

This desert must have at some time been well-watered and fertile as the North African desert which was at one time the granary of the world for when we arrived at Tchaukaib where we, with other Units including two mounted regiments had been camped for some time we noticed a fine crop of oats and barley. The horses had been fed in the horse lines but a fair amount of grain was left and shortly after our leaving there had been some heavy rain and so up came the wheat etc which the ostriches and gazelle were no doubt pleased to feed on.

We eventually embarked on the City of Athens an old Ellerman-Bucknall passenger ship and set off for Cape Town where, after dropping a few men, the ship carried on to East London. Here we berthed on the West Bank and after landing were paraded but not given permission to talk to the crowds of people and relatives who had come to welcome us. We were marched to the Market Square where we were kept standing while various dignitaries made long, and to us, dull speeches. After what seemed hours we were marched to the Drill Hall and then at last dismissed. We had to assemble a few days later to draw our pay, each man contributing a days pay towards the memorial which now stands in the Hex River Pass to those who were killed there in the rail disaster. This memorial is tended to by railway officials and can be seen from the train.

After this spell of Military duty I was entitled to a month's leave and full pay of 3/- per day and a free rail warrant to Palapye Road and back to East London. I had quite a pleasant trip and was met at Palapye station by Dad and we drove the 37 miles to Serowe in the old cape cart and six mules. It was lovely being home again. My brother Gerald had joined the Protectorate Service and was stationed at their headquarters which were then on the Government Reserve the name of the square mile of ground either rented or on loan from the Union Government, on the outskirts of Mafeking. The seat of Government of what is now the self-governing state of Botswana is in Gaborone on what was the Imperial Reserve, as separate from the the tribal-owned territories.

Shortly after my arrival the old Chief Khama, grandfather of the present Prime Minister, Seretse Khama - who, while studying in England, had married a white woman. He was an old man, in his eighties, and rode up to the house sitting his fine horse as straight as anyone could. He had come to pay his respects as he always did when either Gerald or I arrived. He, as usual, only stayed long enough to have a cup of tea and offer me any transport I wanted to go shooting on his reserve. It was of course June and shooting season. The old man was a strict teetotaler and banned any strong drink in his territory although Europeans were not barred from importing liquor.

Our home was three rondavels interleading and large passages which were used as bedrooms. It was very comfortable indeed. There was also a wide verandah all round and the whole dwelling was enclosed with mosquito netting which was most necessary.

The village of Serowe covered about two square miles and consisted as I have already mentioned, of groups of family huts. I should mention that there must at some time have been people or tribes who inhabited the hills for the hill at the back of the Ghotla had the remains of old middens. Prof Schapera on one of his visits went to the top of the one hill and found beads of old ostrich egg shells and a few of their old weapons of stone etc.