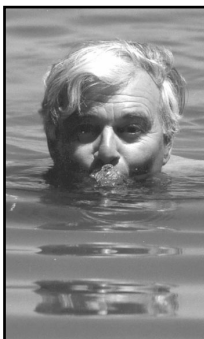


Special feature

A walk before breakfast



I am sure that you can think back over your life and recall occasions when breakfast was really special. I can think of several. There was one at University, after an all-night ball, when our party had bacon and eggs washed down with champagne; and I remember once staying at a very expensive hotel where a breakfast trolley, groaning with every trimming you could think of was wheeled into our room. A romantic occasion of the first order. However, recently, I had a breakfast the memory of which will live with me until the day I die.

Earlier this year my wife Camilla and I holidayed in Kenya, the country of my birth and early upbringing. We have family there and we know it quite well. Some friends there invited us to join them for a few nights at a wonderful and remote bush camp, a set-up designed and built by my cousin and her husband for the most discerning safari-goer. It is called Sahara Camp in the Matthews Range of northern Kenya. It is an 8-hour bumpy drive from Nairobi, or a one-hour flight by light plane. We flew there! The camp consists of five luxurious tents, each with its own fully plumbed bathroom

Above left to right: Some of the Safari with their guide. Middle: Hamish relaxing in the pool and right, Camilla Harvey in the same pool watching an elephant drinking from the waterhole.

and a large rustic, thatched building for meals and sitting out. This has open sides looking over unspoilt Africa and immediately in front is a swimming pool, fashioned out of the large rocks. Below this, about 100 yards down the hill, is the only permanent water hole (fed from the camp) where animals can come safely to drink. Elephant are frequent visitors.

I only tell you this to set the background to where we spent 3 glorious days. Not only did we sortie forth from this camp in specially equipped safari Landrovers, from which to view the wild game, but we were also invited to take walking safaris – anything up to 2 hours or so – in the cool of the early morning or indeed in the evenings when the heat of the sun had diminished. For these perambulations we had the benefit of the camp's guide, Mark, a local and very knowledgeable Samburu tribesman. For security, should we stumble upon any dangerous animals, we had two armed game rangers.

We were offered an early morning walk for the first morning we were there, which 8 of us accepted with alacrity. We awoke to watch the incredible African sunrise from our lovely tent. So near to the Equator the sun seems to leap into the sky and the dawn twilight, from pitch dark to blazing sunshine is remarkably short but

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equally dramatic. We had not gone far before our guide, Mark was pointing out the footprints of many varied animals in the dusty path. They were the spoor of elephant, lion, leopard and hyena. Amongst the smaller animals there were signs of mongoose, civet cats, porcupine and many types of gazelle. Mark was fascinating in his interpretation of the footprints; he could discern how long before us the animal had passed, which way they were going, whether male or female in many cases and often whether the animals were juvenile or mature – very impressive!

Our route took us through an open area with light scrub, on through thicker growths of acacia trees until we came to a dry, sandy ligger – a river course which only flowed in heavy rains. On the way – not too close but near enough – we saw giraffe, elephant, greater kudu and several pairs of the charming, little dikdik antelope. We followed the ligger downstream and marvelled at the endless variety of the birds we saw.

Remarkable were the hornbills, the vulturine guinea fowl, the barbets and best of all, the kingfishers. Although the ligger was dry, there were in fact several water holes dug into the sand to provide drinking water for the occasional passing herds of cattle; the wild animals also benefiting. It was a walk through paradise in the morning sun surrounded by the sights and sounds of wildest Africa.

Mark led us on until, after some 2 hours, we came round a thicket on the river bank to see 8 chairs surrounding a small table with a white cloth, all in the shade of an enormous acacia tree. Discreetly parked to one side was the camp's Landrover, behind which we could see the smoke rising from a small fire. The camp's cook was there, as was the waiter from our dining room. We all sat in the chairs and viewed the sight before us; the sandy ligger, the wild bush and the hills of the Matthews Range a few miles beyond – so picturesque. All this accompanied by the variety of bird song that is so dominant at that early hour of the African day.

This was all something of a surprise to us – but oh so welcome! The table was groaning under a large plate of sliced pineapple, plates, cups and saucers, toasts, butter, jams and marmalades and several thermos jugs of tea and coffee. While we ate our pineapple, the sweetest imaginable, tantalising smells drifted from the campfire beyond the parked Landrover. It was not long before we were all tucking into bacon, sausages and scrambled egg, all served to us by the colourfully dressed Samburu waiter. None of us had realised just how hungry we were, but we ate every morsel of food put in front of us.

What a meal and what a setting! We all of us learnt a whole new meaning to “a walk before breakfast”.

Hamish Harvey

NEWS FROM FIFIELD

Idbury Manor made a wonderful setting for our Easter Egg Hunt and lunch and we were lucky that the weather held out for us. We raised the very respectable sum of £400, a third of which will go to Village Hall funds and the remainder to our two churches. **Our next function** is the **Summer Barbecue on 7th June**; at Sunny Bank, High Street. Then an extra event which has crept into the calendar is fund raising for refurbishment of St. John's - in particular to replace the lighting. All are welcome to enjoy a **Cream Tea** at 'Old Housing' in Church Street where there will also be plants and other items for sale on **28th June** at 3.00 p.m.

Pat Yaxley