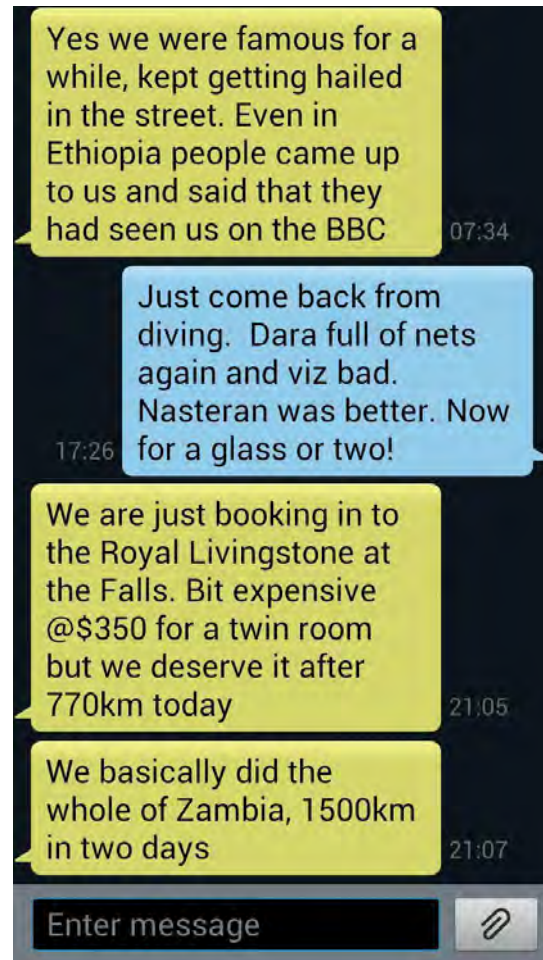
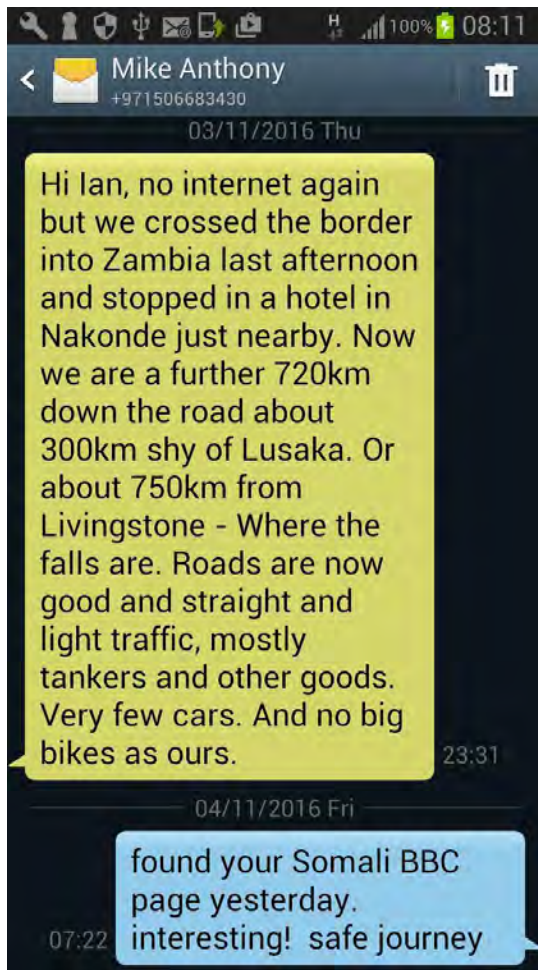
Next was 200km of dirt roads. Where new roads were under construction then the original dirt track gets mixed up with the new highway and big six wheelers laden with earth or gravel. So the track got pretty bad and was either full of bulldust or sand. Horrible stuff to ride a bike through. The front wheel kicks as well as the rear and there is a good chance that you will drop it. In between whiles we had relief as we got onto finished tarmac sections. But the views were good when I had the courage to look at them. About 100km from Dodoma we had continuous tarmac. We refuelled again and decided as it was only just after 3pm and that there was tarmac until Iringa to go for it. So here we are in a half reasonable hotel fed and beered and it is 11pm and I am wasted. More tomorrow.

Wednesday, November 2, 2016

Now it is the morning of the 2nd. I have lost track of the day of the week! As noted above, the border town of Tunduma with Zambia/Tanzania is the first plan for today. If we can figure out where we might stay in Zambia not too far from the border there will be some point in pressing on further south, but we shall see.



Alex after nine hours in the saddle



Mike and Alex photographed in Somaliland (from the BBC web page)


Tusmo

SOMALI
Qaybaha

XAYEYSIIN


LIVE IN THE HEART OF DUBAI'S MOST VIBRANT DESTINATION.

Safar dhulka ah - Dubai ilaa Capetown

21 Oktoobar 2016
La wadaag



Mike Anthony iyo Alex Richter waxay soo gaareen Hargeysa



Waxay gaari doonaan ilaa Cape town

Mike Anthony iyo Alex Richter ayaa wariyaha BBC Axmed Siciid Cige oo kula kulmay Hargeysa u sheegay inay ka soo bilaabeen socdaalkooda magaalada Dubai ee dalka imaaraadka carabta 5tii Oktoobar 2016, iyagoo soo maray magaalooyinka Masqat iyo Salalah ee dalka Cummaan, ka dibna badda cas markab kaga soo gudbeen oo berbera yimaadeen 20 Oktoobar 2016.


Tusmo


LIVE IN THE HEART OF DUBAI'S MOST VIBRANT DESTINATION.



Anthony iyo Mike waxaa la taagan wariyaha BBC Axmed Siciid Cige

Waxay sheegeen inay u gudbayaan dalka Ethiopia, halkaas ka dibna ay dalal badan oo Afrika ku yaalla sii dhex jibaaxayaan ilaa ay ka gaadhayaan dalka Koonfur Afrika, magaalada Cape Town.

XAYEYSIIN


BOLLYWOOD MOVIES
spuul

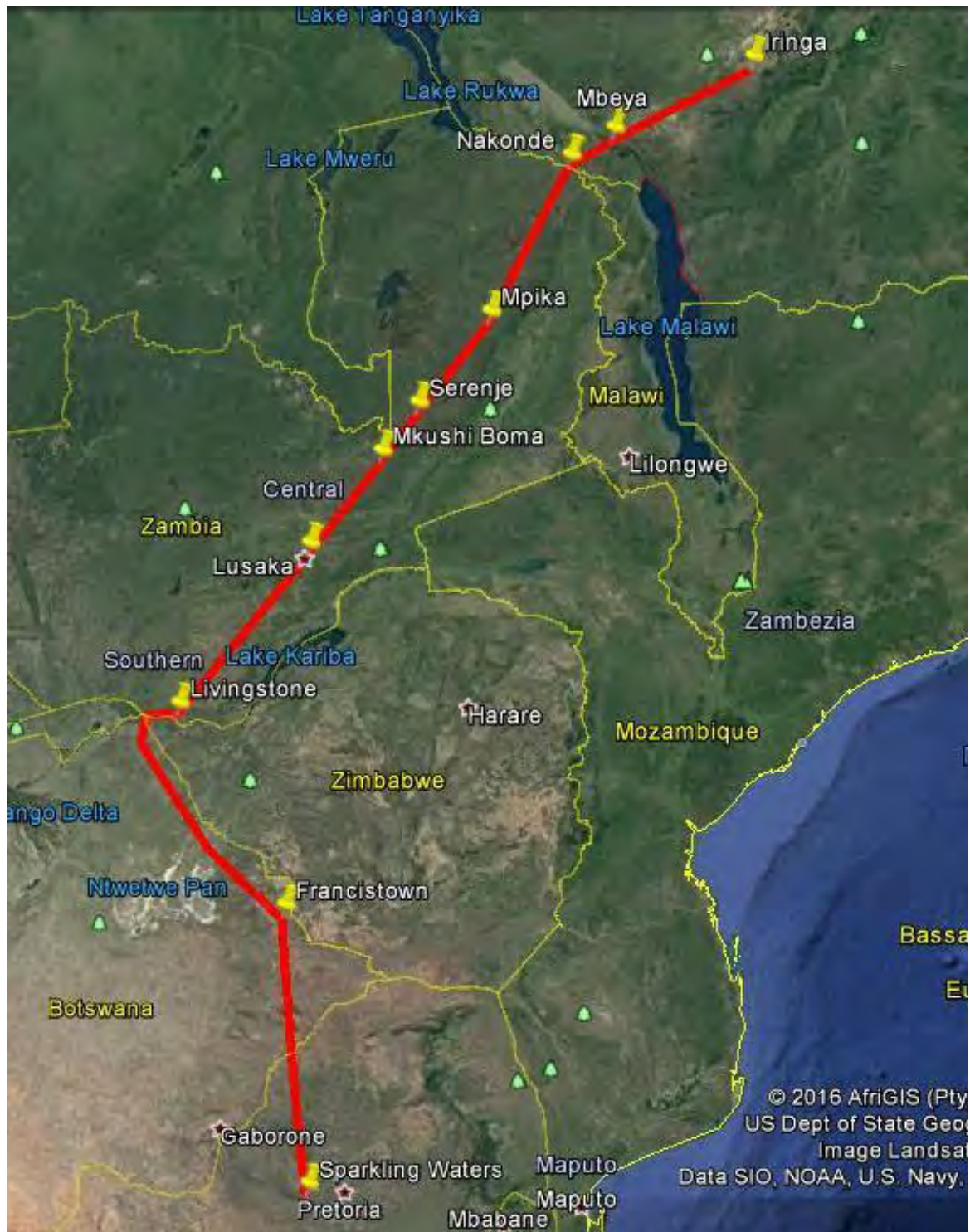
Labada mooto ee ay wataan labada nin ayaa ah mootooyinka dheereey . faah-faahin kale kama aysan bixin socdaalkooda, laakiinse dad badan oo reer Hargeysa ah ayaa daawasho ugu tegey.

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN BY MOTORBIKE

Chapter 4

Iringa – Nakonde – Mkushi Boma – Livingstone – Francistown – Sparkling Waters



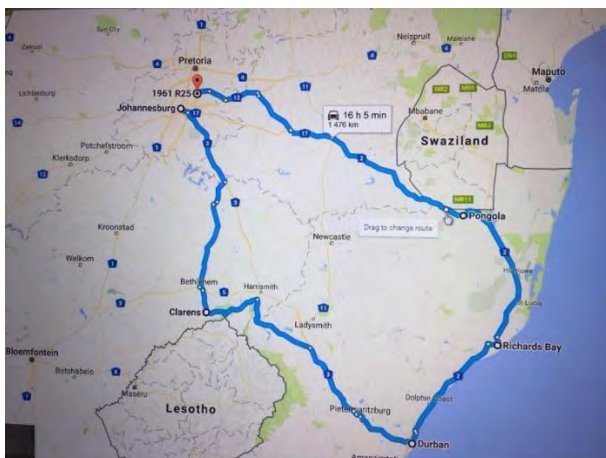
At Nakonde, Zambia

Nakonde, Northern Province, Zambia

Wednesday, November 2, 2016

We are at Nakonde which is just across the Tanzanian/Zambian border from the border town of Tunduma. So today's story was a start at Iringa and 434km to the border. The roads were good for the first 80km or so but then we hit roadworks and sections of dirt roads. There were lorries and coaches plying the route as well and the dust created by these larger vehicles made passing them very difficult. Fortunately, today not too much in the way of sand and bulldust as yesterday. During the first of these off-road sessions my left-hand box fell off again. As we have the solution it did not take too long to reattach it with the remains of the strap that was tying it on.

The earlier repair has lasted quite well considering the punishment that it took yesterday. Just as the last of the roadworks were at an end we got pulled over by the cops and told off for speeding. We had just come off the last of the dirt back onto the tarmac so I had opened up. Anyway, after some groveling they let us off. A little further there was a village and again as I saw the de-restriction sign ahead I opened up but almost immediately had to brake as a policeman ran out into the road.



Meanwhile, Geoff and Richard at the east coast, Eastern Cape on a tour of their own

This time his mate had me on radar doing 87 in a 50 limit. He took our licenses and then said we had to pay a fine in the end £8 each without a receipt which for sure went straight in their pockets, but we got our licenses back. Shortly afterwards we again got stopped in a similar trap. But this time we were not speeding and the cop was just friendly and curious. In fact generally at the stops they are just curious and we have a friendly chat before being sent on our way. Mbeya appeared and we passed through there slowly. Thereafter the roads were OK albeit tram-lined quite badly especially on the hills by the trucks.

I pulled at one point as I was convinced my front tyre had lost pressure; the grooved tarmac steers the bike directly and it felt like the front tyre was deflated. We had some rain in the mountains, the first since Oman. The scenery was nothing special, although where my box fell off could well have been in Saxony, Alex observed. There were plantations of fir trees. The houses were now mostly made from brick with tin roofs.



Baobab trees

The border controls were relatively efficient at the Tanzanian side but the Zambian Customs and the road toll permits took some time. There was some problem finding Alex's e-visa on their system but in the end they decided to give him one. In general, I would say that most Customs officials except the Kenyan man at Moyale have never seen a carnet before. There are not too many tourists with their own transport on these roads. Reading my road toll permit I see that they have mixed up the registration numbers of the bikes and that my passport was issued by Saudi Arabia. I hope that this does not cause us problems.

Thursday, November 3, 2016

OK it is dawn on the 3rd now. It is 1,000km to Lusaka from here and 1,500km to Livingstone. There is a place called Mpika 376km down the road where Billy stopped before. And according to the map there might be a hotel at Serenje which is 621km away. The next 100km are supposed to be tarmac but with potholes. So last night's decision was to see by what time we get to Mpika and then decide whether to ride further or not. The snag is this country is not too liberally supplied with accommodation along the road.

Meanwhile my two sons had arrived in Johannesburg and Geoff had got hold of the hire bike whilst Richard had hired a Polo and they found it a bit hot in Jo'burg so after some cultural touring they set off on a tour of their own.

Mkushi Boma

Mkushi Boma, Central Province, Zambia

Thursday, November 3, 2016

As it is unlikely that you will find this place on the map; suffice to say that it is 300km up the T2 Great North Road from Lusaka and 720km from Nakonde on the Tanzanian border. So after we had a half decent breakfast for 45 Kwacha each (I got 1,000 KWA from an ATM and took a hit of Dh415, so there are 2.35 KWA to the Emarati dirham) we bought some water and cracked off towards Mpika which was 327km. We refuelled there and decided as it was only 1pm that Serenje was on the cards. We had been advised that there were hotels there. However we were also told that better accommodation was available another 100km further on where we are now.

After a cautious start due to not knowing the road which was a wide single track we were soon humming along at 100-110kph. After about halfway to Mpika the pavement quality improved and our speed crept up. A little way on Alex pulled in in need of sustenance and we visited a roadside cafe. I parked the bike carefully and climbed off and promptly fell down a drainage channel. No harm done but I was a bit wet! Basically the roads just got better and past Serenje it was excellent by which time we were doing 130kph.

Traffic was generally light all day and principally consisted of full petrol tankers southbound and empty tankers going north as well as heavy goods. (So they import refined petroleum products from Dar es Salaam) There were almost no cars. Road alignments are almost straight so it is easy to overtake. There was occasional evidence of head on collisions between trucks which usually were burnt out and several lying on their side where the drivers must have fallen asleep.

The road is lined with bushes and trees and occasionally villages or just huts along the way. The charcoal burners offered their sacks for sale; apparently, it takes a week to make a load in a slow burn. It is the principal cooking fuel all over Africa. We pulled in at a viewing point as there was a big valley and a lower plain off to the side of the road. There were several women walking towards us with containers. Turned out that they were full of caterpillars, big fat green ones. At the Mpika petrol stop they were selling them fried. Alex tried a couple, they were a bit crunchy and salty, he said. I opted for the peanuts.

Unfortunately, there is no internet here so this upload is going to be delayed until tomorrow evening when, it is possible, provided that the traffic around Lusaka does not delay us unduly, that we might reach Livingstone. But it is another 680km. Possible - if the roads and traffic are as they were today.



Alex with the caterpillar collectors



Caterpillars

At Victoria Falls

Livingstone, Southern Province, Zambia

Friday, November 4, 2016

The plan was to get here and after 9½ hours in the saddle we have made it to a 5-star hotel and the first beers have just arrived. 770km. We had a fast first two hours averaging 100kph towards Lusaka but inevitably slowed up in hour three as we went straight through the city. On the road south outside of the city in the countryside we got pulled in a speed trap. The cops claimed that there was an 80 limit. If there was a sign it was hiding somewhere. So we went to see two attractive lady cops in the car in the shade. We both had our money out, indeed I had handed mine over, but it was given back and we were told we could go. There is an overall maximum of 120kph, but that is not posted anywhere, neither do they do de-restriction signs.



A zebra and monkeys in the garden of the Royal Livingstone Hotel

The occasional 100kph signs appear and you wonder why. 80 followed by 60 and even 40 in a village and there will be speed rumble strips, a crossing or two and usually some speed humps. So you count down in reverse from the last crossing point and you might see the signs for the opposite direction.

The roads in Zambia are generally good, not many with tram lined surfaces or potholes. But apart from nearby to Lusaka no dual carriageways. The scenery alongside the road consists of the bush with frequently burnt undergrowth. There is usually some people lurking as they pop out from nowhere if you stop. Children offering fruits and chickens line the road. Charcoal in sacks but projecting from the top of the sack and the whole stacked up on rocks to make it look as if there is more - there is a lot of competition. And the towns and the villages are a colourful cacophony of shops, stalls, traffic and people. One thing that you notice after Ethiopia and then Kenya is the relative absence of domestic animals. Just the occasional goat and sometimes cows. But nothing like the countries further north. 130kph is possible safely.



The colonial bar



The T2 Great North Road in Zambia

Thus we have passed through Zambia in two days which is likely a great shame but we have seen the Great North Road - we have one of those in England as well called the A1, it runs from London to Edinburgh. We are now sat in a bar with a very colonial feel, it likely dates from the correct period. And a man is playing ragtime on the piano. And I have a 12-year old scotch at my elbow. We are allowed some little luxuries after the rigours of this trip! Dinner was excellent. The mozzies are annoying me though; Alex has just returned with a repellent spray provided by the hotel.

OK, tomorrow, the plan is to rise at dawn and take a ten-minute walk along the river bank to see the falls. Water levels are down at the moment they say. Followed by breakfast, then checkout and a further 60km upstream there is a ferry which gets us into Botswana. We will spend a night in Francistown and the following day into South Africa.

At Victoria Falls and on to Francistown in Botswana

Francistown, North-East District, Botswana

Saturday, November 5, 2016

We got up early and took the hotel electric cars to the entry point for the falls paths. Disappointing amount of water flowing over but we got the idea from the photographs that we saw later on the path. Alex bought the DVD. We walked back to the Royal Livingstone hotel through the grounds. Came across three zebra chewing the lawn. I went reasonably close to one to get the picture and then it started running. I thought away but no, it did a last minute swerve and presented its rear to me and I was just fast enough to avoid more than glancing blow from its hooves! Alex amused himself taking pictures and it had a go at him too. Meanwhile I had walked on and got some pictures of monkeys.



Zebra about to have a go at me

Breakfast was next and very civilised it was too, sat out on the veranda overlooking the lawn leading down to the river Zambezi - the part above the falls. Next Alex went for a boat trip to the top of the falls. We got away about midday and cracked off westwards from Livingstone heading for the border post at Kazungula.



The 1905 railway bridge at the falls



The dry part of the falls



Victoria Falls (dry season)

The exit from Zambia was better than the entry but a tout was trying to make himself useful. Anyway, with the temperature at 39°C and the sweat pouring off us I was in no mood to argue, just wanted the whole thing over as quickly as possible. We had to pay some sort of local tax for each bike and also buy two ferry tickets. Receipts were issued. After that through the gate and onto the ferry. The Botswana side has no touts and the immigration and customs carnet stamping happens along the same counter. There was no charge for the entry stamp in the passports but we had to buy road tolls for the bikes.



The Kazangula ferry across the Zambezi



Somewhere in Botswana

At just after 2pm having refuelled using Pula for money we set off southwards the 483km to Francistown. This was an easy if longish ride down straight roads with very little other traffic. The bush is to both sides but with a fairly generous cleared strip, frequently burnt either side. I think that they must do this to stop the animals chewing the grasses next to the road. We first saw one elephant crossing the road, later a small herd of them. A few antelopes and lots of donkeys and cows.

Another fuel stop later we were on the last 188km to Francistown into which we arrived in the dark. We are at a fairly soulless hotel and the second room we got has a working A/C. So now we are both showed and a beer and food is next. Across the border into South Africa tomorrow and a meeting with Geoff.

At Sparkling Waters in South Africa

Near Rustenburg, North West, South Africa

Sunday, November 6, 2016

Hello from the Sparkling Waters Resort somewhere near to Rustenburg in South Africa. I am pleased to report that we have met with Geoff.

So today's report starts at the Mercourt hotel in Francistown in Botswana. A very acceptable breakfast was consumed, the fresh orange juice was especially good - I had lots, must have still been a bit dehydrated from yesterday. We set off at 9.00am, refuelled and headed on southwards. I have previously mentioned the Tanzanian radar traps. Seems that the Botswana police have learnt the same trick. Find a place where the signs are either absent or concealed and then set up the trap. I was doing a legal, as I thought, 78kph in an 80 limit when we got pulled. You were in a 60 limit. 500pula fine. Well by this time with the border with South Africa less than 80km away Alex had spent all his Botswana money whilst I had 100 pula left in case of charges at the border.



*A view of the Zambezi river
from the Royal Livingstone*

So in the end this was offered and accepted and we went on our way. No receipt, so you know where the "fine" went. At the end of the day this is only \$9.50 or Dh35 so it is just one of those things.

The exit from Botswana was efficient and quick. We then crossed the Limpopo river - big potholes on the Botswana side - then we arrived in South Africa. At the first stop we got a paper with the registration number of the bike. We parked up queued for a while. Four windows but only one manned at Immigration so it took some time. Next was customs and the large lady there called a colleague to look at the bikes; eventually he turned up and shortly the carnets were written up and were stamped.

So we entered South Africa finally. It was only 188km from where we had last brimmed the tanks so we motored on. We still had almost 300km to go and it was 2pm. Fortunately the roads were almost empty and it was easy to maintain a high speed. It looked greener and fresher somehow along the roads, there were almost no grazing animals, indeed proper fencing lined the roads with the goats and cows behind them. Nice curves were a feature as well as mountains and hills sticking up from the otherwise relatively flat terrain. We saw a train with what must have been five locomotives straining to pull an enormous length of ore wagons moving slowly. I was immediately reminded of what must have been a kilometre or more of parked northbound trucks on the South African side of the border, wondering how long it took for a truck to pass into Botswana.

Sparkling Waters Resort where Alex had lived for some months when working nearby at one of the mines is under reconstruction, so quite a lot of pine trees have been cut down and roads and car parks are being built. However, all other facilities are still available we are told although having just arrived last evening I have yet to discover what these are.

At Sparkling Waters Resort

Near Rustenburg, North-West, South Africa

Monday, November 7, 2016

Having hit my bed early I am awake at just before 5am. It is still dark outside. Today is the 7th and after the hammering we have been doing this last three days we are resolved to have a rest day, clean up the bikes and get out the computer and map and re-plan the remainder of the trip. It is 1,432km from here to Cape Town in a relatively straight line by road according to Google maps or about two long days of riding. We have to return Geoff's bike to Cape Town on the 13th so if we leave here on the 8th that will leave five days to get there by the end of the 12th so giving about a day there to see something of the city before returning the hire bike and Geoff getting on his plane back to Johannesburg. But if we did it in four days with an extra Cape Town day that would be about a 358km a day average - say 450km or so to allow for diversions.

I want to include the Baviaanskloof which is a forgotten valley lost in time and you get a T-shirt at the shop there and the respect of every South African biker. That will be one day from Patenzie to Willowmore. And the Swartberg Pass is another must between Oudtshoorn and Prince Albert. Game drives are already done by all three of us but a visit to the cat place which is some way west of Port Elizabeth might be appreciated.

Probably a quick dash southwards to get away from the heat here in the north - we had 40°C a couple of times yesterday - makes sense and we get to the interesting stuff. And then there is Cape Aguilas and a long dirt road and the Breede river crossing on the pontoon ferry. I am not sure how much of this can be included. But some planning is to be done. Alex has his computer with Mapsource loaded as well as maps so with these tools we will see what can be salvaged from the original tour in the time we have left.

Early Morning at Sparkling Waters

Near Rustenburg, North-West, South Africa

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

Today we set off again southwards. Basically, we have to cover 1,100km over the next two days to arrive at Patensie by the evening of the 10th. Thus, Bloemfontein might be tonight's stop or possibly a bit further on. Yesterday was a rest day. The bikes got cleaned. The tar that I was worried about turned out not to be too much of a problem as it was on top of the dirt and for the most part and not actually stuck to the bike. But a Karcher power washer would have been good to have. The internet here is so slow that it is almost unusable so no photos or this will never upload. More this evening when I can report on the day.



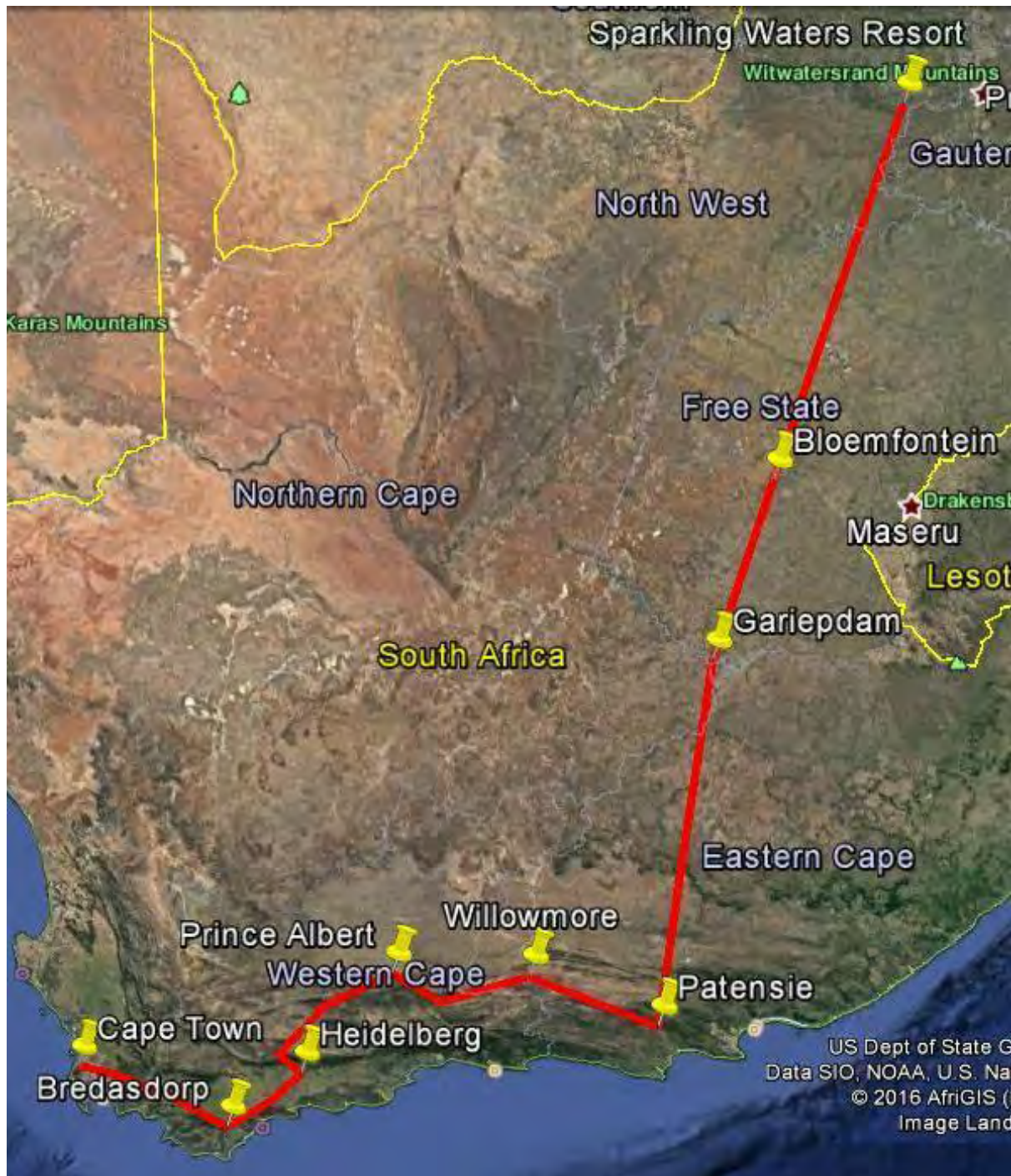
*The mountain
pass shortcut
just to start the
day*

AFRICAN ADVENTURE

DUBAI TO CAPE TOWN BY MOTORBIKE

Chapter 5

Sparkling Waters – Gariepdam – Patensie – Willowmore – Heidelberg – Bredasdorp – Cape Town



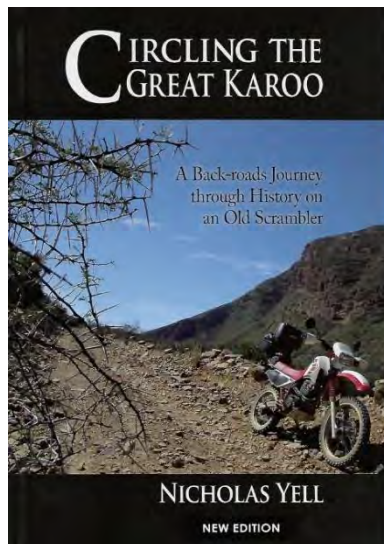
At Gariepdam

Gariepdam, Free State, South Africa

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

Evening time at Gariepdam site chalets. We got a two-bedroom chalet for only R775 reduced in price as I am a senior citizen by about 30%. We are about 180km south of Bloemfontein and perhaps 40km north-east of Colesberg. We ran initially 10km to the fuel station and got sorted then retraced a small way before turning up a dirt road that went over the Magaliesberg mountain. Now if I was to separate technical difficulty due to the state of the running surface and danger factor as in width of track and steepness of slope and mark them out of ten compared with some of the worst tracks in either the UAE or the Oman, it would rate an eight for the surface and about six for the other. Not easy! But we survived and rejoined the main road instead of driving around the mountain. A pretty tough introduction to off-roading for Geoff who did well!

Thereafter we rode some nice curves for a while through farmland principally. Further south the land flattened out and stretched away into the distance either side and was grassland with cows. At some point we joined the N1 and continued south. We went through a toll plaza and shortly after that it was dual carriageway and the 120kph limit still applied. Trucks coming the other way were flashing their lights. The police were hiding in the shadow of the over-bridges with radar. There were four separate traps but forewarned we drive past all of them unscathed. We refuelled again just before Bloemfontein. Alex asked a local if the town was interesting to see. No, it wasn't but some of the suburbs had nice houses so we passed by on the bypass.



To the south of Bloemfontein the countryside became more dry and I started to recognise the names of places mentioned in a book called "Circling the Great Karoo". I bought this when I was last in South Africa. It was written by a motorcycling journalist who was based in George on the south coastline and who set off on an old dirt bike following the trails created by the original settlers.

Apart from describing the journey and the people and places along the way he also tells you about the flora and fauna, the geology and the Boer war. I have read this several times, it really got to me for some reason.

Where we have ended up for the night is a resort built along the shoreline of the lake behind the Gariep dam. The place is almost empty. The internet only works in the restaurant and again there is an MB limit so no photos today. Tomorrow is more than 500km to Patensie. And then we see what the weather has been doing as passing through the Baviaanskloof if it has been raining with nearly bald tyres will not be sensible.

At Patensie

Patensie, Eastern Cape South Africa

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

Patensie is about 50km north-west from Port Elizabeth. We got here at about 3.30pm having ridden 550km since this morning from at the Gariepdam chalet place. First was a fast 40km run on back roads to Colesberg then via Middelburg to Graaf Reinet then down the R75 to Uitenhage before heading briefly along the N2 before turning off for Patensie. The northern part of this route is really beautiful. The light was fantastic in the bright sunshine but as we were above 1,500m for the most part it was a cool 25°C.

We stopped for petrol in Graaf Reinet about midday but by this point we had already summited the Lootsberg Pass and dropped down from 1,781m to a few hundred metres above sea level. The R75 is not too bad a road but it is somewhat rougher on the bikes and the riders in places. Uitenhage looked to be a nice town as we came down from the hills but not quite onto the coastal plain. Here the weather is a lot cooler than up on the Karoo. Nice not to be running with sweat when you climb off the bike at journey's end.



A petrol station yesterday

We are checked in to the Ripple Hill hotel where they have free and fast internet so for once normal service has been resumed and all mails and apps are working. I might even get to read the Telegraph on line when I finish this. The locals say that it has not rained for a while so the rivers in the Baviaanskloof will be low so making for an easy passage. Let's hope the section where Heike lost it in the mud and ripped off a pannier is dry. So tomorrow the plan is to ride through this amazing valley and end the day either at Willowmore or Uniondale depending on what Geoff can discover in the way of cheap digs. We spoke with a man today who said that the road on the northern side of the Swartberg Pass was in bad condition but as our tyres are already cut, a bit more in the way of bad roads cannot make them much worse. Both Alex's bike and mine now have the service notification in the display. But they will make it to Cape Town.

I have a feeling of euphoria now having survived a long journey through Africa which apart from some sections of the dirt roads was generally free from too much hassle. However such a journey really brings it home to you how other intrepid travellers must have suffered battling through the jungles of South America. I am totally in awe of such people. Seriously hard.



At the Lootsberg Pass



*Summit of the Lootsberg Pass at
1,791m*



1.3kg of ribs. He almost finished this!

The Baviaanskloof

Willowmore, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Thursday, November 10, 2016

This valley with a couple passes included runs east-west between Patensie in the east and Willowmore in the west. Distance 196km. Apart from the initial 15 to 20km on tarmac heading west from Patensie the rest is a dirt road of variable standard, width and gradient. A lot of the time you are driving along a narrow bumpy track between trees with occasional sightings of baboons, a couple of Kudu and eventually two tortoises. In the eastern part the river crossings were mostly dry or very shallow.



Mountain climb in Baviaanskloof

No difficulty at all especially as they have all been concreted. Roughly in the middle the track climbs up over a mountain. The climb goes on for some time with the surface in pretty bad shape and many exposed bedrock parts. It winds around the hillsides in the usual manner of mountain roads, with no Armco or barriers. Quite a lot of this offered exposure equal to the UAE or Oman tracks except that there is no bulldust. I forgot to look at the altimeter when we got to the top. On the way down there were some seriously scary sections but we all went through these OK.



A nice wide, downhill section, not too loose or too steep

The western water crossings were more tricky as there was more water but again almost all had a concrete roadway. There were one or two sections which last time I came through here were full of rounded pebbles and water but today were mostly dry. Only one section was a little difficult and we all got a bit wet but no one fell over. At the 140km point there is a café – well, a house by the side of the road that does some food, coffee and tea. And opposite this is the shop where the Baviaanskloof T-shirts can be purchased. We all bought one.



At the craft shop

It was then a mere 54km to Willowmore and by the time there was 33km left we were onto a much better gravel road running mostly straight over moorland type country and were travelling at 75-80kph. The gravel road joins the Willowmore to Uniondale road 3km south of the former. We rolled into town and are now staying at the Willow guest house which has three stars. It is a delightfully old two story house with many features. We have rooms with twin beds upstairs with a generously sized en-suite bathroom. The bar has all sorts of pictures and other memorabilia in it. Alex spotted a genuine Eastern German military cap. We have Internet and means of charging the phones and this iPad so all is well.



Geoff relieved that the worst of the Baviaanskloof is over

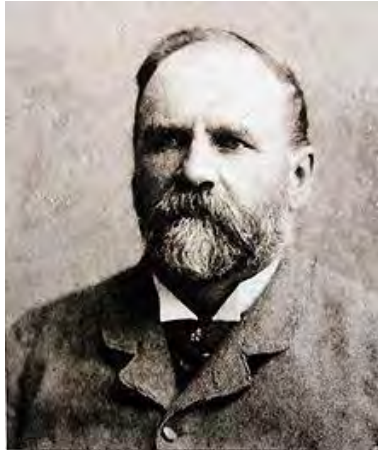
At Heidelberg

Heidelberg, Western Cape, South Africa

Friday, November 11, 2016

Today we started at Willowmore and it was cold at 12°C. Breakfast was up to the usual South African standard and the checkout not being computerised was extremely efficient being hand written including the dinner and the bar from the night before. You begin to wonder whether computers are helping us!

A fast run had us to De Rust then up the Meiringspoort Pass to Prince Albert where lunch was consumed a couple of hundred metres further down the street from where we stayed last time I was here. Then we went over the Swartberg Pass. Thomas Bain did an excellent job constructing this and it is still maintained by the roads people. It is an easy passage, nevertheless care is required not to leave the track and head off down the mountain.



Thomas Charles John Bain (29 September 1830 in Graaff-Reinet – 29 September 1893) was a South African road engineer. As a prolific road building pioneer, Bain was responsible for the planning and construction of more than 900 km of roads and mountain passes, many of them still in use today, over a career spanning from 1848 until 1888. These passes through the mountain ranges between the thin coastal plain and the interior of the former Cape Colony in South Africa, played a major role in opening up the vast hinterland of South Africa.

Right hand bends are particularly tricky as you cannot see around them and there might be a car coming. Upon reaching the tarmac we took the Kruisriver valley road and that was mostly dirt as well.



North side of the Swartberg Pass

We hit the R62 after that and opened the throttles a bit reaching Ladismith then headed off for Barrydale. Before you reach Barrydale you come upon Ronnie's Sex Shop alongside the road. Actually, it is just a bar and a shop. Initially it did not do much business until one of Ronnie's friends added the appropriate word. It has been a tourist attraction for several years since. It was but 64km to Heidelberg after that but once again we got some dirt road which I was not expecting. The Tradouw Pass is good fun on a bike but to tell you the truth I was too tired and my tyres are really finished now so I took it very steadily. We are now at the Heidelberg Hotel which is kind of old fashioned but nice anyway.



Farmland along the way

We Made it to Cape Town

Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa

Saturday, November 12, 2016

The day at Heidelberg dawned somewhat cool and damp. We were on the way in a fine drizzle about 8.30 to find petrol and the way out of town. A short way along the N2 we turned for Witstrand and then again onto a 100km long dirt road that leads almost to Bredasdorp via Malagas. Fortunately the rain held off and the water just dampened the surface so eliminating the dust problem. We took the wets off at the river crossing. Here there is a pontoon that ferries you across the Breede River. There is a fixed wire cable attached to the pontoon running through wheels and men attached chains to this and then walk from one end to the other. 20 Rand for a bike to cross. This long road serves the farms along it and there were endless fields some with cows, but mostly harvested wheat and barley I guess and occasionally a combine-harvester working.



Breede river crossing

At Bredasdorp, Alex continued to Agulhas and had pictures taken at the southernmost point of Africa. Geoff and I headed north-west to Caledon and after a warming coffee in a Wimpy we joined the N2 and headed for Cape Town. There was then but 115km to our final destination. After descending Lowry's pass from which a nice view of Cape Town can be seen we turned off for Somerset West. The plan was to swerve by the BMW dealer in Stellenbosch. I mistakenly thought that that was where Donfords, the BMW dealer was located to where we had to return the hire bike. It was closed when we got there on a Saturday just after midday but the man there told us of another Donfords in Cape Town. We have since located that using Google Maps and the excellent internet in this hotel at Sea Point.

Having arrived just about spot-on the 2pm booking-in time Geoff and I parked the bikes and were shown to our hotel apartment on the fourth floor. It is actually only fractionally smaller than my flat in Dubai.

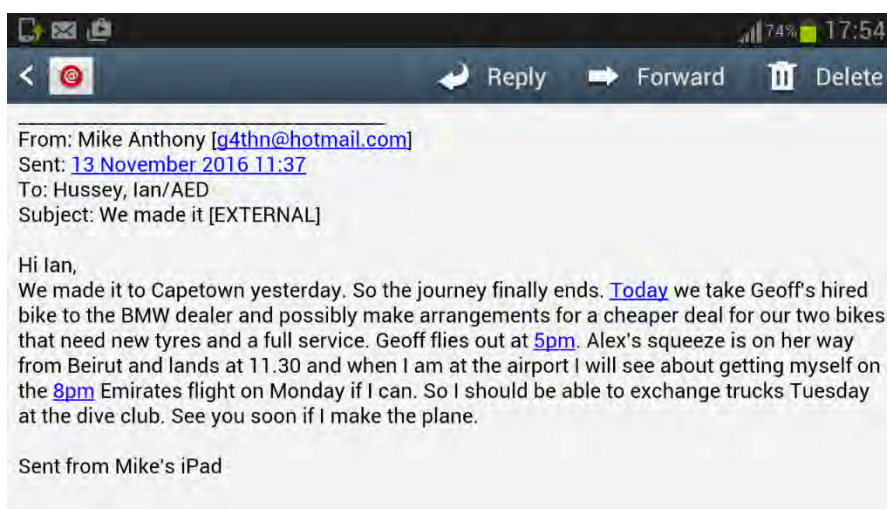
Showered and changed into normal clothes we set off walking along the seafront in sunshine but a nevertheless chilling wind towards the Victoria and Albert Waterfront. Along the way we encountered several hundred people doing The Colour Run. Seems they call by various stations along the way and get powdered paint thrown at them. Whatever it takes I suppose! After what must have been three or four kilometres we arrived and hit the Mitchell's brewery pub for a swift one.



At Cape Town. Nice marine crane and Table Mountain

Beer prices were now as high as R40 - 42 a pint. It was R25 in Heidelberg and that was double what we had been paying further north. We explored all the way to the end. Upon the return journey, I managed to buy a bag to put my gear in and Geoff toyed with the idea of some trainers. Another beer and some excellent mussels were consumed just to keep us going until dinner. We ended up walking all the way back to the hotel as the traffic was gridlocked around the stadium where we thought about getting on a bus. By this time Alex had arrived so we met up. We were pretty tired by then so we ate in the hotel which was a mistake with the fish overcooked and all three dishes totally overloaded with pepper. But they managed to arrange a cheese platter, the first in six weeks.

The rest of the place was excellent, nice apartment room with separate bedroom with en-suite and a partial ocean view.



Last Days in Cape Town

Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Monday, November 21, 2016

OK I am writing this after the event just to close-out the blog.

Next day we had to get Geoff's bike to a place to be off-hired so we managed that and met Candi who took possession of a very dirty but otherwise undamaged bike. Two-up we set off for the Table Mountain cable car but upon arriving were told that it was closed due to high winds, so we went to Signal Hill where in fact better photos can be taken of Robben island and the city. Meanwhile Alex had ridden to the airport, hired a car and picked up his lady friend, Mireille, from Beirut. After lunch we all four returned to the airport, Geoff got on his plane back to Johannesburg and I rode Alex's bike back to where he and Mireille were staying.

Next day we met at Donfords who are the BMW dealer in Cape Town and we checked in our bikes for servicing and new tyres. They said that they would store them for free so that was one less job to be done, taking them way later in the week to a store. We walked back to his guest house via a barber where we had haircuts and a beard trim. Then it was back to the seafood restaurant in the V&A for lunch. We left Mireille pillaging the shops whilst Alex took me to the airport in the car.

I managed to get on the 6.15pm Emirates flight back to Dubai which landed at dawn and by 9.30am Tuesday I was back on site at work.



*At Victoria and Albert
Waterfront in Cape Town*



*Table Mountain in the
background*

We covered 10,093km on the road overall including the 1,250km from my flat to Salalah. The dhow crossing was another 1,250km. No breakdowns other than the thorns in Alex's front tyre in Ethiopia and several sheddings of my left-hand pannier for which we eventually came up with a permanent solution using a strap. We finished both rear tyres and my front was in a bad way as well as the somewhat more aggressive tread pattern wears unevenly under braking. We had GPS problems which Alex fixed with a reset in my case and downloading some software in his case. But I think his Zumo 500 is on the way out; mine died during the summer after eight years of use.



Rear tyres at Cape Town: left – Alex, right - Mike

As you can read we had a slow start, had to hang around for a week in Salalah to get on a dhow, spent six days at sea and then lost a further five days due to visa problems in Somaliland and getting into Ethiopia. Having set off on 5th October we did not cross into Ethiopia until the 26th of the month. After that we pretty much hammered it through the countries along the way to South Africa.

Meanwhile my sons were committed to the original dates and Geoff's bike hire started on 1 November. However, Geoff along with Richard had almost a week going to the Drakensberg which was part of my original plan, then to the Natal coastline through Richard's Bay, Durban and St Lucia before looping back to Jo'burg. But we finally met up near to Rustenburg and with re-planning we managed to get to Cape Town and do some good stuff along the way.



