

## Diary – June/July 2015

**June 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>**

A first for me in this mad place; coming in from the airport this morning in the driving RAIN!! I saw two men on a little piki piki motor bike. Firmly wedged between the two of them was a great big goat with various legs sticking out at all sorts of odd angles. I'm not sure if it was dead or alive but hope for its' sake that it was dead. Talking of rain it is very cold and wet. As usual I have packed all the wrong clothes. I have one light cardigan, seven floaty summer dresses, one skirt, two ¾ length trousers and a few T-shirts. No warm jumpers, no rainwear/umbrella/wellies etc. so I guess I will spend the time freezing cold and soaking wet. What a lovely prospect. I am in need of a shower after the rigours of them journey but hate being cold and wet at the same time so unless things improve a lot I shall be stinky, filthy and dishevelled for some time yet.

The journey was long and tedious. I had to renew my acquaintance with Nairobi airport – it's no more pleasant than it was a few years ago. It was a very long walk from arrival gate to departure gate and an extremely long queue to get through the so-called security checks. On arrival at Kili the health authorities decided that everyone needed a yellow fever certificate regardless of where they had come from. I have one but couldn't be bothered to dig around for it and it is not a requirement to have one unless coming from a yellow fever area which good old Blighty is not, in so far as I am aware. Silly people. I made my point and was waved through. Visa purchase went smoothly, finger print checks less so but good enough and luggage came in in dribs and drabs but eventually I got all my things. Good old Silvester was waiting for me and we headed out in the pouring rain for Ilboru. Prices of foodstuffs are rising steeply, the economy is shot to pieces but everyone is happy according to Silvester. The election draws closer and Kikwete is leaving the country in a great big mess. What a surprise. No one knows what the outcome will be in October so we await with interest. Everyone seems to have different opinions about the various and sundry politicians – 35 are standing for the presidential vote. It seems that the president can be from a different party to the government. The only consensus of opinion is that every one of them is corrupt to some degree. Not a surprise given the endemic levels of corruption in this neck of the woods. In order to vote, the people are given a small window of time in July in which they can get to register. The queues are long but if you roll up and seem to be either rich or old you are waved to the front of the queue as you are more likely to vote for the CCM party who have been in power for ever. Disgraceful. I question what international monitors of elections are doing – but according to my sources they are also bought off by the incumbent party so that's all very unhelpful. So much for the democratic process in Tanzania. I will no doubt write more about politics as the election draws ever closer but will stop for now and go and bang my head on the nearest wall.

I just remembered that we had a little international incident this evening. I was standing on the balcony of the restaurant having a ciggie and milling around below me was a large group of youngsters – teenagers I guess. One of them had a small knife and was busy chopping small pieces off the various plants in the vicinity. I watched in amazement as he attacked one of Annalies's prized palms in a pot and chopped off a whole branch. I shouted down that he was damaging the plants and of course the whole lot of the delightful mob all laughed and jeered at me. I reported this to Annalies at dinner and she went to speak to the tour leader. It transpired that they were Jordanian students planning to climb Kili. We then heard the tour leader giving the whole group a thorough telling off and then Annalies was summonsed to speak to the miscreant – horrid little boy. He maintained that he didn't touch the poor plant but eventually was made to apologise to Annalies. She had a good rant at him and told him this was a holy plant and a very rare and expensive palm.

She also told him that in future if he needed to apologise for something he should look people in the face. Good for her. The lot of them behaved like a load of yobs – not the sort of behaviour I have previously encountered here or anywhere in Tanzania. I pity the poor Kili guides who have to somehow get them up and down the mountain in one piece.

Ilboru is my home from home when I am here. There are many changes since Annalies took over from Ad last year. She has swept clean with her new broom but the staff all seem to be working well and the place is looking very pretty with her eye for design and her feminine touch. She has very kindly lent me a very warm sweater to prevent the onset of pneumonia. I have been provided with extra blankets for my bed – all a bit weird given we are only just south of the equator. I did finally take the plunge and stood under the hot shower to warm up before I dared to come out and get dressed in double-quick time to prevent frostbite. There are no happy mediums when I am here. I either die of heatstroke as in February or freeze to death as now.

### **June 20<sup>th</sup>**

I slept for nearly 12 hours last night – this travelling lark overnight does not suit me. Needless to say it was still raining and still bitterly cold when I poked my nose out of the door. I scurried to breakfast armed with my trusty Maasai blanket for shelter and warmth. I ordered two pancakes – they arrived 45 minutes later because the store was locked so no wheat flour so they had to send out to the shops to get some. I will not do that again. Silvester arrived to take me plus my huge bag of goodies to Usalama house in the driving rain. The roads are getting worse on every visit and I admire the bravery of the drivers who dare to take their vehicles out to run the gauntlet of pot holes, rocks and other hazards that pepper the route. I would hate to drive on these roads – and it is so dangerous for pedestrians. We arrived unscathed and as ever I was greeted warmly by my lovely Catherine and Anna. The three youngest kids were at home but the rest were either at school being crammed for the national exams at Standard 4 or at some religious event called a Crusade.

We had so much news to catch up on so I will try and be brief. Where to start? The small kids took me to one of the bedrooms and showed me a tiny little bulb glowing away. It was linked by a series of wires to a tiny solar panel discarded somewhere and they had got this all connected up and working. According to Catherine it even works at night. I was puzzled as no battery was evident anywhere. When the older ones finally came back from school, I investigated further. It would appear that Mercy is sent up to the roof with a small battery also attached to another solar panel.. They then send her back at night to collect this battery which is then connected to the light. Hey presto! Catherine was not aware of what they were up to because Mercy is so agile and wriggles her way through a small gap in the metal security grids and then out of the window and up the window to the roof. We were all totally amazed by this demonstration. I have warned them now that under no circumstances must they try attaching anything to our proper system in case they fry themselves to a crisp. They are the most enterprising bunch of youngsters and it is great to see them experimenting in this way. Kipara – you must be very proud of them.

Then we have the subject of HIV. I said to Catherine that we must deal with it with Johanes during this visit but to my surprise she had taken what I said on board and the whole subject was sorted. She apparently took Johanes to one side and talked for ages with him to try and find out what he was thinking and what questions he might have. She talked about his parents and what he could remember of them. He cried a lot and said he recalled seeing his Mum dead in her coffin but never understood what had happened to her. So Catherine explained about his parents and then explained that this was why he was HIV+. She was very loving and gentle with him and he has taken the whole thing on board beautifully. They decided to tell all the others and they have all accepted it

well. Goodluck said that it made sense now – I had been going on about accepting people who are sick on my last visit and they also remembered the paint exercise I did with them several years ago to demonstrate hygiene and passing of infection. They are truly all remarkable and I am so proud of them. It was agreed that it will not be discussed outside of the house and they have stuck to it apart from a suspicion that big mouth Elia may have let something slip at school. David was very angry apparently and was considering thumping Elia – most unlike David. Catherine told Elia that I would be informed of his actions so he is due a good rollicking from me when I next see him.

Next – Anna. This is possibly very lovely news but possibly very bad news for us. She has a boyfriend!! She told Catherine not to tell me until she finds out if it is serious but Catherine told me anyway and will encourage Anna to talk to me. I hope this works out for her but if it does then we will be in real danger of losing Anna which would be an absolute tragedy for Catherine and the children. They have worked brilliantly as a team and she is much loved by everyone. I cannot imagine Usalama without Anna but we will have to wait and see what happens in the fullness of time and deal with it if and when it needs dealing with.

Julieth is having another baby and it is supposedly due at the end of this month or the beginning of July. If I am still here when it comes I am to be honorary midwife and general comforter of Julieth as the hospitals do not allow partners to be present. Let them try and stop this Mama is all I can say. Catherine was very brave and accompanied by Tukaye, took herself to Tengeru hospital to have the free women's check-ups referred to last diary. I am so proud of her. This must have been a tough thing for her to do but she did it bless her. The next job is to persuade Anna and Mama Hilary to do likewise. This could be quite a mountain to climb but we will do it eventually. I have decided that Catherine is a saint and quite the most remarkable person I have ever met. I am so lucky to have her as a friend and Faraja Support is even luckier to have her as the boss here in Tanzania. She is a wonderful mother to our kids. She is a wonderful manager of the household and a truly loving human being.

The sun came out this afternoon for a while. I hope it lasts. The kids came from school and immediately Mercy demonstrated her latest achievement- the full splits. Internet permitting I will try and put a short video of this event on Facebook. She is as lithe as an elastic band and as agile as a monkey as well as being super bright. If she were in the UK she would be going to gymnastic classes and probably would have enough ability to compete at a high level. She would be a high flier by even UK standards. How lucky our kids in the UK are – they have such tremendous opportunities but they take it all for granted. It does so annoy me. Daudi came for a visit – he is the son of our landlord. To be fair to them I felt we should tell him when we are moving – early October and I am sure he will deliver this news back to his horrible parents. He brought with him a cute little girl goat – a dairy goat. The kids proceeded to play with her and she reacted to them as if they were other playful goats. She wasn't quite so keen on playing with Butu who also tried to join in. Our household is completely nuts – even the animals are not normal. One hen laid an egg on the settee in the front room. Another one tried to climb on me to lay an egg. Oh – some horrible bastards broke in a stole three of our best layers and also broke into Daudi's henhouse and stole all his hens. This is now the third time this has happened and we are very angry. We will try and make some sort of alarm system when we move to the new house with its' smart new henhouse – maybe run on solar power. Ideas please if anyone can come up with something cheap but effective. The ex- village- Chairman from whom we originally purchased our land is still pestering Catherine about selling the small piece next to the new house. This is despite me having told him in no uncertain terms where to put his super-inflated price. He is still asking a stupid price so he can continue his annoying pestering until he is all pestered out damn him.

I am sure there are plenty of things I have missed out but I need to stop now. Tomorrow I am meeting Catherine in town for lunch after church and will go and see Mama Grace who I gather is newly ensconced in her new shop in the rebuilt Maasai market. After our tremendous financial success at the Riverside Festival in Leicester recently I am going to do a five day world fair in Nottingham in September – any offers of help for this marathon gratefully accepted. We really need to continue to raise as much money as possible as costs are rising and schooling is the key to the future for them all. So I will hopefully purchase lots of lovely things from Mama Grace for this event and sell on at the Fair for vast profit for the charity. My bed awaits me and it is lovely and warm in the snuggly blanket and snuggly sweater so I will sleep soundly I hope.

### **June 21<sup>st</sup>**

In sheer defiance of the weather I have put a dress on this morning. I may live to regret this decision as the skies are grey and the wind is blowing. In fact the weather seems to be improving and I got quite hot walking into town to meet Catherine for lunch. It's amazing how much warmer it is in the town and what a difference a few metres height makes to the temperature and micro climate. The walk down to the main road is becoming more treacherous every visit. The "road" is dreadful. The recent rains have washed away even more of the mud surface and has exposed every knobbly stone and etched deep gullies and ditches the whole way down. Combined with the ever-present motor bike lunatics who whizz up and down without a care for anyone else on the "road" it is not an enjoyable pedestrian experience and I fear falling over at every step.

I got to Fifi unscathed this time and waited for Catherine to arrive. The exchange rate is very favourable for us at the moment – I am getting nearly 1/3 more to the pound. I wish it had been like this last year when we were building – it would have made an enormous difference to our costs. The locals are very concerned as from their point of view the economy is very bad indeed now and they are fearing inflation running out of control. I suspect all this is due to uncertainty over the election and it will settle down once it is done and dusted in October. But I exchanged some money for my purchases with Mama Grace and will exchange money for myself for our next visit in October whilst the going is good. Catherine arrived from a totally different direction. She explained that the local buses – dala dala – have been stopped from using the main street through the city and all routes have been diverted elsewhere. Whilst we were sitting talking and eating our ears were assaulted by constant loudspeakers on cars hailing the advent of Ramadan. Very noisy and very intrusive.

We had a lovely time just chatting away and we both really enjoy each other's company. Catherine is a truly remarkable person and I couldn't ask for a better friend. We were late getting to Maasai Market to see Mama Grace in true African style – if you can't beat 'em then join 'em. The market looks very different now. It has been completely rebuilt after the devastating fire last year. It has lost its ramshackle charm and now looks more like a vast shed full of individual stalls. I am sure it will regain character as it becomes more alive over time but was a bit of a shock to see it for the first time. It has been built to reduce fire risk and has a lot more security now which is a good thing. Mama Grace is only just up and running and her stock is well below what she will need eventually to get the business working well. It will take some time for her and the others to build everything up and for the place to buzz again. I placed a very large order with – more than I had intended – and she will be sourcing everything for mw over the next few days. She showed me a beautiful large wooden salad bowl and asked me to take it to show Annalies who had apparently expressed an interest in some. We agreed a price for the bowl or bowls. In fact Annalies decided to have ten of them with servers which is quite a lot of money so poor Mama Grace is left with a problem of how to pay for so many. I am sure she will find a way and stands to make a good profit out of the deal. I paid for some of my purchases and left a large deposit for other things as she is struggling with cash flow at the

moment. She really cannot be making much profit on the stuff she sells to me at very low prices but every little helps. She is a real friend of the charity and a lovely person.

Catherine and I are now on a campaign to encourage every woman we know to take up the free women's health checks at Tengeru hospital so Catherine told Mama Grace and her friend about it. A certain amount of ribald hilarity ensued regarding the procedures involved. I offered to run then stall whilst they go to the hospital but I suspect that Mama Grace won't take up the offer on the grounds that I am totally unaware of what things actually sell for. I think her son helps her out if she is now there. We are also going to speak to all the women at Ilboru and tell them to go and get themselves checked out as soon as possible. Annalies felt she couldn't discuss the subject with them because they would be embarrassed. I must say that embarrassment is not something I have encountered so far on our little campaign. We headed back to our respective homes laden with the purchases and the sample bowl. Ilboru was alive with a huge party for some charity or other and everything was running efficiently and calmly. Annalies does seem to have got her staff well motivated and working hard and is a very calm person so things run smoothly and calmly.

I took a long hot shower and went for dinner. I chatted for a while to an elderly gentleman who had given me lots of pencils and pens for the children. He wants to visit Usalama House but I suspect that won't happen as his itinerary is full. The cook is very liberal with the pepper pot which makes everything overly fiery and my mouth suffers as a result. I have passed my comments to the kitchen so hope he will tone things down a little.

Ex Chairman Eliza continues to pester Catherine regarding the piece of land. We had a discussion about this over lunch and agreed that if he phoned again we would make an offer of half of what he has been asking. He did indeed phone whilst we were in the market and Catherine spent a very long time talking to him. I don't know what she said to him but in the end he actually agreed to the offer which seems incredible. She is a true negotiator and she has the confidence now to go for it. So, if we can raise the money I think we will agree to take the land. It will enable almost total self-sufficiency and encourage sustainability in the long term. I will probably fund the purchase myself and then the charity will repay me over time rather than risk our resources dropping too low. If anyone feels like contributing a little extra towards the land deal that would be wonderful and the charity would be extremely grateful. If you stick to your guns out here long enough it is possible to get your own way and get people to do the right thing. It's a bit like dealing with small children really. That does sound very condescending but it really is like that much of the time.

What a lot has happened in such a short time – I am amazed at how things fall into place for us and hope it continues.

### **June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

I had a very restless night. I had vivid dreams and weird ones at that. In my dream I was suddenly asked to attend to the police station without any explanation. When I got there it appeared that I was to receive an award from the Chief Constable. The award was money and I was allowed to write my own cheque. I modestly asked for £3,000 but this was not allowed as it was too little. So I ended up with a cheque for £50,000. I wish. All very strange. I staggered my way down to meet Catherine at Sanawari and we hobbled like a pair of old crones into town to do the exchange and pay the school fees. On the way into town something triggered a vivid memory for Catherine and she told me the following story:

Back in 2006 when Mercy was very small she was desperate to try and earn some money to feed her children. Her husband never gave her any money for the children telling her they were hers so she

should feed them herself. Charming man but this is not uncommon here in Tanzania. She had a few pairs of pants and a few clothes to sell so leaving the children with her neighbour she set off and walked miles and miles over three days but did not make a single sale. She became totally desperate and decided that she could not take any more so decided to throw herself under the nearest large tanker when it came past. There was a massive argument in her head; one voice was telling her to do it and all her worries and grief would be finished but the other voice was telling her to carry on, to remember her children and also to remember good things that had happened in the past. The first tanker went by and she prepared to jump in front of the second tanker but still the argument continued in her head. She had pretty much decided for sure that the next one that came along would be the one that she leaped in front. As she waited on the roadside a Maasai man with a bag of food for his family was hit and killed instantly by a passing land rover. His guts spilled out on the road and he shuddered and died in front of Catherine's eyes. She was totally horrified and went into shock. A voice inside her said she should continue to look at this dreadful scene and told her that is what she would look like if she jumped into the traffic. In the end she could bear it no longer and somehow made her way home with the help of a neighbour. She was apparently totally incoherent and suffering from deep shock. The result of this horrible incident was that she realised that it had taken an innocent family man to die to bring her to her senses and she resolved to continue living and make the best of her life at that time. It was not long after that she left her husband to go it alone with her children.

So onto cheerier things – or maybe not. The exchange rate against the pound is rising by the hour. By the time we had finished our various tasks in town another 30/= had been added to the rate. I suspect this will continue for some time yet. So we went and changed money for salaries, for Catherine's kids and for school fees. The girls will be very happy with their salaries for sure. When we came to sort out the school fee money for David and Grace we realised we were 5000/= short. We returned immediately to the exchange place and after a lot of checking and assertiveness on Catherine's part they agreed to give us the missing cash. In fact it transpired that this error was not the fault of the exchange place but of the bank from which they had got their cash. Because the cash was direct from the bank nobody felt it was necessary to put through the counting machine. The Manager told us this was not the first time this had happened. I said he should create stink at the bank and he said he had already done so but to no avail. At least he did the honourable thing by us – a rarity for sure.

We went to the first bank to pay the Goodwill fees and stood in line. It actually moved quite quickly and we pleasantly surprised by how quickly we were through to the counter. At the counter it took for ever because the telling machine wasn't working properly – this is significant when dealing in millions. Then the computers used to print our receipts went down so we stood yet longer. We wended our weary way down to the next bank to pay the Edmund Rice school fees stopping off at a chemist on the way to buy me a pair of tweezers for chin plucking exercises. I was rather embarrassed when trying to explain what I wanted because the shop assistant lady had virtually a full beard. I beat a rapid retreat and hoped I had not caused any offence. The second bank NMB caused me to have a blood pressure surge and a serious loss of cool. We stood in line yet again – not a particularly long line either – and absolutely nothing happened. The line got longer and still no movement. I went to the customer service (ha-ha) desk and asked why they would not put more tellers on the desks to help. I was met with a blank stare and was asked if I wanted to make a deposit. That was pretty obvious I would have thought. I said of course but that I had no intention of jumping the queue simply because I was white and that everyone in the queue had the right to be served quickly. More blank stares then she disappeared for over 10 minutes. She eventually came back but by this time I was fuming and demanded to see the Manager. More blank stares so I told

her to call him immediately. She got on her phone and after a lot of talking I was told the Manager was coming to see me. I asked if that would be today or tomorrow and was told he was coming now. Of course he never materialised and after an hour eventually the transactions were completed. Everyone just meekly stands in line and no one complains or even believes that they have a right to complain. "We are used to it" was one customer's remark. Pathetic. No wonder this country is a mess. No one gives a sh\*t about ordinary people. Bank rant over but another one to come.

Having finished our tedious banking expeditions we headed to the market via McMoody for a small rice lunch. Just as we had started to eat a young lad appeared and was obviously begging. The owner tried to shoo the boy out but we stopped him and Catherine proceeded to question him. It appeared that he had no parents and lived on the streets making his was in the world as best he could. The lad looked to be about 8 years old. In fact he was 12. He was dirty, his teeth were all broken, probably from numerous fights and he was generally not in a good state. We sat him down at our table, much to the disgust of the staff and other customers and proceeded to give him our dinners and drinks. He devoured the food at such a rate I feared he would be sick. When he had finished he got up and left and we will probably never see him again. We were left feeling dreadful and yet again wondering what sort of country and what sort of government allows things to get this bad for children. We were a little peckish for a few hours but that cannot compare to the permanent state of hunger that these street children experience.

Chastened we went into the market for Catherine to buy her groceries for the house. I also bought 5 large flat woven baskets that local people use for cleaning their rice. They are incredibly cheap – about 0.43p and I should be able to make a decent profit in the UK for the charity. We walked a long way to collect our dala dala. All the buses have been forcibly moved away from the centre of the town which in one way is a good thing but it means quite a trek for passengers laden down with their various purchases. Many of the dala dala teams were taken to the police station and held for a couple of days as a warning if they did not comply with the new regulations. When I got back to Ilboru, Annalies decided she really liked the baskets so I have agreed to collect ten for her next time I am in town.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015**

Silvester collected me to take me to the house. I no longer feel safe to do the walk across the fields to the house alone. I have definitely lost a lot of confidence in my physicality recently for some reason. When we got to the house Silvester demanded a pestle and mortar and some hot water and took from his pockets a small bag containing some mysterious looking leaves. He had gone in search of this plant earlier in the morning as some local remedy for intense stomach pain he has been having a lot recently. He has been to the hospital for various basic tests but nothing has shown up so he has turned to local medicine as do many people here. It tasted pretty vile but he reckoned it would help. He wasn't sure of the dosage so was only going to take it with food to avoid poisoning himself. All a bit hit and miss I reckon.

A little later Wilson and Ismael appeared and it was lovely to them again. Wilson explained that all that was left to complete was another three layers of blocks on one wall and a few small bits and bobs. Ismael said that ex-Chairman Eliza would be coming to see us at about 1.00pm. Needless to say he didn't show – he has a habit of doing this – so I will see him on Saturday if he deigns to turn up.. A while after that Grace and David turned up having collected the little ones from school on their way back from extra classes for Maths and Physics that they are taking during their month's holiday. They are the most delightful pair of young people and Grace is just so loving and affectionate. David is mature and thoughtful and Catherine is obviously very proud of them with

good reason. They work really hard at school and help around the house when they are at home without ever complaining or moaning or sulking, unlike teenagers in the UK. Our 5 Standard 4 children have been taking exams today – mock national exams to be taken in October. Again they work so hard, sometimes too hard in my opinion, but the school is determined for them all to do well and for the school to climb higher in the regional league table.

After lunch we went up to look at the new house. It is fabulous. Catherine has already started planting vegetables in one part of the garden and they are growing well. She is good at everything she does is our Catherine. The hen house is strongly built and just needs a wired outside run for pecking and playing. We had long discussions about washing lines and wire for them – all a bit too technical for me. Inside, they have been cleaning thoroughly; I was ticked off for forgetting my magic window cleaning stuff so must try and find space for this when we come in October for the grand move. The hot water is very hot indeed; some of the kids have been coming up for showers already. Catherine will need to teach the younger ones not to scald themselves and to not stand for hours in the shower thereby taking all the water from the others. We decided where the play area for the children will go and Catherine starting worrying about a big tree that may fall down and damage the avocado tree in front of it. The banana palms are all fruiting and this will save a lot of cash for us. Banana palms throw out baby shoots and these grow up and fruit after about one year. Once the hands of fruit are cut down the whole palm is removed and the cycle starts all over again.

So we are all but there and it will be a great relief for me once everything is totally completed and we are moved in. There is now power in the local area which will eventually enable us to connect to the grid. We will certainly move the solar stuff from the current house to the new house to provide lighting. The hot water system provides the water. So it may be cheaper to use the grid for additional power for things like computers and an iron rather than to install a whole new system. In fact I am sure it will be cheaper – but Catherine will have to monitor usage so as not to run up large bills. There is a voucher system available so that may well be the way forward.

The younger children returned from school but still no sign of Elia. I hope he is not avoiding me as he knows he is in for a ticking off over the big mouth incident. I am assured this is not the case. I was escorted to the dala dala by Grace, David and Joram and Grace gave me some information about average life expectancy and family sizes. Life expectancy is definitely increasing as family sizes reduce and infant mortality lessens. Whereas before people were having 6 or 7 children of which probably half never achieved 5 years, now they are having 3 or 4 children and most of them survive into adulthood. So things are improving to some extent. Malaria is on the decrease as people are using nets more frequently and I think the incidence of HIV/AIDS is dropping off a little. This disease took virtually a whole generation so thank goodness that it is less prevalent nowadays.

The sun has been shining now fairly consistently so I am finally beginning to get a bit of colour. To go home with less colour than when I arrived would be an anathema for me. Vanity as ever.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

We had to meet the boys in town to hand over the money for the final building tasks so a wended my precarious way down to Sanawari to meet Catherine. I bumped into Silvester who said he needs to gather more stomach plants so it's not done any good so far. Catherine had managed to get a lift with one of our rick neighbour's drivers so I climbed in gratefully and we proceeded to town. We checked out the exchange rates. The place with the best rate maintained they were not dealing in pounds so I was annoyed with them for advertising their high rate and rubbed out the figures on their board, much to the entertainment of the security guards. The rate does seem to be slowing

down a bit but we managed to get 3555/= for our pound. It makes such a big difference when changing large sums of money and I wish it had been like this last year. We met the boys and handed over the cash and they went on their way. We proceeded to the dala dala via the market where I bought ten more baskets for Annalies. We then set off to go to Julieth's place. We arrived at about 1.00pm and little Janita shot out with a great scream of Bibi Helen and gave me a huge cuddle and showered me with kisses. It's lovely that she remembers me so well and we are becoming great friends. She is totally delightful and very amusing. She imitates everything that is said to her in whatever language; she also has invented her own language so no one knows what she is on about half the time. She is exhausting to be around as she is so bright and so demanding but wonderful company nevertheless. She spent a lot of time whispering to me and of course I hadn't a clue what she was saying but that didn't seem to bother her. She loved looking at the pictures and videos on my phone and sang along with herself in the videos from last time. I think she will be ready to start baby class in January when she is 4. She used my calculator to practice her number recognition and also used it as a phone and camera – very imaginative she is.

Julieth is looking well but tired. She is heavily pregnant now and insists that the baby is due in a week. Julius said she has another month to go and I suspect he is right as her neat little bump is very high up as yet. How she is going to manage with a new baby, a live wire Janita and continuing to run Ebenezer I have no idea but she is ever resourceful and seems to cope with whatever life and the universe throws at her. Women are very strong here and put me to shame. We spent the afternoon chattering away and playing with Janita. Julieth had to excuse herself to spend time with her sister to discuss something or other. Then some of her hoard of kids started to drift in from school. Catherine and I notice how differently they behave as compared to ours. Ours whoop and holler their way up the road – we can hear them coming from miles away. Julieth's kids seem very subdued and all line up as if still in school to greet Julieth. She is still very severe with them in my opinion and there is a lot of negative feedback and shaming going on which we are not happy about. Catherine tried to discuss this again with Julieth later but I don't know how open she is to listening. She has a big heart and is doing a fantastic job with minimal support financially or in other ways so I feel bad criticising her but the difference between the two regimes is very noticeable. Catherine and Anna are relaxed and gentle with our kids and any disciplinary issue are dealt with kindly but firmly and with no degree of shaming. That's not to say that they don't lose their cool with them from time to time but it is over with in a flash and humour comes into play.

It was by now 5.30pm so we really had to move. Janita dissolved into a heap of crying having smacked Julieth in the mouth because she was talking to me and taking my attention away from her. We had a slight altercation as I tried to get Janita to apologise to her mother but she was by now very tired so we gave up on that one. She gave me another series of huge hugs and kisses and we went on out by now very weary way. I got off at Sanawari with Catherine to avoid crossing the road at Ilboru and walked along to take a car up to the lodge. I was very tired but had a shower anyway. The power went off yet again whilst I was in the shower. I had a not very nice meal and went to bed knowing I was staying at the lodge tomorrow so felt more relaxed and slept better.

### **June 25<sup>th</sup> 2015**

I woke at 9.00am and took a leisurely time to get ready to go for breakfast. I returned to my room to catch up on this diary but was immediately called to reception to see a lady called Anna who was selling baskets at a good price. I ended up purchasing 15 of them and hope I can sell them on at a fair profit for the charity. How on earth I am going to get everything home is another question.

I caught up with various pieces of work and finished my murder mystery book in the sun. It has been warm but quite cloudy so little risk of burning today. This afternoon Annalies had a dog trainer to visit to help her sort out various problems with her two dogs. Jack is 6 and she has had him for a long time. Luna is just 10 months old and very lively and puppyish in her behaviours. The problem is that Jack has become increasingly aggressive since Luna arrives 6 months ago. Jack is a really sweet dog and I think he just very jealous of the attention that Luna demands by virtue of her age. I personally have never seen any signs of aggression from Jack and I wonder whether he seems more aggressive than he actually is with people he does not feel confident with or trust. The trainer worked with Annalies to encourage correct commands and tone of voice and her main problem is that she has to teach her children and her house staff to interact in the same way. Maasai are naturally fearful of dogs and are more likely to react aggressively towards them which only serves to increase the problem further. Whilst the trainer worked with Annalies and Luna, I took Jack away for 15 minutes for a little walk and a big cuddle. This has just reminded me how much I miss my beloved Charlie who died about 5 weeks ago. It was a little treat to spend time with Jack and I think he enjoyed having sole attention rather than having to share with lively Luna. Interesting to listen to what the trainer had to say on various matters – some I agree with and others maybe not. But each to their own and what works for one maybe isn't so useful for someone else.

Annalies wants more things from Mama Grace which is good. It must be really helping her to build up her business again. Unfortunately the girl that runs the shop at Ilboru is not around today so I won't be able to sort stuff out before I go and get my purchases from Mama Grace tomorrow. Annalies also shared with me her plans for redecorating the rooms next year and she seems to have some very creative and not too expensive ideas for introducing light into the rooms which are presently very dark. I am going to stop now and try and email this diary to everyone. The internet is so poor but I have some sort of connection at the moment so fingers crossed for success.

I watched a really interesting movie made in South Africa this evening. It was based around football and was basically made to highlight how the HIV virus is sexually transmitted but more to the point graphically demonstrated what blissful ignorance can do as opposed to knowledge being power. The young guy who was scared to get tested ended up with full blown AIDS with all the ramifications of the opportunistic diseases that preyed on him. The hero of the story agreed to get himself tested after going through months and months of angst and denial but he ended up well and playing the game to a very high standard. It would be a really useful movie to show to local people to encourage testing and the understanding that these days a positive result does no longer mean a death sentence. We might even show it to some of our older children although there are a couple of fairly graphic sex scenes which Catherine may well not approve of. We shall see.

### **June 26<sup>th</sup> 2015**

This evening I thought I would not have much to write about today but I have just spent an hilarious hour with a few Dutch ex-pats who reside and work here in Tanzania. They all have been suffering from slight hangovers after the birthday celebrations of one of them yesterday. They regaled me with various strange and funny stories of their lives in this neck of the woods. One guy whose brother was a volunteer here back in the 1980's was approached by a local man who said he had slaughtered all his chickens and would he like to buy one. The guy had nothing to eat that evening so bought one for a small price. The next day he spoke again to the farmer and asked why he had slaughtered all his birds and the response was that they all had typhus. So this poor man had unwittingly eaten an infected bird and spent many anxious days waiting to see if he had contracted the disease. Fortunately he had not.

Another guy used to run a small boutique hotel on Zanzibar. He asked some staff to paint the walls of the hotel but they were not doing the job correctly. So he decided to demonstrate how to do it. He climbed the ladder with his paint and was in the process of teaching them what to do when along came someone from immigration who immediately arrested him for taking jobs from local people. He was able to explain that he was actually only teaching them what to do so was let off. This same guy wanted to pay his electricity bill today. In Tanzania many bills and credits are done by phone but you have to choose whether you pay for air time or for money for bills when you purchase the credits. Robert was still hungover from yesterday and ended up purchasing so much airtime that he will not need to recharge his phone for a very long time and has still not managed to pay for his electricity. Interestingly this particular guy, having left Zanzibar, is starting up a new safari company specifically for handicapped people – a novel idea. Another guy resigned last week from his job running a safari company in partnership with a local man. The local man was so outraged that he sent for immigration and the poor man was put in the lock-up for many hours until he could prove that he was firstly entitled to be here and work here and secondly was entitled to resign from his job if he so wished. Life is hazardous and unpredictable and I must say I would find it very tough to live here permanently with the vagaries of systems.

Finally, the young son of Peter, a Dutch ex-pat has moved here recently. We were talking about smoking and this youngster said he had given up so I congratulated him. Peter proceeded to tell me that a couple of years ago his son had been very ill and was diagnosed with amonia. He was told that he should stop smoking immediately or he would die. Of course he meant pneumonia but it sounded so funny when he came out with the wrong word in all seriousness.

Anyway, after my leisurely day yesterday I felt well rested and set off late morning to meet Catherine to go to Mama Grace to collect my purchases. We stopped for a soda and gossip on the way and rolled up to Maasai Market about 12.30pm. Mama Grace was ready for us so we spent ages trying to sort out what she had managed to buy and what she had missed out on. She has not yet got the large bowls for Annalies but they are on order so I paid a deposit for them and the balance will be paid on receipt of the items. Grace had managed to gather together most of what I wanted and will bring the rest to me at Ilboru on Monday. She can also then take a new order for the shop in the lodge. We are certainly bringing her a lot of good business at the moment. Mama Grace also had brought with her a huge sack of avocados for the children – she grows them and was very kind to give so many to us. I pinched one for my late lunch snack and it was delicious.

We loaded up a car with the fruit and my numerous purchases and returned to our respective abodes. Goodness knows how I am going to get everything packed up to transport safely to home.

Tomorrow and Sunday I will spend at the house and hopefully see a bit more of the children. They come so late from school at the moment that I have hardly had any time with them at all.

### **June 27<sup>th</sup> 2015**

We had a lot of comings and goings today – a right old logistical problem. Bill, an old chap from Texas was back from safari and had expressed an interest in visiting the house. So I arranged for Silvester to pick him up at 1.30 to bring him for an hour and wait to take him back again. Then 10 minutes before I was due to go to the house I met a British woman called Maureen who had arrived late last night. She had a bit of time to kill whilst waiting for her partner to arrive back from the mountain. So she came along with me and Silvester at 10.30. Both of them got embroiled in major land negotiations when Elisa turned up on time for once. Maureen kindly took the three little ones into the garden to play as they were quite boisterous today.

Poor Silvester ended up taking part in the negotiations along with Ismael and Wilson and of course Catherine. I had been told by Catherine and Ismael to keep my mouth firmly closed. As usual all the Maasai guys lapsed into Maasai language so neither of us girls had a clue what was going on. Apparently Elisa knew Silvester's brother so there was a lot of blah about that. Eventually everyone reverted to Swahili and serious discussions started again. At one point Catherine came into the conversation and I heard her offer 8 million which Elisa turned down immediately. He stuck to his guns at 10 million. He said that he was under pressure to sell at a much higher price to someone in the locality but felt that he really wanted to help our children hence his change of heart. He also said that he had persuaded his sons to agree to the lower price which was quite a coup on his part. So then it was offer to me so in my very best humble and snivelling style I asked if he would accept 9.5 million and to my total shock he accepted this offer. Handshakes and general congratulations all round. Elisa seemed to be in a hurry to complete the deal as he was due to go away to visit his farms elsewhere so we agreed to try and organise money transfers as soon as possible. Maureen was as delighted as the rest of us when she heard the news. Silvester then left with Maureen to return later with Bill.

At some point Jeremiah appeared out of the blue. He was acting really oddly and I am sure now that he must have some sort of mental health issues going on. He disappeared without saying goodbye but texted me later. All very strange. The children gradually rolled in from school and Bill was shown around and joined us for a chapatti lunch. He loved spending a little time with us and insisted on numerous photographs with everyone. After he had left with Silvester I went for a little chat with Elia about his indiscretions regarding Johanes. He seemed very penitent and said he had sorted things out at school by telling everyone that he had only been joking. I am not sure that was the best thing to do but it's done. He promised that he would never do anything like that again and I explained that what goes on in our family stays in the family. We had a hug and decided to leave it at that.

All the children are in fine fettle and continue to work hard and do well at school. Mercy has decided to grow her hair which involved her having to sit still for hours whilst Catherine attempted to plait it up. This is a long and intricate task and Mercy occasionally started to complain until we reminded her that this was her choice so she should shut up and sit still. We even tried to bribe her with money to change her mind but she was quite adamant. The afternoon rolled along gently with everyone playing football and the little ones had made bowling hoops out of old wire which they enjoyed playing with. At one point they were getting very noisy and arguing so I set them a route to run round which we thought would take them at least 10 minutes. In fact the swiftest were back in under five puffing and panting but with marginally less energy than before. Of course Goodluck and Mercy were back first past the post. Joshua wailed that he wanted to go – it was much too far for him to run – so dear David took him off for a little jog which he enjoyed until he stepped on a thorn so returned home limping. He's a tough little boy that one.

At some point during the afternoon Catherine and I drafted out a letter to the rich MP who has a palace of a house near us and has got fat on the back of corruption as have most of the other MPs. We have invited him to visit us and have suggested that he might like to do something to help the orphaned children in the vicinity. Ismael knows him and will deliver the letter to him personally when he is back from Dar es Salam. You never know – we might squeeze a few shillings out of him to lighten his bag of cash so he can make room for some more.

I was escorted to the bus as usual and rolled down to Sanawari. A lovely day with my delightful little family.

**28<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

After the excitement of yesterday I lost a whole lot of sleep trying to fathom out the best way to transfer the money to pay for the land. Mark (son) has been very helpful and Mike and he have been in communication. On my way to breakfast I had a quick chat with Annalies who made a really kind offer. So I hope by now that Mike has been able to make a SWIFT transfer in dollars direct to Annalies's bank account here. We will then go and get the dollars from the bank tomorrow or Tuesday and exchange for shillings at the best rate we can find. If there are no hitches that's the job done barring a bit of paperwork at the local Kijiji. I just hope nothing goes wrong such as Mike not being able to fathom out how to do the transfer. We need to get it sorted as y time here is running out and the exchange rate is dropping quickly now which is not in our favour.

Silvester collected me to take me to the house and I took one million shillings as the deposit ad gesture of our intent to give to Elisa. Only Mercy was at home with Catherine – Anna was on her off day and the rest were at church so it was very peaceful. Mercy spent a happy half hour plucking my annoying hairs from my face with my newly acquired tweezers. She is so gentle and it was remarkably painless. I was then allowed by Catherine to chop up various vegetable for lunch. She manages to keep her knives incredibly sharp and I had several near misses of my fingers. The mob returned from church so the peace of the morning was shattered. Joshua and Jordan were playing hoop bowling with an old piece of tyre. Many of the others embarked on a game of football with the usual arguments and injuries. Willie from rich neighbour and Onesmo from landlord both appeared and joined the general melee. The hens are still totally bananas running around the house laying eggs with loud squawks when they have laid. Most odd. Butu, our dear little cat, was in attendance in the kitchen waiting for his food. He is such a lovely little animal and puts up with all sorts of manhandling from the children.

Lunch was served – I escaped the horrible meat stew – and everyone polished off their meals very quickly. After lunch the bigger ones all disappeared off to Willie's massive house and garden ostensibly to play football, but more likely to watch TV. We checked Joshua's homework which was all correct. He is a bright little button and learning well. Jordan unfortunately seemed to have totally messed up his homework. They kids spend a lot of time having to copy their homework into their books from the board. Jordan had made so many mistakes in the copying that it was impossible for him to do his work correctly. We helped him out as best we could and did a bit of diphthong practice with him. Then the two little ones went off to Willie's house and Catherine and I chatted peacefully away on the porch for hours.

We are such good friends and enjoy hearing each other's stories from our very different past lives; some funny, some sad but all of interest to each other. Catherine told me of her experiences of having her children in particular when she had mercy. Her vile husband turned up at her little house when she had started labour, with another woman in tow. She was apparently only 43Kgs weight when at the end of the pregnancy due to the lack of support financially from this nasty piece of work. She was cutting up old kanga so she had something to wrap her baby in when it was born and he sat there with this other woman and watched. He brought her no money to get her to hospital so when it was time for her to get to the hospital a neighbour called a friend to take her and another neighbour took David and Grace to look after while she was in hospital. She got to the hospital – on arrival all mothers have to show that they have the money to pay for sterile gloves and whatever else is needed – and eventually produced little Mercy who was very underweight. Her delightful husband turned u the next day with no food for Catherine who was light-headed and exhausted. She had no milk for Mercy. The staff and other patients all had a go at this man and gave him a good telling off. She then had to walk quite a long way to the bus carrying her bag and baby and when she

got home she was in a state of collapse. Due to the kindness of various neighbours she survived this ordeal and eventually began to produce milk for Mercy.

And so we chatted on. Anna appeared at about 4.00pm and joined us for chai. Catherine is still trying to extract information from her regarding this potential boyfriend but Anna is giving very little away. Oh – Mama Hilary is pregnant and due in October. This could present us with another problem to solve and we need to talk to her about this and find out what her intentions are. Nothing stays the same unfortunately but I suppose we have been so fortunate with our staff for a good length of time.

I decided to leave at 5.00pm as I wanted to get back to find out if the money transfer has been completed. Of course the internet was down so I am as yet none the wiser. I was accosted by every single drunk in our village on the way to the bus which was irritating but otherwise made it back to the lodge comparatively unscathed. Tomorrow Mama Grace is coming here to bring the rest of my order and to take another big order from the lodge.

### **June 29<sup>th</sup> 2015**

I am 100% done in this evening. I am tired, tearful, happy, homesick and every other emotion I can think of. It is sometimes so hard to do things in this country – and everything is so different and today was one of those days. It started brilliantly. Dear Annalies offered to advance me the 8.5 million shillings I needed to pay for the land today. The transfer from the UK was taking longer than expected and at this end I was being brought under enormous pressure to get the deal signed and sealed today because Elisa needed to be somewhere else urgently. Interesting to note that when it suits suddenly things can happen very fast but never when it suits me. I am very grumpy tonight. So Annalies wrote me a cheque for the money and authorisation to release the cash to me immediately. So far so good.

Mama Grace arrived just after 10 as did Catherine. We then proceeded to do a very large amount of business with Jackie who runs the shop here. Some guests joined in looking at the various samples Grace had brought with her and money exchanged hands on the spot. She had forgotten most of what I needed to complete my order so will come to see us at Usalama on Thursday to bring the items I need and to say goodbye. We have certainly brought her in an enormous amount of business which I think she is finding quite hard to cope with. But she is extremely grateful as it is really helping her to get back on her feet. She gave Catherine and me a lovely glass beaded necklace as a gift which was kind of her. Business completed we decided to call Silvester to escort us to the bank and then to Usalama with the large amount of money. He was delayed because he had to take food to his wife's family as the grandfather had just died. Eventually we got to the bank and were greeted by enormous queues everywhere. We made our way to customer services and asked for Rose on Annalies's instructions. Eventually we were shown into a meeting room and the cheque was taken from us. Then we sat and we sat and sat some more. By this time I was getting pretty irate and Catherine was getting worried that I would explode. Another beautiful-looking man was also sitting looking very fed up. Eventually he explained that all he was waiting for was a print-out of his statement. So we had a good moan together. After about an hour Rose reappeared and asked for my ID and vanished again for another 10 minutes. Finally she came back with passport and the money by which time I was positively furious.

We went outside and Silvester was nowhere to be seen. Carrying that amount of money is not safe so I retreated to the steps of the bank to smoke a much needed cigarette and Catherine managed to locate Silvester. I ranted and raged in the car all the way up to the house with Silvester trying to

soothe my troubled breast. Catherine went silent. Silvester then started to rant along with me about the lack of customer service etc. whilst he hurriedly ate his ugali and went on his way. Meanwhile Jordan wanted help with his wretched homework so I did my best to be patient with him. I was made an omelette which the flippin' cat ate most off and the Chairman Elisa appeared with his two ugly but sweet dogs. The cat was not a happy bunny and proceeded to growl and spit from the safety of my lap. Elisa had brought with him a prepared document which Catherine went through with me and then we stomped our way up to the house to measure up the land. Of course no one had a tape so we went with Wilson's stepping out of the boundaries. From there we proceeded down again and directly to Elisa's house so the documents could be signed and witnessed and the cash handed over. We each had to have four witnesses – we sent for Anna after I explained that I could hardly witness my own signature. Elisa's side only managed two witnesses as the Mama insisted that it must be her three sons one of whom was away on the other side of the country and one of whom wasn't there. Ridiculous. All the babbling away in Swahili got me very stressed and by the time we had finally completed the paper work I was in total meltdown. But I think that everything is done now and correctly so under local rules so I will try and put it all behind me and enjoy the little time I have left here. The poor service in the bank unhinged me I guess and equally so the unexpected speed that everything happened today was so unexpected and unusual it took me somewhat by surprise.

I was gobsmacked that as we rose to leave Elisa's house the Mama handed Catherine 50,000/= for being a good Chair of the proceedings. Ismael took it upon himself to distribute it amongst us all as some sort of payment for ourselves which I was really quite cross about. I refused to accept mine as did Catherine, Anna and Wilson so we decided that the money would go for shoes and exercise books for the kids. David tried to give his back but I insisted he kept it because he never asks for anything and is a totally honest and wonderful lad. And as a final footnote – when I got back to my room I was gasping for a cuppa only to find that the milk had gone sour. Hey ho and on we go. No shower for me tonight. I simply haven't got the energy. But we now have our land and it will be of enormous benefit to Usalama House in the future.

### **June 30<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Today I was not feeling so great – I think after the emotional expenditure of yesterday I slept badly yet again and my foot has become extremely painful walking on the difficult surfaces. Nevertheless I made it to the main road in one piece and managed to get on the same dala dala as Catherine to head into town. It keeps raining in the mornings which delays our start times but we still managed to be in town by 11.30. We headed straight to the shoes market to look for shoes for the two youngest children. On the way we met the guy who had sold us several pairs of shoes previously so he accompanied us to the market to help. Choosing shoes is a bit hit and miss as sizes don't seem to exist. Catherine had drawn round the feet of both kids so that was the nearest approximation that we had. We rifled around the heaps of shoes and eventually managed to find a couple of pairs that seemed about right. All very hit and miss. The cost was high but we had no choice but to buy. So anyone who has any black shoes for boys around 33, 34 or 35 in good condition we would be happy to receive them.

We then headed back to check the exchange rate. Suddenly the value of the shilling has dropped drastically against the pound and the dollar – something must be going on somewhere for it to fall so steeply and so quickly. We then made our way into the market for some veggie purchases and from there to the stationary shop for a box of exercise books. These were very heavy so Catherine plonked them on her head. By the time we got back to the bus my foot was really painful so I decided to go straight back to the lodge to rest it in preparation for tomorrow's exertions. Catherine

called David to meet her at the end to help her carry the books and veg to the house. I meanwhile went to the lodge and prepared for a restful afternoon on my computer by the pool which is the only place I can pick up any semblance of useful WiFi. My peace was disturbed by the young son of some ex-pats who has recently moved here from Holland. What a mess. He appeared to have had an incredibly dysfunctional childhood and suffered badly from the break-up of his parents. He seemed to need to talk to someone so I drew the short straw on this occasion. Having poured his heart out he then changed the subject to describing in great detail a highly complicated computer game that he seems to be hooked on. Good distraction I guess. Once a counsellor always a counsellor but I did get very bored where the computer game was concerned. Eventually he went off somewhere to play his guitar and I decided to go back to my room to read my book. I had also decided on an early shower but as I was about to undress Annalies knocked on my door and invited me to accompany her and her children to their school for the end of term talent show. It was a kind offer so a quick change of clothes and we went.

Her children go to one of the several pricey international schools in Arusha – the education they offer is based on the British system and this school seems to have mainly black pupils from a variety of African countries. The talent show itself was rather short on talent but entertaining nevertheless. There was an excellent demonstration of gumboot dancing and one very good Michael Jackson impersonator with all the moves. Gumboot dancing originated in the mines of South Africa. The white bosses forbade the black workers to speak to each other whilst in the mines so the workers devised an alternative way of communicating by means of stomps and slaps – from this arose the whole gumboot dancing thing. I remember seeing a team from South Africa performing in Leicester some years ago and it was amazing to see. So it was a nice distraction from the everyday matters of my life here in Tanzania. We got back after 8 so I went quickly for dinner and then had a shower before diving into bed ready for an early start in the morning.

### **July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015**

It was raining again this morning so we delayed our departure to Usa River to DREAM. Eventually it stopped so Catherine, Johanes and I piled on to the dala dala for the ½ hour bumpy ride. Too long on those buses and one can begin to feel quite sick and claustrophobic but an experience not to be missed for first time visitors. DREAM was very quiet – the counsellor said that many patients just don't show up for their appointments so she goes out and chases them up. Ignorance kills for sure. Johanes first had to give his blood; he just sits there and watches everything without a peep out of him; brave little soldier. Then he was weighed and continues to gain weight well. A short wait and we went in to see the doctor. This bit was upsetting for us all. Under new WHO and Tanzanian guidelines the ARV protocol now is to start ARV treatment sooner rather than later so they decided that Johanes needs to start immediately. At least now we can speak openly about everything, which is a relief. Both Catherine and I confessed to each other later that we felt sad and also quite angry that the poor kid has to be subjected to a lifelong diet of pills from now onwards through no fault of his own. He is an innocent victim of this disease and his parents' ignorance. He will have to take four tablets at night and two in the morning from now on and will go back in two weeks to see how he is doing. There is a myriad of possible side effects some of which can't be ignored – if he develops a rash and fever he has to be taken straight back. Most of the other side effects will wear off after initially starting treatment so let's hope he's OK.

The pharmacist went through the protocols thoroughly with Catherine and we have to slowly encourage Johanes to take responsibility for medicating himself. We left and headed for the dala dala to go back to Tengeru to see Tukae – Ad's wife. We bought Johanes a large carton of milk to devour on the way. We managed to get off at the correct place and walked up to her house. We

were greeted warmly and Johannes plonked himself in front of the TV and didn't budge from there, except to eat, for the rest of the day. Tukae is preparing to leave for Austria with Antoinetta on July 21<sup>st</sup> to join Ad again. She is very stoical about it all but I think she will be very sad to leave her beautiful garden which she has planted over the last two years. It is full of many different fruit trees all productive. We all prepared lunch together and finally sat down to eat at about 2.30. Johannes stuffed his face until he was full to burst. He eats for Tanzania that boy but he needs to eat as much as possible. Ad called whilst we were there about a visa problem of Tukae's so I had a few words with him which was nice. I hope once they are settled that we can visit them in Austria and even have them to stay in Leicester with us in the future. Zita, Tukae's eldest daughter is married to a doctor and living in the US but they are planning a big African wedding in Tanzania on April 13<sup>th</sup> next year so we will try and be there for that. They will have in excess of 300 guests so it will be quite a big event.

Antoinetta arrived home at about 4.30 and was in fine fettle. She is a very amenable little girl and always fun to be around. She tried to teach her mum some gumboot dancing which was very funny to watch. I hope she settles well again in Austria as she has been thoroughly messed around with all the comings and goings of the last year. I encouraged us all to make a move at about 5.30 but it took nearly until 6 to get us all in the car. Then the blessed car wouldn't start so we had to go on foot to the main road to catch the dala dala. Then disaster struck! In the scramble to get onto the bus I put my foot awkwardly on the uneven ground and gave my ankle a very good twist. I grabbed the door to stop myself falling down so the door came off its hinges. I managed to get on and sat there trying not to cry and the pain gradually subsided. It started to swell and by the time we got to Sanawari it was pretty impressive. No way was I able to walk any distance so Catherine found me a car and I got back to Ilboru feeling very sorry for myself. I wasn't hungry and certainly wasn't able to get up to the dining room so I sat outside talking to a friend and we had a bowl of soup. I struggled to my room and went to bed with my foot up on a pile of pillows. Not the best thing to have happened but at least it happened towards the end of my stay and not at the beginning.

## **July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015**

I woke this morning to a sill swollen and sore ankle. So now I have one sore foot and one sore ankle. I am seriously p++++d off with myself. Silvester had got another driver to take me to the house as he was tied up at a funeral. So I got to the house in one piece more or less. We spent the morning preparing lunch and generally chatting. Butu came on my lap and slept there for ages. Mama Hilary managed to "confess" her pregnancy to me after Catherine told she should be open with me. She is due mid-October which is not the best time from our point of view as that is when we will be moving house; but these things can't be helped. I have agreed to her taking three months off and she will help us to find someone else to stand in for her. We have also agreed to pay her half her salary whilst she is off. I don't know what the employment laws are but she has been a great member of staff and I wanted to be fair to her and also want her to come back from maternity leave which she wants as well.

I also had the dubious pleasure of trying to help David and Grace with their Physics and Maths work. Physics was never my strong point and this was to do with mass, volume and density all of which I had forgotten. Between us and by a series of logical thinking and practical demos on my part I think we cracked it and I was actually quite impressed with my demonstrations as were Catherine and the two kids. The Maths was a bit easier once I had time to think about it. I even learnt what sines, cosines and tangents were – I don't think I had ever grasped it before but Grace was a good teacher. She had written a series of pithy sayings in one of her books about education which I quote below.

*“The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open mind.”*

*“No education without struggling.”*

*“The world is like a classroom. Each day is a new lesson. Every person I meet is my teacher.”*

*“Education is the key to success.”*

*“Without education we are horrible and deadly.”*

*“Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned at school.”*

David went off to collect the three little ones from school and we all had lunch. Then it was the homework of Joshua and Jordan which was somewhat less taxing for my brain. David is just wonderful with them and sat quietly encouraging them to do the work nicely. He is such a gentle chap without a bad bone in his body. We have become very close this visit which is nice. I think he and Grace will come to the lodge tomorrow afternoon for some more Maths and Physics – lucky me. Eventually Mama Grace rolled up on a piki piki with more goodies for me and at the same time Ismael and Wilson arrived. So we had a lovely time talking and sorting out money matters and generally having fun. It was a wonderful atmosphere and a time I shall remember with fondness. Winnie and Willie from next door also showed up and riotous playing was heard from the bedrooms.

The house is now finished and awaits our arrival. Unfortunately I was not able to get up to see it because of my ankle but I am sure all will be well. Ismael inspected my ankle which was ballooning alarmingly. Someone produced some sort of bandage so Wilson and Ismael proceeded to bandage me up and Ismael insisted on doing some sort of Maasai physiotherapy. I'm not sure it actually made any difference but it was nice of him to offer and it was quite relaxing. We are so lucky with our circle of friends and I will miss them all as usual. A car collected me at about 5.30 and we dropped Anna and Grace on the way back to the lodge. I actually felt sick by the time we got back due to the state of the so-called roads. I had a drink and a chat with a Swedish guy and Annalies joined us. Annalies is busy planning a birthday party before I leave on Saturday evening. She has been lovely to me. So kind and helpful and I really appreciate her help – particularly her beautiful warm sweater which has been much used and necessary this visit. I then went back to my room to have a much needed hot shower. The Swedish guy Jens had waited for me for dinner so it was nice to have company for the meal. He regaled me with more bizarre stories from his experiences in Africa including getting lost in a boat on Lake Malawi in the dark and encountering three huge hippos whilst paddling around trying to find their way back. It was a scary experience and they were lucky to have survived it. Apart from the malarial mosquito, hippos kill more people in Africa than any other animal. I was really late to bed but it was a fun evening. I slept badly yet again and then overslept the following morning.

### **July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015**

As already said I overslept badly this morning so threw my clothes on and hobbled my way through the rain to breakfast. From the weather point of view I shall be glad to get back to experience some of the hot weather that is happening there at the moment. It has been exceptionally chilly here this visit and more rain than usual. I have been sleeping with a duvet, a thick blanket and even my Maasai shuka. Ridiculous.

I spent some time catching up my diary and other bits of work and eventually Mama Grace arrived an hour late with a huge amount of stuff for Annalies's approval. I helped her set everything up in the office for Annalies to look at and she decided to buy most of what was on offer. I wish I had had

more money as Grace has some lovely new lines; always a next time. Annalies told Grace that she had to be more business like if she wanted to continue to do business and I showed her how to write out the order in a coherent and legible way. She was also asked to try to be on time in the future. Grace seemed to take it all on board and was very happy with the payment for her purchases so everyone was happy in the end. I then caught up with Jens for a little while before going to my room for a mammoth packing session. I am sure I will be overweight and I don't want to risk getting all my purchases broken so may have to repack and carry breakables as hand luggage. This won't help me to cope with the airports with my very poorly ankle. Various people have made many weird and wonderful suggestions for gaining an upgrade because of my injury. I need to appear at the airport heavily bandaged and with a pronounced limp. I need to ask for special assistance with my bags as I am not able to stand for too long. I also need to tell them it is my birthday. I draw the line at a wheelchair to take me out to the plane. If I get an upgrade which is highly unlikely, I then have to take a selfie and send it to my friends as proof and the first round of beers will be on me next time I am here. I can but hope.

I wanted to check my flight was OK but the internet has been worse than usual here today. Jens managed to check me in using his own connection not via the hotel WIFI so that was done. Various little tasks were completed. Annalies has organised a small birthday party for me. The Usalama household is coming tomorrow at around 1.00pm and sausage and chips are on the menu. I think Annalies has invited various other individuals including herself and her children so it should be fun. I just hope it doesn't rain all day – the sky is not looking hopeful tonight.

I then chatted to Jens some more and we were joined by two Dutch ex-pats in for the evening Friday drinking session. A young Brit doing a PH.D also joined us. He was interesting to talk to. He is doing his Ph.D on the impact of fire and fire management in the Serengeti. This is involving him spending 12 hours a day in the Serengeti collecting samples and observing various herbivorous forms of animal life. Apparently fire occurs a lot on the savannahs of Serengeti but it is all man-made in some form or other. He has had close encounters with elephant and other wildlife but his greatest concern is running into snakes. It makes sense as he is spending a lot of time crawling around in the grass. I do meet some interesting people here and everyone has a story to tell. I had thought that David and Grace would show up for some Maths and Physics homework assistance but in the event they didn't show up so I was spared that.

I went for dinner early in anticipation of a long hot shower and a further packing session before going to bed to stock up on shut eye in preparation for the rigours of tomorrow night's flight.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

Today is my birthday and I think it is the first birthday I think I have spent alone and away from home so quite strange. Annalies has arranged a little party for me this afternoon for Usalama house and one or two other people plus herself and her kids. It is a good distraction from the fact that I have to get on a wretched plane for yet another long overnight flight which I dread. A necessary evil and a means to an end but not something I relish. Never mind – at least I might get a bit of warm weather after my chilly sojourn here. I need to complete my packing now before the mob arrive so will complete this journal when I am at home tomorrow.

I spent the morning trying to pack sensibly; given the enormous amount of stuff bought from Mama Grace this was quite difficult and I worried about it all getting back to the UK in one piece. As it turned out I was overweight but was allowed to get through and everything arrived intact at home. I had a little time to spare so sat in the sun – yes sun – for a little while and tried to read my book. I

could see various comings and goings with plates and other items heading in the general direction of the snack bar so I assumed this was for the party. Everyone arrived at just before 1.00pm so the school had taken notice of or request to release the children on time. Various children were covered in some sort of rash and hadn't been feeling that well. According to Catherine this was due to having eaten a different sort of fish from usual but no one looked too bad and everyone appeared to me in reasonable spirits. Grace and David headed off to the snack bar with a bag full of something secret. We all headed down there a few minutes later to find the place all laid out for the party and David and Grace were decorating everything. Annalies and her two children arrived and Annelies doled out sausage and chips with soda for everyone. Olivia – daughter of Annelies – got a very strange fit of the giggles when she was asked to explain to the children about a little treasure hunt she had organised for them. It was really funny and most uncharacteristic. But she survived to trauma and recovered her equanimity when threatened with being sent home. After food Grace appeared with home-made cake she had cooked for me on top of the charcoal. It was very good and had risen really well. It had used nine eggs but no fat at all was used in the making of it. We kept a piece for Mama Hilary to have later. Then I had to sit in the place of honour whilst everyone sang various versions of Happy Birthday and I was presented with a pressie from the household. This pressie was a set of 6 pairs of large Bridget Jones knickers; this was given because I had complained that my underwear was in danger of falling down on several occasions. I have to add that I have actually worn these since I got back and although they are anything but fashionable and elegant, they are actually very comfortable. During this presentation Jens arrived and joined in with the general jollity.

We then decamped to outside and sat around chatting and waiting for tea. Peter, Lizzie and Colin arrived together with guitar and Colin started to play, much to the delight of the children. Colin demonstrated Swing Low Sweet Chariot with movements – your truly joined in and made a complete fool of herself. Then another round of Happy Birthday and a lovely two-tier birthday cake arrived from the staff at Ilboru. Ceremonial cutting and dishing out followed and it was delicious. Not a crumb was left – the children are better than any vacuum cleaner. They all rushed off to do the treasure hunt and returned with a haul of loom bands donated by Olivia. More singing and African dancing and tea and the afternoon sped past in a delicious and lovely blur. I think it is the best birthday I have ever had. Catherine thoroughly enjoyed herself and joined in with everything: Anna on the other hand looked pretty uncomfortable with the Western/African fusion event and she left with some of the younger children at about 5.00pm. My European friends departed and we went to my room to gather the last bits and move my bags to the entrance. David actually lifted my heavy case onto his shoulder and carried it across. Mercy took my little bag and Catherine, Grace and I manhandled the remaining bag to reception.

I was expecting Silvester to take me to the airport but he wasn't able to make it so sent someone in his place. I was sad not to see him – our little chats make the trip to the airport bearable. Annalies came to say goodbye and said life would be quiet without me – no one to indulge her secret smoking habit with I reckon. Mercy did her best not to cry; Catherine and I also did our best but didn't succeed as usual. It is painful leaving them all behind and I was really sad by the time I got to the airport. My attempts at getting an upgrade due to the sprained ankle failed woefully. I was sent to the front of the check in queue which was helpful. Someone also carried my bag up the steps to the aircraft which was more helpful but that was where helpfulness ended. The plane was rammed from Kigali onward so by the time I arrived at Birmingham my ankle had swollen up alarmingly. I had to sit next to a nice little girl but she proceeded to vomit for most of the trip which was not pleasant for me (or her). An announcement was made as we approached Kigali to say that anyone found with

plastic carrier bags in Rwanda would have these confiscated. I checked online later and indeed Rwanda has outlawed plastic bags on environmental grounds. Good for them.

Having heard rumours of a heatwave in the UK I was disappointed to find that either everyone had been lying or the weather had suddenly changed. Mike greeted me with a bunch of flowers and we headed for home. I was extremely tired after the night flight but managed to stay awake for most of the day. Mike had bought me a birthday cake from M & S – my third cake so we dug into that with gusto. I miss my lovely Usalama family but we will return again early in October and at that time we will be moving into the new Usalama House. I am very relieved that this project is more or less complete now and this will certainly take the pressure off as regards to fundraising. We still have the extra land to pay for but that shouldn't take too long to recoup.

Thank you everyone for taking the time to read this latest episode in my life in Tanzania – you can be sure that more will follow in the future if you can stand it. Thank you also for all the support, moral and financial, you have offered Faraja Support over the years and hope that you will be able to continue to support our children for the foreseeable future. Karibu Tanzania – everyone is welcome.