

## Setting the scene

Peter was born in Dar es Salaam, in Tanganyika as it was then, lived in Dodoma and went to school out there till he was 13. Now he wanted to put something back into the country of his birth but emailing the Bishop of Central Tanganyika met with no result. Through Duffield Church he met Martin, who was already running a small charity, hope for Tanzania, which supported Tuishime Primary School in Arusha, Northern Tanzania, and went out twice, once to support the building work in the school, and, as a separate venture, to take out some medical equipment.

Rosalind, the long-suffering wife, backs Peter in all his mad ventures.

Jacky, retired paediatric nurse and farmer, also wanting to put something back into society, heard Peter's story of how the school ran a bus service morning and evening to get the pupils from and to their homes in the remote bush, and immediately asked "Why not provide bicycles for the children to travel on?" Such lateral thinking developed the idea of using all the unwanted bikes in people's garages to provide bikes for their family as well.

Kate, Jacky's daughter, is a student teacher, and her eyes lit up at the prospect of turning an East African visit into a purposeful teaching practice. All came together, and the four of us set to packing ourselves and two children's bicycles for the trip.

Felix, our host, is a retired Clinical Officer in radiology, and a stalwart of the Arusha Cathedral community. Naomi, our hostess, is retiring from the task of headmistress to a Government primary school with currently 3000 pupils and 50 teachers. She is just succeeding in getting 2 pupils to a desk instead of 3.

Felix and Naomi built their retirement bungalow in 2002, and then decided the children of the local area were in need of another school, so they started one, using the retirement home as the school building. Tuishime School is named after their eldest daughter.



Here is Felix. The cat is called PussPuss

## Peter's diary

30 August. Find ratchet lashing strips. Borrow a lashing from Steve in return for loan of edging shears. Find stepladder and lash bike boxes to roof bars. After discussion, book meet-and-greet service at Heathrow.

31 August. Last-minute preparations and panics. Assemble paperwork, forget to post letter, load car with far too many bags and set off for Jacky and Kate. Far too many bags joined by even more, but somehow everything fits in. Set off at 12.30, only half an hour late. Steady progress in well-laden vehicle along A38, M42, and M40 to Oxford service station, where we make the bush stop.



We join the M25 – still no serious holdups – call the parking service and arrive at Terminal 4 earlier than the planned 4 pm. Park in the assigned valet parking lane, find trolleys, get bike boxes down, empty car, phone parking service and have conversation with man with strange accent about where we are (where we should be, of course). Police try to move us on.

Enter arrivals hall. Now for the real fun of getting two large boxes through check-in. Jacky has had numerous conversations with Kenya Airways, and is resigned to them going as excess baggage (300 euros). Nice man at baggage drop says they don't exceed anything except size – take them round to E62. Three cheers. "But" he says, "you'll have to make sure there's no air in the tyres, or they may explode in the aircraft." Two cheers. Kate and I rip open the boxes while Jacky disappears to find parcel tape. Extract bikes with struggle, let tyres down, struggle to get bikes back in boxes. Jacky and Kate go off while Rosalind and I complete check-in (nice man ignores our overweight suitcase) and head for E62. The row of signs stops at E61 and starts again at F. E62 = Platform 9¾. Eventually we find it tucked in a corner, and meet up with the others.

In security I walk through. Rosalind has every bag item checked, every jar of make-up examined with a wand. One of these days I shall wake up to being married to a secret terrorist. 6 pm and the flight is not till 8. Agree to meet at 7.30 and head for a quick snack and some impulse shopping. Jacky/Kate still in long queue for surly cashier in WH Smith at 7.33. Only slight panic.



Kenya Airways Boeing 777 wide body jet. Very comfortable, even if the in-flight entertainment speaks terrible French. The girls are in the 3 window seats while I sit next to them across the aisle. My neighbour is an ex-diplomat and Manchester University lecturer going to an Islamic studies conference. Dinner of curried beef preceded by two complimentary gins and tonic. Must fly Kenya Airways more often. Try and snooze.

1 September. Enjoy Continental breakfast before landing. Nairobi Airport still shows marks of fire. Official lady says "Kilimanjaro? Gate 4A". Along corridor needing repair, into lift. Long queue for 4A. Lady official says "Wrong gate, Kilimanjaro flight is at gate 1A" Into lift, back down corridor, meet first lady official again. "What you doing here?" Eventually directed to gate 5. Along corridor, into lift... well you get the idea.



Little Embraer jet takes us past the top of a cloud-shrouded Mount Kilimanjaro.

Kili airport is as pretty as ever with flamboyant trees and bougainvillea bushes. No trouble with Customs and out we walk to meet Felix and Naomi.

They look younger than ever.

The new bungalow looks fabulous. We all collapse after lunch, and head for a snooze. Felix heads off into town to the old house with Jacky, while Naomi, Rosalind, Kate and myself go out for a little walk in the evening glow.

We share a prayer and an evening meal served from insulated pots down the centre of the table. Rosalind and I knew what was coming and viewed it with relish; the others were a little cautious of the novelty.



There are 3 bedrooms in the bungalow. Rosalind and I have been offered Teddy's bedroom (Teddy, or Teresa, is the niece of Felix and Naomi, brought up as a daughter). Teddy has retreated to join friends in the spare room. Jacky and Kate have their quarters in the house of the newly retired Bishop, just round the corner. Felix prays for us all.