



The newsletter of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust and Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust  
"working for the environment and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi"

Welcome to the autumn 2010 issue of Nyika-Vwaza News.

We are now only two months away from our promotional evening at the RGS. We hope that you will join us for our annual get-together - for more details, including how to apply for tickets, see below.

You should find much to enjoy in this bumper newsletter. We have reports on everything from the latest news from Malawi to celebrating the diversity of the Nyika and Vwaza in the UN's International Year of Biodiversity, from a new fundraising effort by a long-standing supporter to the launch of our new website. For those who enjoy a trip down memory lane, don't miss Lorna Robson's and Robin Gray's articles on living in Chilumba forty years ago.

While you read the newsletter, please also remember why we do what we do. If you have experienced the aerial acrobatics of blue swallows over Chelinda, if you have observed the quiet grace of a pair of wattled cranes as they cross the grasslands or if you have watched, breath suspended, as the Nyika's elephants emerge from a forest patch into the soft evening light, you know that future generations must be allowed to witness these wonders. Our message is simple. Save the habitat and you save the species. That is what we are doing. And that is why it is so very important that you continue to support us.



Nyika elephant family at dusk

Thank you.

Jane Gallacher (Editor)

## RGS Annual Lecture – 9 November 2010

Please join us for our annual lecture and social evening at the Royal Geographical Society, in London, on Tuesday 9 November 2010. Doors open at 6pm

The lecture, "Thin on the Ground: Land Resources Survey in Malawi and the Commonwealth", will be given by Professor Anthony Young. It tells the story of how the agricultural potential of Malawi has been assessed, as a contribution both to Colonial history and to the history of science. All who are interested in the capacity of Malawi's land to feed its people will want to attend this event.

Anthony Young was Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia, and subsequently Principal Scientist at the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, Nairobi. His numerous and wide-ranging publications on the environment, resources and land management include studies of the development problems of Malawi extending over more than 40 years. The UN has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, making this a timely lecture.

There will be a cash bar both before and after the lecture, when Malawian merchandise will be on sale. All profits will go towards the conservation of the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve.

An application form for tickets at £18 per person is attached to this newsletter. Forms can also be downloaded from [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org) (just click on the "Events/RGS Evening 2010" button) or from Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD. Email [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org). Tel : 01752-892632.

**PLEASE DON'T DELAY - APPLY FOR YOUR TICKETS NOW.**

## New website launched

If you haven't looked at our website recently - [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org) - please do! It's had a major facelift, thanks to the expert help of our friend and web design professional, Graeme Beaty. When you look at the revamped site, we're sure you'll agree that it now has a professional look and feel, and is much more easily navigable than our old site.

If you are looking for a web designer to help you with your business, we would highly recommend Graeme - find out more about GB Web Solutions at [www.gbwebsols.co.uk](http://www.gbwebsols.co.uk).

## Drew Williams' Sprint Triathlon in support of the UK Trust

One of our most dedicated supporters, Drew Williams, our second London Marathon runner, is now taking on another fundraising challenge for us. He explains below.



Drew Williams

After completing the London Marathon on behalf of the UK Trust, I caught the training bug. That led me to the Roade sprint Triathlon in September 2009, which I completed in a time of 1:20:03. After this, I started looking for something to do this year. I did my first open water sprint at Grendon Lakes on 9<sup>th</sup> May (time of 1:30.54). I then moved up to Olympic triathlons with the Northampton triathlon on 27<sup>th</sup> June (time of 2:38.36). I then finished off my Olympic distance triathlons for the year with the Milton Keynes Triathlon held at Emberton Park, on 25<sup>th</sup> July (time of 2:34.59). My times have steadily improved all year. I hope to take at least 10 minutes off my 2009 time when I return to Roade on 26<sup>th</sup> September. At the same time I would like to raise some money for the Nyika Vwaza Trust.

This is a super initiative. Please support Drew by sending a donation to Harry Foot. You can use the form on page 10 marking it 'In support of Drew's Triathlon'.

## News from the Nyika

Andrew Jackson started working as our volunteer trust manager on the Nyika at the beginning of 2010. Here are some of his thoughts and experiences.

I was sitting on a terrace in L'Aveyron, which I used to consider remote and rural, enjoying a coffee and brioche when I received a fateful telephone call from the previous NVT managers last September. Would I be interested in caretaking the NVT manager's role as they were continuing their travels. As I had known Jerry Kent for more than 15 years, I had followed his and Lisa Hollyhead's time on the Nyika with interest. I have also always been a country boy at heart. "Yes, I was interested", I said. "Caretaking" turned into me becoming trust manager for a year and unbelievably I have now been here for almost six months.

There are many stunning pictures of, and articles and books about, the splendours of the Nyika National Park. None can prepare one for the true beauty of the place. After entering the park, there are 20kms or so of brachystegia woodlands, interesting enough in themselves, but then the real beauty begins. Stretching before you lie km upon km of rolling hills and ridges covered with montane grassland and interspersed with pockets of montane evergreen rainforest. Rivers, more redolent of Swiss mountain streams than African rivers, glide across the plateau. On clear days the views from the peaks, to Lake Malawi to the East and Zambia to the West, merit a place in "1000 things to see before you die"!



Andrew Jackson with NVT mechanic  
Lameck Gondwe

A tremendous amount of work was undertaken by the trust in 2009 to enable Nyika National Park to continue to be enjoyed by visitors. Roads that were previously impassable were graded and drains cleared. Bridges that had been damaged, or deliberately burnt by poachers, were replaced. This has opened up previously inaccessible areas of the park to visitors and, equally importantly, enabled the game scouts to mount anti-poaching patrols in these areas.

That work has continued in the first six months of 2010. One bridge has already been replaced, with plans for others to be also. Now that the dry season has commenced the 50km road from Chelinda camp to the Juniper Forest has been graded and is much easier to drive. Controversial to some, but vital say all who have lived and worked here for years, early burning has commenced to protect important parts of the park and to prevent fires becoming out of control at the height of the dry season. That work will continue thanks to the support of the UK trust.

Are there challenges to conserving the Nyika National Park or indeed to undertaking the role of the NVT volunteer manager? The answer is "yes" to both. Poaching, both of game and orchid bulbs (the latter are ground into flour and made into bread) continues to be an issue and the size of the park makes it very difficult for it all to be patrolled. The pine plantation around Chelinda is being logged and, as I type chain saws screech, wood-mizer sawmills howl and various machinery rumbles away.

For the NVT manager, the major challenge lies in the rather poor communications available on the Nyika, and throughout Malawi. Mobile telephone reception is infrequent and internet access is not always available when one makes the long trip to town. A shopping trip to Mzuzu involves a round trip journey of between 9 to 11 hours, depending on the season!

These challenges, however, do not detract from the fact that Nyika National Park to me is one of the most unique, and beautiful, places I have been fortunate to visit.

## Why we do it - the flora and fauna of the Nyika and Vwaza

In every issue of Nyika Vwaza News, we update you on what we are doing in the field - road grading, firebreak cutting, bridge building, etc. In the UN International Year of Biodiversity, it seems right to celebrate the biodiversity of these two great but fragile wildernesses. Our work in maintaining and preserving the infrastructure of the Nyika and Vwaza is for one purpose and one purpose only: to conserve their biodiversity for people today and for the future.

### Nyika fauna

In Nyika NP, there are six vegetation communities (*Brachystegia* woodland, pine plantation, montane grassland, dambos, water and evergreen forest).

There are 100 species of mammal, including 21 species of "game" animals (the largest range in Malawi), and the highest density of leopards in the country. Famous for its large herds of roan antelope and eland, today these are much reduced and located primarily close to Chelinda due to extensive poaching. Of these mammals, there are rare and endemic species: Nyika NP is the only known Malawi locality of the Greater Dwarf Shrew *Suncus lixus* and the Lesser Dwarf Shrew *Suncus varilla*. Also a very rare bat *Pteroleirotes anchetae* and two species of vlei rats are endemic to montane areas from the Nyika to Ethiopia (Tanganyika vlei rat *Otomys typus* and Kemp's vlei rat *Otomys deni*).



Red winged Francolin

There are 430 bird species with more species of forest birds than any other area in Malawi or Zambia. Nyika is listed as an IBA (Important Bird Area). Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami* are resident on the plateau grassland with occasional sightings of groups numbering 15-24. Also endemic are Red-winged Francolin *Francolinus levaillantii*. Three bird species of global conservation concern breed on the Nyika. First, the Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* - Nyika NP supports 10% (around 300 pairs) of the total breeding population. Healthy montane grasslands are critical for their survival. Second, Churring Cisticola *Cisticola njombe*, also dependent upon healthy montane grasslands. Third, Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus*. In 1986, there were about 12 breeding pairs; this is now thought to be reduced to three breeding pairs. Also of conservation concern are the Pallid Harrier *Circus macrouris*, the Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and the Greater Double-collared Sunbird *Nectarinia afra*.

There are 47 species of reptile listed for the area of the proposed Nyika Trans Frontier Conservation Area but probably more exist. Three species are endemic to the Nyika: Nyika Variable Skink *Mabuya varia nyikae*, Hilda's Skink *Mabuya hildeae* and Goetz's Nyika Chameleon *Chamaeleo goetzi nyikae*.

Lake Kaulime and the three man-made dams, together with the four major rivers that rise on the plateau, as well as numerous streams, provide habitats for 27 indigenous species of fish. Most are found in the lower reaches of the rivers, the most important being Lake Salmon *Opsaridium microlepis* (known locally as Mpasa) that spawn in the clean waters of the North Rukuru river. The only indigenous species on the plateau itself is the Mountain Catfish *Amphilophus platychir*. Both Rainbow Trout *Salmo gairdneri* and Brown Trout *Salmo trutta* were introduced but the latter did not survive.



Nyika Dwarf Toad  
Photo by Quincy Connell

The Nyika supports at least 15 types of frogs and toads, which favour the damp and cool dambos, of which two are endemic - the Black-Striped Sedge Frog *Hyperolius quinquevittatus merdensi* and the Nyika Dwarf Toad *Bufo taitanus nyikae*.

The Nyika supports 287 species of butterfly, of which 120 are varieties of forest butterflies - the largest collection in Malawi. At least five species are endemic: *Charaxes dowsetti*, *Axioceres nyika*, *Lepidochrysops handmani*, *Lepidochrysops chalceus* and *Lepidochrysops nyika*.



Gaudy Commodore (*Precis octavia*)  
Photo by Quincy Connell

### Nyika flora

The Nyika NP is classified as a Center of Plant Diversity. In March/April 2000, a SABONET expedition to the Nyika Plateau involving 20 botanists collected 3,343 plant specimens. The Nyika is renowned for its wildflowers, especially orchids, of which there are both terrestrial (grassland and dambos) and epiphytic (woodlands). There are 215 species, 12 of which are found nowhere else in the world.

(Continued on page 4)

## Vwaza fauna

The marsh is a floodplain comprising sedges and rank grass and is bordered by *Mopane* woodland (one of its most northern limits) mixed with *Miombo* woodland. Only limited research into its flora and fauna has been carried out in this Reserve.

But Vwaza is known to be home to the widest variety of large mammal species in Malawi, including elephant (150), kudu, impala, buffalo, warthog and pods of hippopotamus.

It is listed as an IBA (Important Bird Area) with 326 species recorded. However, the marsh deserves further study as the more discreet waterbirds (e.g. crakes) are little known. The marsh is the most northerly limit of Swainson's francolin *Francolinus swainsonii*. Birds of conservation concern include the rare White-winged Starling *Neocichlia gutturalis*, which occurs only in this locality.



Elephants at Lake Kazuni—Vwaza Marsh

## Vwaza Flora

There are 366 species of plants listed for Vwaza.

*We're sure you'll agree that these are impressive lists of flora and fauna. With your help, we can ensure that the biodiversity of these two parks is maintained.*

## New flora and fauna database launched

The above article highlights just some of the biodiversity of the Nyika and Vwaza. Since the inception of our two trusts in Malawi and in the UK, our efforts have focussed on supporting Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife in maintaining the basic infrastructure of these two parks. But there are other weapons in the conservationist's armoury and, for us, the time is now right to deploy one of them.

We are embarking on an ambitious project to create a central database of all – yes, all! – the fauna and flora of these parks. To have a central, easily-accessible resource providing comprehensive current and archive information on plant and animal species, which can be used by both the scientist with a specific interest and the layman with a general interest is, we believe, an important tool for conservation. Over time, and combined with our Bibliography, we hope that our database will become THE essential source of information on the Nyika and Vwaza.

We cannot manage this project on our own, so we are immensely grateful to a number of eminent scientists and naturalists who have agreed to assist us. Their knowledge, professional expertise and assistance are of vital importance to the project. Together they form a team of prestigious Patroni Naturae. We thank them for embarking upon this venture with us.

We welcome our current Patroni Naturae who are:

Carl Bruessow (Reptiles)

Francoise Dowsett-Lemaire (Birds & Evergreen Forests)

Robert Dowsett (Birds & Butterflies)

Cornell Dudley (Insects)

David Happold (Mammals)

Meredith Happold (Mammals)

Sigrid Anna Johnson (General)

Alison Kitchin (Trees)

Isobyl La Croix (Orchids)

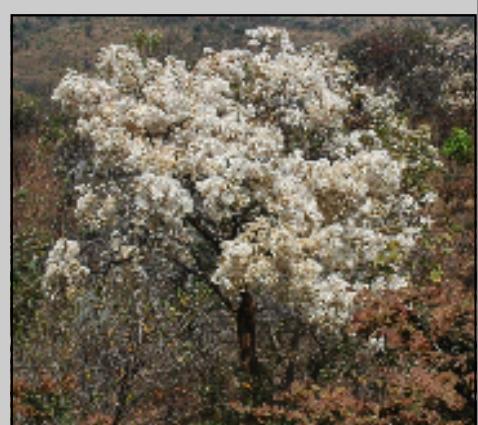
Hazel Meredith (Molluscs)

Brian Morris (Ethnobiology)

Jonathon Timberlake (Vegetation Ecology)

Denis Tweddle (Fish)

Dolf van Bruggen (Molluscs)



Dombaya tree

We would also welcome offers of assistance from other experts; in particular, we are looking for a volunteer who is scientifically and computer literate to coordinate the project. Please do contact any of the Trustees or Harry Foot (email: [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org)) if you would like to offer your services.

## How you can help to conserve the Nyika and Vwaza

With threats of a double dip recession in the UK and "austerity" becoming the new buzz word everywhere, times are harder now for everyone than they have been in years.

Please do continue to support us if you possibly can. We rely totally on your generosity to conserve the biodiversity of the Nyika and Vwaza. A pound goes a long way in Malawi, and we stretch it as far as we can. But the country is far from immune from rising oil and commodity prices. NVT uses huge amounts of diesel and our staff must eat so our operating costs have increased significantly over the last 18 months.

We think there are ways in which you can support us that may reduce the pain a little:

- A monthly standing order of, say, £5 (or less) may hurt less than a quarterly donation of £20 (there is a banker's order form at the back of this newsletter if you would like to donate in this way).
- If your employer operates pay-roll giving - Give as You Earn - this is a very tax efficient way of giving regularly: the sum you donate is deducted from your salary before it is taxed.
- If you have a Charities Aid Foundation account, you can simply send us a CAF cheque. Or else you can send a "normal" cheque for a one-off donation.
- If you are unable to support us now, you might consider a bequest in your Will. This is also a tax efficient way of giving, since charitable bequests are deducted before any inheritance tax is charged on your estate. You can find out more at [www.rememberacharity.org.uk](http://www.rememberacharity.org.uk).
- When completing your Income Tax Return for 2009-10 you will notice that the Revenue permits tax payers to donate overpaid tax to charities. For this purpose the Revenue provides form *SA 100Charity 2010* which can be downloaded. On page 2 of that form you are required to insert in box 5 our charity's unique code which is *BA R3 1J G* (you will find the G already printed on the form). It is all very straightforward.

Every little helps and anything that you are able to give will go a long way to supporting our work on the Nyika and in Vwaza. It is better still if you can donate a small amount regularly; it gives us some certainty when planning ahead if we know we have a regular income from our supporters.

## The Endowment Fund

Last year, the generous legacy of Ian Hay enabled the UK trustees to set aside £50,000 in an embryonic Endowment Fund.

The initial aim is for this fund to increase over time through investment returns and additions of new capital, hopefully from gifts, donations and other legacies. The ultimate aim is that the capital of the fund should generate sufficient income to meet the annual requirements of the UK Trust. This will ensure our long-term financial stability and so our ability to fund NVT's work in Malawi. Our immediate target is to double the present capital by April 2015. Contributions to the Endowment Fund will be warmly welcomed. If you are able to help, please contact any UK trustee or the Hon. Treasurer, Harry Foot (Email: [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org)).

## Elephants and Humans

Last December a large audience enjoyed Prof. Brian Morris' lecture at the Royal Geographical Society on the relationships between Malawians and animals. He discussed the fact that for many centuries the people of Malawi had lived "cheek-by-jowl" with wild animals, particularly the larger mammals, and the relationship had always been close and intimate. One of the relationships was a consequence of the advent of agriculture for, when animals raided the food crops of villagers, they became a menace, and the chief marauders were elephants. "In 1991" said Prof. Morris "when I camped at Lake Kazuni, at dusk a herd of elephants regularly left the reserve to raid the nearby maize gardens, and took little notice of the game guards who attempted to keep them within Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve."

This instinct has not changed nor is it likely to do so. What has changed since 1991 is that the southern and much of the eastern boundaries of the Reserve have been fenced to prevent elephants from marauding and to protect the animals in the Reserve from poachers. We were therefore disappointed and saddened to learn earlier this year that three elephants had been crop raiding and that two villagers were killed as a result. In response to our enquiry a spokesman for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) explained what had happened:

"There were three elephants that came out of the Vwaza and went on rampage in villages East of the reserve. As people kept chasing them from their properties using whatever means, the elephants continued going further away from the reserve eastwards. And at some point, it is believed that this one



Elephants in Vwaza

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

elephant strayed away from the other two, which made a turn back towards the Vwaza, but still about 50km away. So in the way people were harassing it, as someone said they were throwing fire logs of wood at it, and it must have got angry with the way people were treating it. And that is probably why it killed the first person as it was running away from the harassment, and later killed another person who was apparently in its way. This person just met his fate when he was innocently moving from one place to another.

But it is the very communities that the fence is meant to protect that destroy/vandalise it, rendering communities vulnerable to elephant attacks (like this was the case) in the process. We will continue to carry out maintenance in all the damaged fence parts, extend the fence to cover more distance and then carry out sensitization to the communities on the benefits of the fence.

Some funds have been budgeted for a 15km new fence line and maintenance of the old fence line in Vwaza in the 2010/11 Financial Year.

Please be assured that we are doing all we can to minimise these incidents."

So, hungry humans with the same desire as elephants for food, damage a mutually protective fence to gain wire for their snares, with the consequence that two innocent humans and one elephant have died.

We thank the spokesman for this helpful information. We also commend the DNPW and its staff for the measures they are taking to secure the Reserve and to "sensitize" the local communities to the benefits of the fence.

Educational visits to the parks by local villagers are encouraged by the Malawi Government. This is an activity that we too are keen to promote.

### Volunteer Trust Manager Vacancy

The Trustees of the Malawi-based Nyika-Vwaza Trust invite applications for the post of Volunteer Trust Manager which becomes vacant at the end of December 2010. The post is best suited to a couple sharing the responsibilities who commit to work for a minimum of 12 months. Free accommodation is provided in a purpose built log cabin located at Chelinda in the heart of the Nyika National Park. Return air fares UK to Malawi on commitment to 12 month's service and thereafter each 12 month's service. Moderate subsistence allowance. For full details apply with information about yourselves to the Secretary of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust, Carl Bruessow (Email:[carl@mountmulanje.org.mw](mailto:carl@mountmulanje.org.mw)  
Tel: +265 (0)1466 282/179)

### Living in Chilumba forty years ago - "down on the plain" - by Lorna Hobson

Robin Gray's articles about road building in Northern Malawi unleashed a flood of memories for me of a wonderful year I spent in the Northern Region back in 1969.

In the late 1960s, I was delighted that VSO chose to send me to Central Africa. Initially I was appointed to Soche Hill Secondary School but the highlight for me was an extra year when I was stationed in Chilumba.

I was the first British volunteer posted to the school, which had only recently received secondary status. My household consisted of myself, my dog and the 'domestic staff' who lived nearby. They were Nya Nkwacha, a woman of small build but amazing energy, who cooked for me on the wood-burning stove, taught me some Chitumbuka and with whom I shared many a laugh; and Wilson, a man from the village who worked as a part-time 'hewer of wood and drawer of water'. The water was carried from a nearby well and pumped up to the tank above the stove which Wilson kept going with wood gathered from the bush behind the school.



My house at Chilumba Day secondary School

In my first week at Chilumba, I had an unexpected visit from Chinese workers from the Hara Agricultural Scheme, offering me a wonderful selection of fruit and vegetables. Thereafter they called weekly, so I was never short of fresh food. Nya Nkwacha also bought chambo and other fish for me at the lakeshore and eggs formed a staple in my diet. I seldom bothered with meat.

The teacher I most clearly recall was the headmaster, Mr Mvula, a friendly easy-going character. Another colleague was the history teacher, a man who, I was shocked to find, had to support his large family on the same monthly salary as I, supposedly a volunteer, received as 'pocket money'. I used to visit his wife of an evening. She told me that her youngest child became poorly whenever the moon was full. Like every mother, she loved to speak to me of her little children and their development, and I loved to hear her.

Our nearest doctor was at Livingstonia, but more valued locally as a health centre was the Vinthukulu Mission, just north of Chilumba. On the beach one night a VSO was stung on the tip of his finger by what we supposed must have been a scorpion. He was taken to Vinthukulu. The story, as he told it later, was that they had bound a special stone tightly against his finger and by morning he watched the swelling in his arm subside and the pain ebb away. The

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

stone was then boiled in milk, after which it would be ready for re-use. At the time I heard this, I was incredulous but quite recently I heard a similar tale startlingly similar in every detail.

Something I greatly valued was being invited to students' homes. Visiting at Kaporø we watched the *malepenga* and other tribal dances, learnt to play the *bangwe* (a seven-stringed harp), to knot rope to make fishing nets, and - greatest thrill - went out in a dugout canoe. The trip that stands out most in my mind, though, was a visit to the Misuku Hills in the far north. We had many happy days high up in this beautiful landscape, with its varied flora and stunning views, and we visited different villages, wherever our student had relatives for us to meet and greet in the local dialects he taught us. Each village conveyed the feel of a caring community, proud and self-reliant. The houses were well looked after and neat, the slopes terraced for cultivation; we saw bricks being made with straw and mud, and a primary school painted with obvious care and pride.



Brickmaking in the Misuku Hills

As for the other northern highlands, my first reaction to the Nyika was elation at the sight of those fine rolling hills and coniferous forests, the rocky outcrops and the rich-looking dark soil supporting a profusion of flowers. We saw numerous herds: zebra, antelope of various kinds, eland, reedbuck. . . and birds of prey soaring overhead. I returned on another occasion, but it rained almost continuously, reminding me of the Scottish Highlands.

On several occasions I travelled the forty-five miles of 'dirt' road north to Karonga - a journey that on one occasion took the bus four hours!

That would have been only months before the re-surfacing of that road, mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter. Also at that time the road south along the lakeshore, through the South Rukuru valley, was still two years in the future. So apart from the dear old 'Ilala', our main route south was via Livingstonia. Many a time I enjoyed - sometimes endured! - the rough ride Robin Gray mentioned as unforgettable, between Livingstonia and Rumphi. I also of course experienced the thrill of the incredible escarpment road between the Livingstonia Mission and the lakeshore, that drops more than 3000 feet in 7 miles via 22 hairpin bends. Of course, it is close to this road that the breathtaking Manchewe Falls make their dramatic descent in a series of drops down the thickly vegetated precipice. One can go into caves under the Falls, where some of the Ngoni people are said to have once lived in hiding during a tribal conflict.



Teaching Block at Chilumba DSS



Manchew Falls

On the Chilumba School compound, although the staff houses and the science teaching block were fairly new, the classroom where I taught was part of an old long low building with unglazed windows (though glass was later added allowing us to build up a class library). The corrugated iron roof made it feel like an oven in the afternoons and when it rained the clatter was so deafening that speech was impossible! In the hottest season just before the rains, the highlight of my day was when school was over (for the Day Students at least; I had Night Classes later) and I could take my bike and, with my dog running beside me, cycle through villages, through avenues of tall elephant grass, to plunge into the Lake. Later there would be piles of workbooks to be marked by the light of tilley lamps or candles. Then sleep, to the background night chorus from the nearby bush.

I count myself lucky to have lived in such a beautiful place, to have had the friendship of such welcoming people and to have been able to share with them the precious resources of this very special part of Africa.

Many thanks to Lorna for providing such an evocative account of her time at Chilumba. For readers who would like to learn more, the full length version of Lorna's article is on our website on the News/Latest News page.

### Living in Chilumba forty years ago - "up on the hill" - by Robin Gray



Landslide Livingstonia Escarpment Road  
April 1950

In 1969 I was posted to Chilumba to supervise construction of the lakeshore road from Chilumba to Chiweta and to lay a black top surface to the gravel road from Chilumba to Karonga.

At the time, the access to Chilumba was down the rift valley escarpment from Livingstonia or round the north of the Nyika to Chisenga and Karonga or via the lake steamers or by air to Karonga. Livingstonia escarpment had 22 hairpin bends, some of which even a car had to reverse upon and pretty much impassable in the rains, and so was unsuitable for lorries. It was a long way around the Nyika and could be closed for days at a time in the rains. In the previous issue of Nyika-Vwaza News there was a

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

picture of my Morris Traveller parked by the old timber Hara Bridge: all the roads were earth in the north but most private vehicles were ordinary two wheel drive. Even though we were building roads through the bush nearly all our vehicles were 2 wheel drive - if you needed 4x4 then it was probably too wet to build roads!



Livingstonia Escarpment  
Sept 1969

Our work force represented the biggest change in population for some years: our team consisted of about twelve expatriates (mostly with families); probably fifty skilled Malawians from the south with families as well as many locally employed Malawians. It soon became apparent that the local economy could not sustain such an influx. Uliwa market at the main road mainly had a few vegetables and scrawny chickens and occasionally a cow would be butchered somewhere along the road. Many of the Malawians were not happy with the local staples of cassava and rice and so maize, UFA (commercial bagged ground maize) and other non perishable supplies were brought up from the south on the company's lorries. Memories are now fading but I think that fuel came up in the bunkers of lake steamers, was transferred into a dumb barge that was towed inshore and laid alongside the small stone and timber jetty (the present jetty at Chilumba was constructed in 1973 and much modified since).

We had our offices and workshops at Hangalawe which was the first village and stream south of Uliwa and just on the northern edge of the Hara Plain. Our imported Malawian personnel lived in a camp of prefabricated tin huts (Speederect huts) nearby. The first year we had exceptional rains which were rather embarrassing as the photo shows.

Initially communication to the contractor's base in Blantyre was by the old Cape to Cairo telegraph line which was a single wire on metal posts with the current return through the ground. This probably worked well with a Morse code telegraph but using it for a telephone involved a lot of shouting, frequent interruptions and consequent stress. An SSB radio link was quickly established but was restricted to two half hour periods each day and also involved a lot of shouting and atmospherics. Our mail went up and down on the lorry shuttle and then by post from Blantyre since that was more reliable and quicker than Malawi post.

The senior staff lived in conditions considerably more salubrious than Lorna Hobson at the nearby Day Secondary School, on a site overlooking the lake. We had a generator on site to supply electricity to all the houses and the bachelor's mess which allowed us to have fridges and freezers. The lounge in each house was air conditioned but generally we preferred to have the windows open for fresh air. Water heating was by Rhodesian boiler. Water was pumped up from the lake and used with no treatment but most people had a water filter for drinking water. We had a club house on the beach with a rather uneven surfaced tennis court, a power boat for water skiing etc and three Mirror sailing dinghies. We used to go out in the dinghies at weekends to fish to supplement our diet. The lake steamer "Ilala" called at Chilumba for Saturday and Sunday nights and provided a diversion for those so inclined to go out on one of our boats and dine on board.

One Sunday evening our earthworks foreman, Franz De Jong, was standing on his lawn watching the "Ilala" come into the bay for her regular night stop when he felt a sting or a bite on his big toe. The toe began to throb and became very painful so he drove back to Vintukhutu Catholic Mission on the main road where there was a dispensary and small hospital run by two Malawian nuns who had trained in the USA. They checked and found only one puncture mark which probably indicated a scorpion or a centipede. They put a small stone on the wound held in place by a bandage and told him that when he could bear the pain no longer he should take it off, boil the stone in milk himself and return it to the nuns. He went home and by midnight he could bear the pain in his toe no longer so he took the bandage off and, as he removed the stone, the pain disappeared. He boiled the stone himself as instructed and returned it next morning. Lorna Hobson recounts an almost identical story when one of her VSO colleagues was stung on his finger. What a mixture of traditional or practical medicine carried out by western trained nurses!

We visited in 2009 and were well pleased to see that the staff camp was still in vibrant use after four decades as a base for research on communicable diseases.

*Our thanks to Robin for preparing an article to compliment Lorna's and to round off his series on road building in Malawi in the '50's and '60's.*



Flooding the Offices at Hangalawe  
Jan 1971

## Readers' corner

In his Cambridge University Senate House speech on 4 December 1857, Dr. David Livingstone famously appealed for the Arab trade in humans from Africa, which had been accepted as normal for centuries, to be replaced by trade in goods and produce.

It was almost 40 years before that human trafficking through, and from, Malawi was effectively halted by the defeat and death of Mlozi, the self-styled sultan based at the northern end of Lake Malawi. It is thought-provoking that the slaughter of elephants for their tusks was central to both Mlozi's trade and the nascent European commerce that sought to replace it. Now, 115 years later, comes the first book to analyse the impact of Mlozi on the inhabitants of the northern region and the events that led to the end of his reign. In reviewing this book, Dr. John Lwanda, writer and social historian, commends the book and explains why. He writes:

"David Stuart-Mogg's book is a challenging, fascinating, multi-layered work examining a dark period in Malawi's history using the story of the ivory and slave trader Mlozi. Using Mlozi's life, I liked and enjoyed the way he illustrates man's past and current inhumanity to fellow man covering, *inter alia*, the African victims of slavery; the fellow Africans who captured them; the Afro-Arab middlemen; the Arabs who bought them and transported them; Christianity; early colonialism and its cast of characters and army and some of the, often less than honourable, 19<sup>th</sup> Century European traders in Malawi whose commerce replaced Mlozi's. A most rewarding read for all students of Malawi history."

To obtain copies of **Mlozi of Central Africa** in the UK send a cheque for £14.95 plus £2.20 p&p in UK payable to "David Stuart-Mogg" at 10 Robins Field, Wansford, Peterborough, PE8 6JW. David has offered to donate 10% of the book revenue to the Trust when purchasers cite Nyika-Vwaza News with their order.

## The NV(UK)T Book Collection

Five books, second hand, have been donated to the Collection recently. They are:

- "Ulendo - Travels of a Naturalist in and out of Africa" by Archie Carr. (1965)
- "Tropical Africa" by Henry Drummond.(8<sup>th</sup> Edition originally 1889)
- "Kamuzu Banda of Malawi" by John Lloyd Lwanda (1<sup>st</sup> Reprint 1995)
- "Kamuzu Banda of Malawi" by John Lloyd Lwanda (2009 Reprint—mint) (2 copies)

The Collection, with descriptions and prices, is listed on our website [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org). If you would like to purchase any of the above books please contact Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD. Email [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org). Tel : 01752-892632

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*Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.*

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The Nyika-Vwaza Trust can only continue with the vital task of helping to conserve the Nyika and Vwaza Marsh with the continuing support of generous donations. We welcome further donations from current Friends of the Trust but we also endeavour to widen our scope for funding so please pass on copies of the newsletter to your friends and relations.

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*(for UK residents only)*

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Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust,  
Stowford Farm,  
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PL21 0JD  
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UK taxpayers are asked to send donations to the UK Hon. Treasurer, other donors either to the UK Hon. Treasurer or to The Trust Manager, Box 577, Mzuzu, Malawi.

# Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

**Promotional Evening with Lecture by Professor Anthony Young  
at the Royal Geographical Society,  
Exhibition Road entrance, London SW7 2AR on Tuesday 09 November 2010**

**“Thin on the Ground ”.**

## **Application Form for Tickets**

Admission tickets are £18 per person.

I would like to apply for      tickets to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust fundraising party on 9th November 2010 for the people named below.

I enclose my cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust.

**(Please complete in block letters)**

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
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Names of other people for whom tickets are requested ( see also Continuation Sheet ):

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

Please return this form, with your remittance, a.s.a.p. to Harry Foot, Stowford Farm, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD.

((Please complete in block letters))

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No:		
Email Address:		

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

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Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

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