

Cecil G Ames 1897-1977

Part 2 In West Africa



by

Jennifer Ridley (née Ames)

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Preface

As I grew up, I came to understand that my father worked as a judge in Nigeria. It was not until later that I realised that was not the whole story, that he had begun his career there as a District Officer, or local administrator, a man on the front line of the British Empire. The last DOs hung up their sun helmets long ago when the colonies became independent states in the 1950s and 60s, and since their disappearance a certain romantic aura has become attached to the job. I wanted to find out whether this was justified. What did a DO actually do?

Of course, my father was a colonialist. It may be that for some that fact is enough to stop them reading further. I can't do anything about that — he was born in Britain in 1897. Nowadays we think differently, but I also wanted to see how a decent, thoughtful man might have operated within the flawed system of his day, as administrator and then as judge.

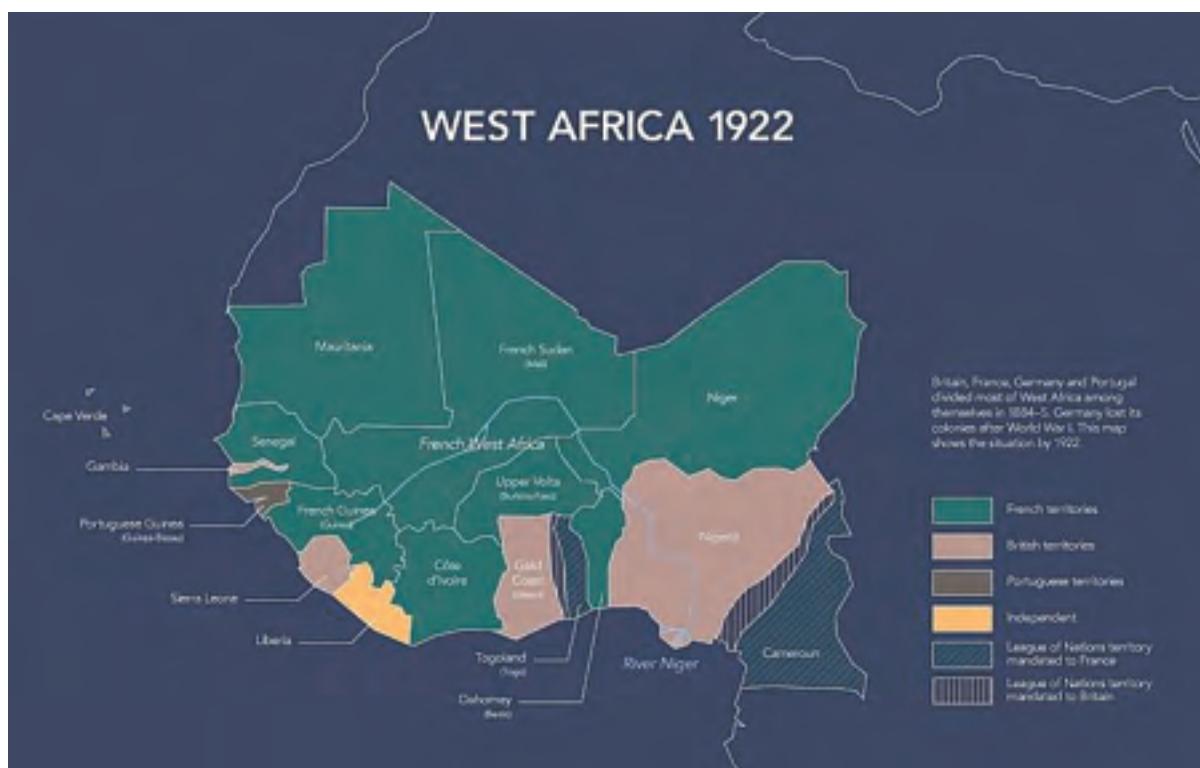
The later stages of my father's life involve myself, of course, and I have included those parts of my own story which are closely intertwined with his.



Cecil Ames with family and friends outside Buckingham Palace, July 1965

1 Transition

In the late spring of 1921, my father applied to the Colonial Office for an appointment to the ‘administrative services in East and West Africa.’ He was 24, and newly qualified as a solicitor at the family firm of E G Ames and Son Solicitors of Frome, Somerset. He had lived a very different life from 1917 to 1919, when as a young officer his army service in the First World War had taken him to India, and then via Egypt to fight in the Palestine campaign against the Ottoman Turks. He had been lucky in these postings, and I see his application to go to Africa as a desire to return to the life he had tasted in the army, a more adventurous life than a small town in Somerset could offer.



What was he applying for? In 1921 Britain, like France, had an extensive empire in Africa. On the west coast were the British colonies of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, where coastal trading posts and mining interests had gradually extended their influence inland, until huge areas had been made subject to British control, with or without the agreement of the local rulers, and definitely without consulting the people who lived there. In 2021 we can find much to deplore in the way in which the European powers acquired their colonies in Africa, but in 1921 the existence of the British Empire was simply a fact of life, and clearly its territories needed men to administer them so that law and order prevailed. District Officers (DOs) were responsible for delivering this outcome, and Cecil was applying to become one of these. It was a job to appeal to any self-reliant young man in search of a stimulating, outdoor life with plenty of human interest and the potential for adventure.

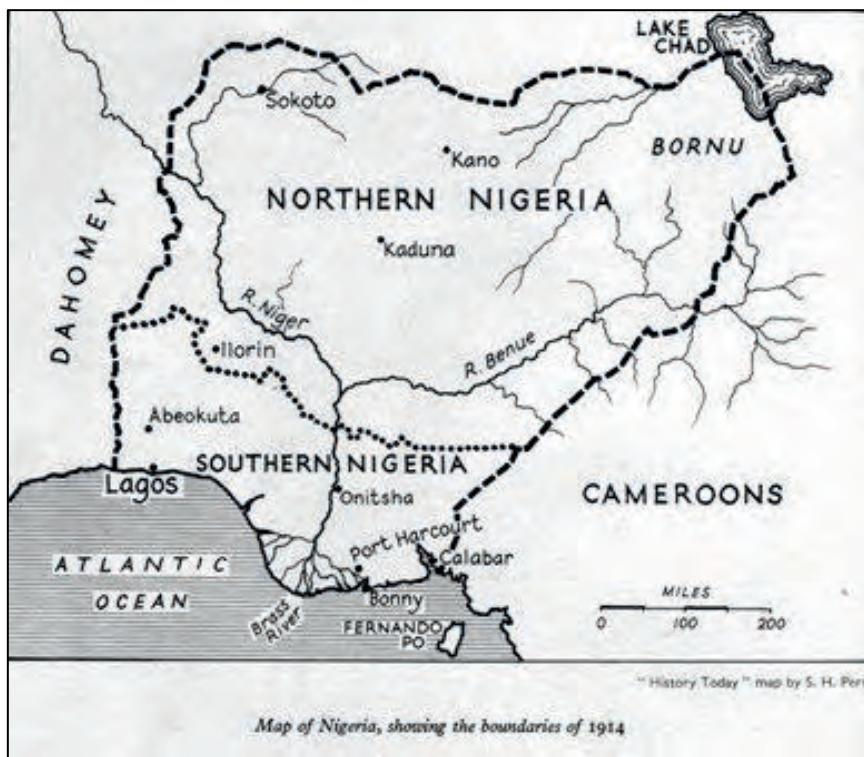
Most prospective DOs came, like Cecil, from middle-class families with a tradition of public service, usually reinforced by education at a public (boarding) school. By 1921, many candidates had degrees, but service in the armed forces was an entirely acceptable alternative and after the end of WW1 many demobilised officers applied to become DOs.

References were required and interviews followed. What qualities were the interviewers looking for? A 1930 report suggested that candidates should have 'Vision, high ideals of service, fearless devotion to duty born of a sense of responsibility, tolerance and ... team spirit.'

Cecil's qualifications for the job can never have been in doubt. He had no degree, but his professional legal training stood him in good stead, and above all, as an ex-army officer with a good war record, he was a man of proven character. He fitted the requirements perfectly.

But was it to be East or West Africa? They were and are very different and it seems that those accepted were sometimes able to express a preference. I think it is quite possible that Cecil went to West Africa by choice. In January of 1917, when travelling to India by the long route round the Cape of Good Hope, he had spent a week moored off Freetown in Sierra Leone, the first foreign country he had seen, and many years later, in a talk given in his retirement, he recalled thinking how beautiful it looked. Be that as it may, he was allocated to the huge region of Northern Nigeria, a much sought after posting.

In the simple 1914 map below, the line that divided Nigeria into two very unequal halves can be seen lying well to the south of the broad Y formed by the rivers Niger and Benue. It gave Northern Nigeria an area three times that of the UK.



The next stage was training, in 1921 still quite rudimentary, a maximum of 12 weeks at the Imperial Institute in South Kensington, on a site now occupied by Imperial College. In ‘Symbol of Authority’, Anthony Kirk-Greene lists ‘the unduly wide range’ of subjects to be studied in this brief period: ‘colonial accounts, tropical economic products, criminal and Mohammedan law, hygiene and sanitation, surveying, ethnology and African languages.’ The training was shortly (1926–28) to be thoroughly re-organised and expanded to a year’s university study, and although Cecil missed this in 1921, he benefitted later from an increasing general interest in the serious study of the peoples and lands of the empire.

Before the new DO was ready to put his training into practice, he had to equip himself for life in the tropics. What did he need to buy? Essential here is Cecil’s ‘Nigeria Handbook’, the official government guide, published annually in Lagos, for those needing information on the country. Cecil’s retained a copy of the 1933 edition, and some of its content is more 1933 than 1922, but I think we can accept the general gist as applicable to either year, while remembering that at the earlier date Europeans are likely to have found the living conditions more rather than less challenging.

The Handbook starts with 67 pages of advertisements by UK suppliers. Some of the items on the list of tropical clothing provided by Isaac Walton and Co Ltd (below) may be unfamiliar: tussore was a type of silk, and the spine pad was a length of quilted material fixed to the shirt to protect the spinal column from the sun. A terai was a wide-brimmed and well-ventilated felt hat with a double crown, and mosquito boots were for use in the evenings and at other times when needed.

On other pages are advertised everything from water filters (the candle operated Pasteur-Chamberland filter was the brand leader) to Elsan chemical closets ‘for Up-Country Sanitation, no drains needed’, from taxidermy to steamrollers, from ‘Preserved Provisions (Pan Yan Pickle, Flavouring Essences, Herrings in Tomato, Cods’ Roes, Mixed Grill, etc etc)’ to Remington or Olivetti typewriters. The new oil-operated fridges advertised in 1933 were unfortunately not available in 1922, and there are a worrying number of advertisements for ‘tropical remedies’, but some familiar brands like Nestle’s milk chocolate and McDougall’s flour provide reassurance, while for those feeling cut off culturally, bookseller E F Hudson of Birmingham invites orders from ‘English Residents in Nigeria who wish to keep in touch with English Literature.’

How much of all this did the new recruit actually need to buy? And what did he use for money? Guidance is at hand towards the end of the book, in a chapter entitled ‘Suggestions for newly appointed officers’. It seems that new officers might apply for two months’ salary in advance, from what was then a fairly generous pay scale. Cecil had no private income, so I imagine he did that. In 1933 the pay for DOs ranged from £450 to £960 a year.

ISAAC WALTON & Co. Ltd.

OVERSEAS OUTFITTING

Gentlemen going Overseas can obtain reliable Clothing and Equipment at Walton's in up-to-date styles and at, what is needed to-day, economical prices.

The Tailoring imparted into Tussore and Palm Beach materials is of a high standard, and materials are selected for long service. Suitable Shirts, Underwear, Boots, Trunks, etc., are available, and shopping for Overseas is made easy. For satisfaction—Outfit at Walton's.



A few selected items from our List :

Tussore Jacket and Trousers	25/-, 42/-
Cream Gabardine Jacket and Trousers	30/-, 42/-
White Drill Jackets and Trousers	21/-, 29/-
Khaki	21/-, 26/-
Palm Beach	20/-, 59/-
Wool Solaro	85/-
Cream Gabardine Trousers	12/-, 29/-
White or Khaki Drill Trousers	10/-
Bush Shirts	8/-1/-
Drill Shorts	6/-
Spine Pads	1/-1/-
Calvin Cord Riding Breeches	21/-
Khaki and Drab Drill Riding Breeches	15/-, 18/-
White Drill Dinner Jackets	18/-
Mess	16/-
Tropical Weatherproofs	85/-, 95/-
Waterproof, guaranteed all climates	49/-
30-in. Airtight Case, Pullover Bolt	48/-
Cork and Rubber Helmets, Gents'	16/-, 18/-
Pith Helmets, Gents'	18/-
Woley Helmet	16/-, 25/-
Colonial Felt, all Fur	21/-
Double Terci	32/-
Waterproof Helmet Covers	5/-
Panama Hats	7/-, 12/-
Mosquito Boots, White Canvas	19/-
Mosquito Boots, best quality Black Glace	27/-
Mosquito Boots, best quality Brown Sheepskin	27/-
Airtight Boxes, Wardrobe Trunks, Cabin Trunks,	—
Mosquito Nets, Camp Equipment	—
Ladies' Mosquito Boots	18/-11/-, 25/-, 42/-
Helmets, Ladies' Cork and Pith	—, 18/-
Ladies' Tropical Raincoats	75/-, 95/-
Ladies' Tussore Dustcoats	35/-
Ladies' Riding Breeches, Mosquito Boots,	—
Helmets and Sunshades a speciality	—
Children's Pith Helmets	12/-

THE ABOVE CLOTHING READY TO WEAR.

Can be made to measure if necessary at slightly extra cost.

Customers tell us it is surprising that we can impart so much style into washing suits. We have a range of specially selected cloths, and claim to offer the finest possible value.

There is satisfaction in Walton Tropical Clothing.

Isaac Walton

CITY ESTABLISHMENT:

1 to 9 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, E.C. 4

What should he buy? A surprisingly large amount, it seems, and not just clothes, but also the items needed for the running of his (small) household, and the camping equipment needed to enable him to carry out the very important duty of going 'on tour'. So, despite advising against over-buying until one has seen what is needed on the spot, the Handbook suggests a minimum 'outfit' which extends to almost four pages.

The kitchen, for example, will require one large and one small kettle, one frying pan, four saucepans, one mincing machine, cook's knife, fork and spoon, crockery, cutlery, glass and linen.

Fresh food is advised when available, but store cupboard items, fairly easily obtainable (in 1933) in the south of Nigeria, are said to be more difficult to come by in the north, except in places close to the railway. 'In any case, an officer will find it convenient to have by him a few months' supply of provisions, made up by his British outfitters in chop boxes,' wooden cases with hinged lids which could be locked. 'Chop' was the universal word for food in West Africa, and chop boxes often had a long and useful after-life as impromptu furniture and general containers, especially when made of stronger wood.

The 'few months' supply' suggested will include:

- 4 (1 lb.) tins tea.
- 6 (1 lb.) tins coffee.
- 28 lb. sugar, in 2 lb. or 4 lb. or 7 lb. tins with lever tops.
- 90 lb. flour, in 4 lb. or 7 lb. tins.
- 15 lb. washing soap.
- 6 tins sausages.
- 12 tins salmon.
- 6 (1 lb.) tins jams (or in bottles with screw caps).
- 6 (1 lb.) tins marmalade (or in bottles with screw caps).
- 6 (1 lb.) tins dry biscuits.
- 6 small tins cheese.
- 6 tins fruit in syrup.
- 1 case (96 half tins) unsweetened evaporated milk—and some salt, pepper, curry powder, and baking powder in small tins.

Medical items, the new officer is assured, will be provided free by the Government 'when required'. This presumably refers to standard preventative treatments, such as the daily 5 grains of quinine needed to build resistance to malaria. The Handbook is at pains to correct the widespread belief that because of its climate, the west coast of Africa is 'the white man's grave', saying that 'in almost every instance, disease is due to some known and usually preventable cause', and it gives advice on how to avoid not just the three major diseases of malaria, yellow fever and sleeping sickness, but also on how to treat the bites of some of Nigeria's very many other insects.

The new recruit gets advice on vehicles (a bicycle or motor bike may be useful in the southern provinces) saddlery or horse-riding gear (needed by those going to the north, and including 'curry combs, body brushes, halters, a pair of clippers and saddle soap') firearms (to be seen as luxuries for officers interested in shooting) and clothing, not forgetting the insect proof metal cases needed to put it in.

Clothing was in fact relatively simple. There was no uniform as such, but the figure of the European administrator in Africa, in sun helmet, shirt, shorts and knee length socks has become a familiar icon of the colonial period and on the right, in what must be a very early photo, we see Cecil standing, slightly askew, in the doorway of a mud hut. The tie, instead of his more usual open-necked shirt, suggests that this is a photo for home consumption in which he wanted to appear at his smartest.

The Handbook has a useful list of the minimum camping equipment needed when 'on tour', which in 1933 was available free for officers on lower pay scales; this gives us some idea of where a better paid recruit such as Cecil needed to start, either immediately or during his first leave:



Cecil as District Officer

- (a) Camp bed with white mosquito curtain, two pillows, one cork mattress and a bed bag.
- (b) Table.
- (c) Camp chair.
- (d) Travelling bath and washstand.
- (e) Pasteur Chamberlain filter in case and three candles.
- (f) Two hurricane lanterns.
- (g) Bucket.
- (h) Two chop boxes.
- (i) Water carrier.
- (j) Ground sheet.

On the next page is the Handbook's whole page advertisement for the Pasteur-Chamberland filter from the above list, in which the name has been copied incorrectly.

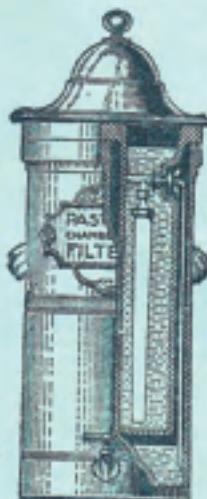
Finally, a note on packing. 'It should be remembered that this outfit should be packed into loads not exceeding 50 lbs in weight, as the chances are that part at least of its journey will be made on the heads of carriers.'

SAFE DRINKING WATER

EVERY WATER DRINKER
needs an efficient FILTER on
which absolute reliance can be
placed.

THE Pasteur- Chamberland Filter

As supplied to the Crown Agents for the Colonies



Made in a variety of types and sizes for use
under all conditions

Non-pressure Filter in
stoneware, enamelled
iron or aluminium
From 2 gallons capacity



Pocket Pump Filter for Travellers.
A convenient size, giving a rapid supply
of filtered water. Supplied in compact
japanned case.

Official Government Statement :

Wherever the PASTEUR
FILTER has been applied
TYPHOID FEVER has
disappeared

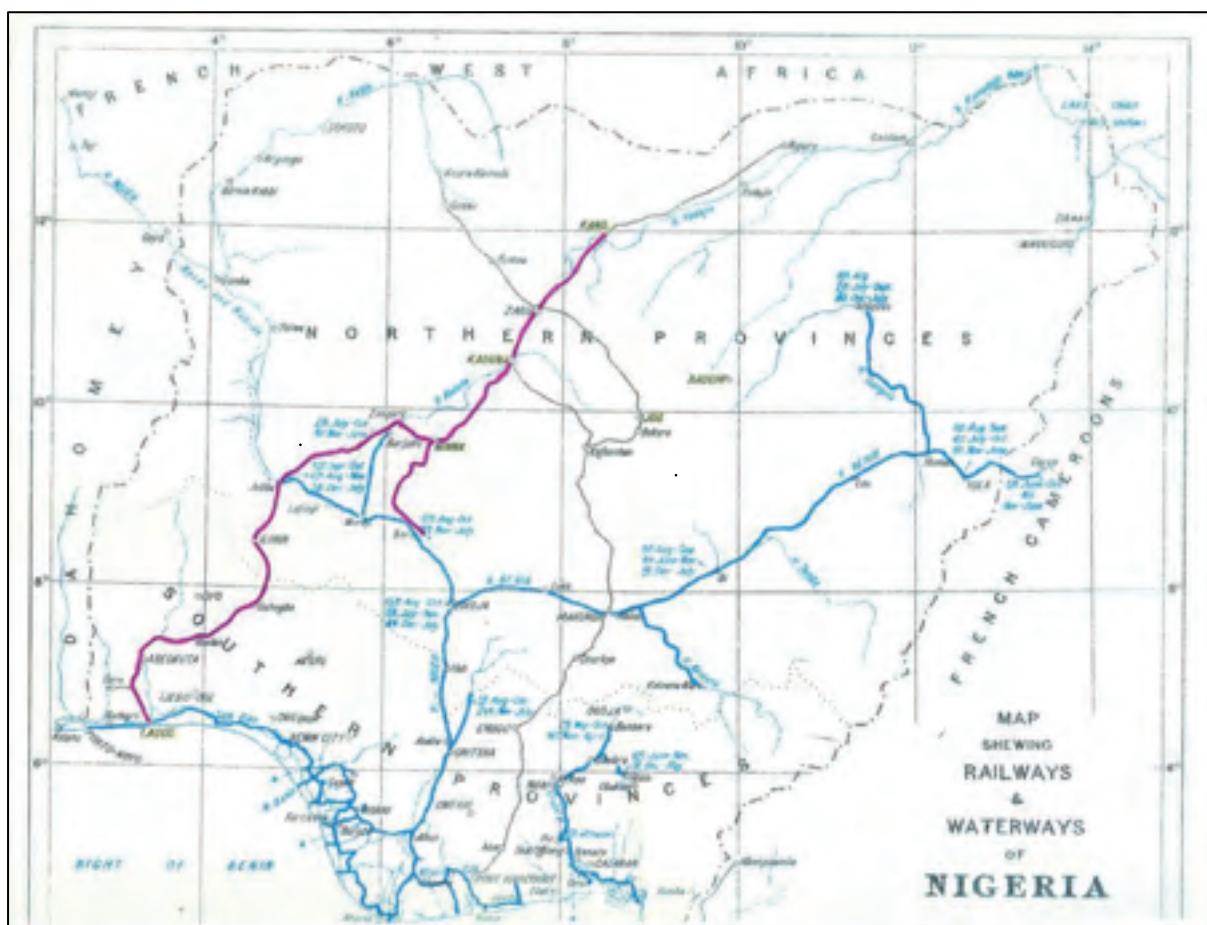
Pasteur Chamberland Filter
Candles do not break easily
and do not wear away by
cleaning.

Sole Makers for the British Empire :
**The BRITISH PASTEUR CHAMBERLAND
FILTER Co.,**
5 White Street, LONDON, E.C.2.

2 Starting out: Minna

Cecil worked as a DO from 25 January 1922 to early 1934. The voyage out was regarded as the start of one's period of service, and, almost certainly, he will have sailed from Liverpool, and on a ship belonging to the Elder Dempster company, which dominated the route to West Africa for fifty years.

For the first ten days, as far as Freetown (Sierra Leone), the ship followed the route Cecil had travelled on his longer journey to India in 1917, down the west coast of Africa. At or after Freetown, the new recruit usually received his precise posting by telegraph, to be followed by congratulations or commiserations from the old hands returning to Africa from UK leave. Four days further on, the ship reached Lagos (Nigeria), and from there Cecil could use the recently completed (1911) railway link north, marked in pink below. This went as far as Kano, via Kaduna, the town founded by the British in 1900 and in 1922 capital of the Northern Region. Taken from the 1933 Handbook, the map's blue lines show the seasonal variation in depth of the many main waterways.



There is good reason to think that Cecil left the train before it reached Kaduna, getting out 100 miles to the south, at Minna.

Why Minna? When researching his war service, I found by chance that in November 1922 Cecil used the telegraph office at Minna to send to the UK War Medals Dept a claim for the Military Cross he had won in Palestine but had never received, so that seems to be the area to which he was sent initially.

I have little detail on dates or places for this period of Cecil's life. The records are held in Kaduna. But I have his notes for the talks he gave in retirement, about 150 photographs of varying quality and preservation (all unlabelled, so some creative guesswork has been in order), a few other small items, books that he kept to the end of his life and the book he himself wrote about the province in which he spent the longest time. It's not a great deal, perhaps, but together with the accounts of others as recorded in the books of Anthony Kirk-Greene and Charles Allen, and in material available online, it will do.

Minna is 87 miles to the southwest of Kaduna, and by 1922, following the completion in 1915 of more rail track, it had become a significant centre, with extensive rail-associated workshops. It was made a '2nd Class Township' in 1917, and in 1920 an official British publication noted that 'A native town has sprung up since the days of railway construction and now has a population of nearly 1000.'

It seems in 1922 to have been also a growing centre of British administration, so a good place for the new DO to shadow a more experienced colleague as an Assistant DO, before being sent out to manage his own patch. That is, if he was lucky; DOs were thin on the ground (the 1933 Handbook lists 379 names to cover a total area of more than 356,000 square miles) and many were on their own from the outset.

One of the talks Cecil used to give was about snakes in West Africa, and in it he mentions an incident with a snake on a tennis court in Minna. Frustratingly, the story stops there, but the tennis court suggests the presence of a club for Europeans. There were horse races too:



And parades, such as this one of the Royal West African Frontier Force:



Below, we see spectators, all Europeans, gathered to watch some event. Cecil is standing in front of the third pole from the left, arms akimbo, as was his habit.



One of the DO's first needs was a steward, a servant to manage his domestic affairs. Particularly for a single man, his steward's support was vital, not least for companionship in what could be a lonely life. I don't know exactly when Cecil met Sabo, whether in Minna or later, but I shall take him as representing any earlier stewards also.

Sabo's primary job was that of general-housekeeper, to manage the practicalities of Cecil's everyday life; it will have been his responsibility to find a cook and to organise any other Africans working under him, a gardener for example or a groom - Sabo did not cook or do gardening - and generally see that the household ran smoothly. That included doing the shopping, for which Cecil famously, but perhaps later on, used to write a list in Hausa, using Arabic script. Hausa was the dominant language of the north and Sabo will have been able to help his employer improve his knowledge of it. Once engaged, either on arrival or later, Sabo stayed with Cecil for the thirty years the latter spent in Nigeria, and at the end of that

time Cecil set him up to join his brother's clothes-making business back in their hometown of Bauchi, a long way east of Minna and Kaduna.



Sabo, painted in 1949

In 1949 my parents had this portrait of Sabo painted by French artist Maurice Fiévet and it brings back to me the man I looked up to as a child in 1946 and 1948.

One of Cecil's two photo albums from this period opens with pictures which seem to record the day when Cecil got his horse. Sabo, on the right in the two upper pictures, wears his characteristic tall cap. Perhaps he had been instrumental in finding the man with a horse to sell. He also, of course, took the photo below of his employer looking, I think, not totally at ease with his new acquisition. There is a perimeter of stones around the three figures, and in two of the photos the lower part of what looks like a flagpole. I think that behind the viewer there was probably Cecil's office. I should add that my father must have become a reasonably competent horseman, because he spoke later about using a horse to get around for 'a number of years' when he was first in Nigeria.



Cecil takes delivery of his horse

3 Learning the ropes, theory and practice

So much for the domestic arrangements. What was the job that Cecil learnt somewhere near Minna?

The theory will have been taught in the six weeks' London training, so we need to take a look at contemporary thinking on how the empire should be run.



From 1900, Northern Nigeria had been brought under British control by a mixture of diplomacy and force, but by 1922 much progress had been made on settled government, thanks to ideas developed by Frederick Lugard, later Lord Lugard, governor of the Northern Region from 1900 to 1906 and of the whole country from 1912 to 1919. Conveniently for us, 1922 saw the publication of Lugard's book, 'The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa', in which the author explains, not for the first time, his concept of 'Indirect Rule', whereby Britain used existing African structures to govern its colonies. It was the dominant idea of the time, and fitted well with the fact that Britain had neither the money nor the manpower to do anything else.

Lord Lugard

As taught to the trainees in London it perhaps amounted to 'learn how they govern themselves and assist that process.' (Charles Allen, 'Tales from the Dark Continent')

But in order even to begin to do this, the new DO needed to be competent in a variety of areas. In later years, several exams had to be passed during a man's first 'tour' or period of service, which in West Africa was normally eighteen months, so I imagine that Cecil too had, formally or informally, to satisfy his superiors in law, judicial procedure, local government regulations and Hausa.

But that was just the beginning; the 1920s and 30s really were the era of the 'all-doing, single-handed DO'. One DO who served in what is now Zambia in the 1930s reckoned that the DO needed to be 'road-maker, bridge-builder, doctor, teacher, detective, policeman, magistrate, farmer, cattle-breeder and, if necessary, undertaker.' He might have added 'environmental health officer', as two of the rather few stories Cecil used to tell about his period as a DO concerned public health. One was about the need to drain stagnant water where malaria mosquitoes might breed, and in the other he blamed his duty to inspect slaughterhouses for putting him off eating anything recognisable as meat for the rest of his life, a fact usually recalled as he ate his one sausage on Christmas Day.

The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa

BY

THE RIGHT HON. SIR F. D. LUGARD
G.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

HON. D.C.L. OXFORD AND DURHAM; LL.D. HONG-KONG, ETC.

"It will be the high task of all My Governments to superintend and assist the development of these countries . . . for the benefit of the inhabitants and the general welfare of mankind."—HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

"The wellbeing and development of peoples not yet able to stand by themselves, form a sacred Trust of Civilisation."—*Covenant of League, Art. 22.*

"We develop new territory as Trustees for Civilisation, for the Commerce of the World."—JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN.

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London

1922

The title page of Lugard's 1922 book

Lugard's title is based on the reciprocal benefit to be gained by both parties: trade for Britain and increased 'civilisation' for the African colony. The same idea can be seen in the three quotations he cites, the League being the League of Nations, precursor of the UN.

The photos in Cecil's two albums from his time as DO contain, frustratingly, no labels, nothing to help explain them if they are not self-explanatory. Where possible, I have tried to place them in their probable contexts, but at a distance of a hundred years, much is informed guesswork, in which the reader is invited to join. What is happening in the picture below, for instance? Bridge building, or repairing? Or something quite different? What we can say, however, is that these pictures give some idea of what he saw or organised as he went about his district, construction work, markets, travel, ceremonies, people, the work of a DO in all its variety.



Bridge work?

Lugard too, in his book of 1922, has something to say about the DO's role:

'The duties which a District Officer is called upon to perform are very varied. In an isolated station he may have to discharge the functions of all the departments — postal, customs, police, and engineer — in addition to his normal work. He is the medium of communication between the military or the departmental officer and the native chiefs in matters of labour and supplies, and is especially charged to see that labourers are fully paid and properly treated. To him alike the missionary, the trader and the miner look for assistance and advice.'

Ensuring that tax got paid was an important part of the job. Many of the peoples of Nigeria were already accustomed to paying tribute in kind to whatever was the dominant local power group. British taxes had at least the advantage of being calculated according to

known procedures, but they were to be paid in cash, a new development and one which had far-reaching consequences for people who did not live in a money economy.

On tax collection, Lugard advises that the DO should, assisted by the native district and village headmen, 'assess roughly the amount each village had to pay, by taking a census of the population and live-stock, and noting the amount of cultivated land, the proximity of markets, water-supply, &c., and the number of craftsmen and traders it contains. The profit on village cattle (as on those owned by nomads) is for convenience calculated at an average rate per head (ls. 6d.). Craftsmen (blacksmiths, tanners, weavers, dyers, &c.) may be assessed by a comparison of their standard of living with that of the agriculturists, or grouped in classes according to their visible profits.'



Market scene in Northern Nigeria

'This assessment is obviously not an easy task, but when once the tax of a normal village, enjoying ordinary facilities as to markets, &c., has with much pains and discussion been arrived at, additions and deductions can be made with sufficient accuracy for other villages in the district. To the ordinary value of the usual crops must be added that of special irrigation crops, and of livestock, together with the profits of the non-agricultural population, including traders.'

'The total is then divided among the adult population in proportion to their wealth by the village headman. If an individual earns a separate income – as, for instance, by working as a casual labourer during the season when his farm does not demand his attention – he would be liable for the percentage of his profits in the place where they are earned, and no account of them would be taken in the village assessment.'



Village elders, Northern Nigeria

The DO was to respect the local structures, represented, perhaps, by men such as these, and do his best to integrate them into the British system:

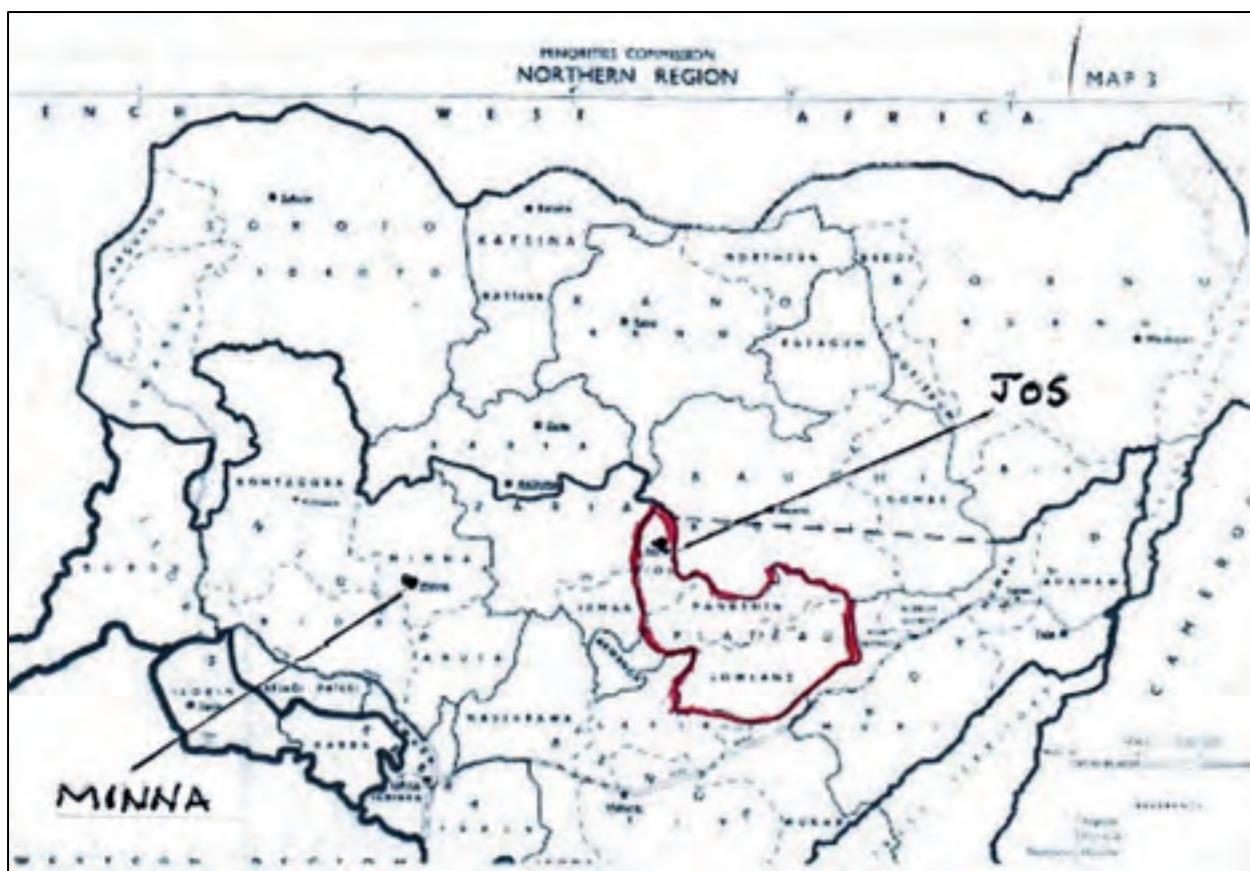
'The district headman collects the tax from the various villages, and takes it to the ruling chief, unless (as in a small community) he is himself the chief. The list of villages with their assessments is carefully checked by the chief and his council each year just before the harvest, when the crop can be estimated with fair accuracy, in order that any small additions due to increase of population and wealth, or decreases due to migration and other causes, or alterations due to seasonal variation may be affected. As time permits the District Officer would check these revisions on the spot. The modifications, and the reasons for them, are explained to the villages by the village head, who is thus trained and encouraged to accept responsibility.'

We may wonder how many DOs lived up to Lugard's high standards, but he certainly intended them to try.

4 A variant province

Although Lugard recommended continuity in postings for DOs, it tended not to happen, and a DO back from leave in the UK was quite likely to find himself transferred to somewhere new. There were practical reasons for this: the generous amount of leave, one week at home in the UK for every month served in Nigeria, was given for health reasons, but the eighteen weeks which followed the normal eighteen months' tour of duty might well seem too long an absence for a district to run without supervision. So an 'acting' DO was appointed, and when the post holder returned to Nigeria, more than four months later, it must often have been more convenient administratively to let his substitute continue where he was and send the returner somewhere else. As a result, the DO returning from leave was often transferred to a different district, and not infrequently, as happened to Cecil, to a totally different part of the region.

He kept two cards sent to him by his sister Des in 1925 and 1927, addressed to two different towns, both well to the east of Minna, and both in what was from 1926 the newly created Plateau Province, an area at the geographic centre of Nigeria but then part of the huge Northern Region. By 1932 Cecil had written a book of 350 pages about the province, so I shall assume that is where he worked for the rest of his time as a DO



Northern Nigeria, with the Plateau Province outlined in red

Today's Plateau State, a little bigger than its predecessor, is a highly desirable holiday area, full of natural beauty. At its heart is the Jos plateau, where the average altitude of over 4,000 feet provides cooler temperatures than in most of the rest of the country.



Map showing the high ground of the Jos plateau

But in 1926 when it was created this was a province markedly different from the other areas in the Northern Region, with their clearly established local rulers. Here the people had no governing structures over and above their individual villages, which each functioned as a distinct unit with its own customs and language, at least one of which Cecil later learnt, in addition to Hausa, so as to be able to communicate directly with the Africans.

In 1922, C K Meek, Government Anthropologist, in his book on the tribes of Northern Nigeria, wrote about the peoples of the Plateau that, having lost out to stronger groups for the possession of the better land further north and west, they have 'formed enclaves which have resulted in polyglot peoples, exhibiting almost unparalleled diversities in culture and social organisation... Their secluded position in detached groups has enabled them to maintain all their primordial ideas of religion and space. The hard conditions of mountain life and the struggle for land have tended towards perennial inter-tribal and inter-village wars... They have never learned to live and let live, and so among the mountain tribes we find a marked absence of any central authority.' For the British, and Indirect Rule, this was a

problem. It was not too difficult to learn (and ‘assist’) the African system where it was plain for a European to see, with the emirs and chiefs who ruled in much of the region presenting an easily recognisable form of government. But what about areas like the Plateau where there were many tribes and no structures beyond those at village level?



Members of one of the Plateau's many tribal groups

Seven years after the province’s creation this was still a problem, as the 1933 Handbook makes clear: ‘In some parts of Nigeria where the chiefs have shown a capacity to rule, and especially in the Northern Provinces, the Government exercises only an indirect control ... assuming the role of adviser. In other parts, however, where there is no strong native authority capable of governing, the rule of the administrative officers is a more direct one.’

As Cecil writes in his book, ‘the only solution was the creation of what must still (1932) be regarded as purely artificial Native Administrations, each with its common Treasury, its Prison, its Police Force and the officials of its central institutions under the direct control and guidance of the Government’s Administrative Officers.’

How did the British Administration create these structures? At the very least, the DO needed an intimate knowledge of his district and its inhabitants, if he was to see how, where and with whom he might sensibly, and therefore durably, introduce them.

5 Getting to know one's district

The DO lived in the house that went with the job, which sometimes he had first to get built. Probably a small, single storey building, with a thatched roof of grass and palm leaves which came down to shade the wide veranda that circled the house. No electricity, but paraffin lamps. No fridge, but a cool box operated by water evaporation. A rudimentary outside toilet. Some basic furniture, and, with luck, no snakes or insect infestations. A photo near the start of one of the albums shows us what is probably one of Cecil's houses; there seems no other reason to have taken it.



Cecil's first house (?), above, and a messenger, below

DOs usually had an office as well, but no electricity here either, and no phone. There were few places with postal services, and you needed a sizeable centre, like Minna, in order to send a telegram. What the DO did have, though, was at least one 'messenger', here standing to attention awaiting the day's jobs, one of which was to keep him informed of



what went on in his district, particularly anything that might threaten to disturb the peace. The messenger also managed the flow of the many callers bringing their complaints or requests to the DO's bungalow or office. Kirk-Greene comments that it 'lay at the very heart of the colonial district system that anyone living under British rule had the right to seek a hearing or redress via the DO if wrong had been done to them, so the DO would often find himself as the local adjudicator in a wide range of disputes, from which he could learn, incidentally, much about how the people lived. He was rarely off duty.'

But undoubtedly the best way to get to know one's district was to go 'on tour'. Very often it was the prospect of going on tour that had attracted men to join the colonial service in the first place and what they loved most about the job.

Quoting a later DO, Charles Allen writes that travelling about the district had a mystique about it which 'was completely justified because although everything might be fine around the station, it was only by going from village to village, looking round the houses, looking at the people, talking to them, looking at their crops, taking their tax census, all the routine jobs, it was only by doing that that one could find out how they were thinking and feeling.'

In a rural area in the 1920s, the DO going on tour would probably have travelled on horseback, with, at the very least, steward, cook, messenger and interpreter alongside. Carriers took care of the baggage, which could be substantial and include camping equipment. Indeed, the DO's office might be a tent, as in Cecil's photo below, with camping chair and table set up so that he could make notes as he talked through the issues brought by local people. On the right the Union Jack flies from a flagpole stuck in the ground to signal the official British presence. A DO on tour was literally flying the flag.



Cecil's 'office' while on tour, with British flag (right)

If the DO happened to know a European living near his proposed route, he might be able to spend a night under his roof, and there were also a growing number of government rest houses, unstaffed houses on main routes at intervals varying from 5 to 20 miles. If not, the whole entourage camped, the DO fairly comfortably so, using the equipment listed in Chapter 1. But they probably all slept under the stars.

What were the distances involved in touring? The Plateau Province, when it was created as such in 1926, had an area of just under 11,000 square miles. (For comparison, Wales has 8000.) It had five Divisions, within which were the Districts. These varied a great deal in size; on the plateau itself, in the area around Jos, the largest District extended over 149 square miles, about the size of the Isle of Wight, and the smallest only 61, but the majority stretched for about 90 square miles.

At some point in this period Cecil was the Administrative Officer in charge of Pankshin Division; other than that, I don't know in which districts he worked, still less the size of them. But it is likely he worked in several different places within the Plateau Province. As we have seen, DOs were moved about, and not only when they returned from leave, but also to fit an ever-changing map, as administrative boundaries were redrawn to reflect more accurately the actual tribal groupings. In addition, it was thought to be good for the DO to be moved around, to keep him on his toes and avoid his becoming too deeply dug in to a single area. As a result of all these changes and in order to prevent the system falling apart, it became essential to create records to pass on from one officer to the next, and from early on in the British Administration, every DO was required to keep a District Notebook and a Touring Diary.



Bridge inspection

The consultation going on above between DO (Cecil) and African was perhaps an inspection of the bridge on which they stand. It merited a photo; did it also get a mention in Cecil's Touring Diary?

As more roads were built, the horse gave way to the car and from as early as 1923 Cecil held a driving licence. But cars had their own disadvantages, as we see here:



And the existing bridges had not been built for motorised transport:



Lord Lugard was clear about the value of touring:

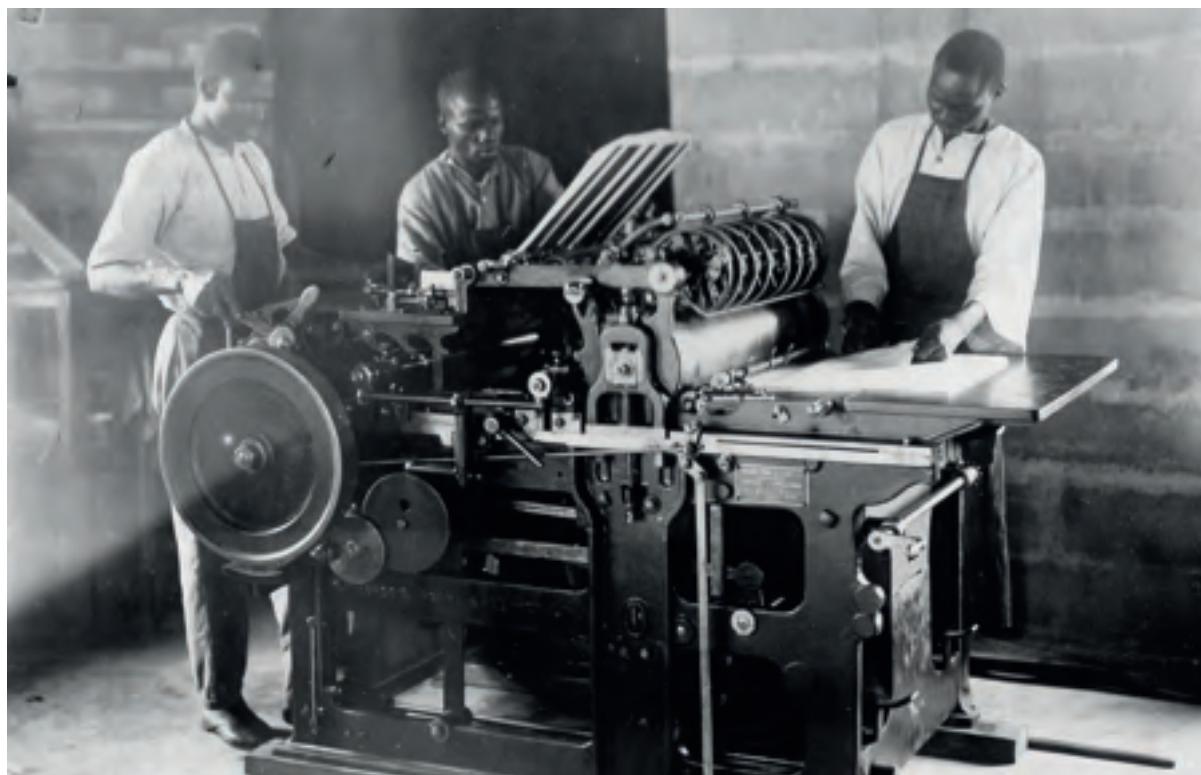
'The primary object of travelling (accompanied, when possible, by the local chief or district headman) is that the District Officer may hear the complaints of the people at first hand. It is only by the advent of a British Officer that scoundrels, misrepresenting the Government action, or extorting what they will from the natives in the name of Government, can be caught; for the villagers in their ignorance, supposing them to be genuine, dare not as a rule complain. It has been abundantly shown by experience that "unrest", resulting in murders and outrages, and eventually necessitating the use of force, inevitably takes place among primitive tribes when districts are not regularly and systematically visited. By frequent touring, abuses are redressed before they become formidable, the law-abiding people are encouraged to restrain the turbulent and lawless elements, and trust and confidence in Government is fostered. The results of the District Officer's careful and precise inquiries are contained in the Provincial Record Book and in the map of the district, to which he is always adding the new information acquired on tour.'

The function of the DOs as collectors and recorders of local information, and even as map makers, was vital to the smooth running of the system, and soon after WWI, steps had been taken to gather all this information together. The contents of many of their notebooks and touring diaries, together with the tables of facts and figures held in the centres of administration, were issued in books called 'Gazetteers', one for each province of the northern region. Most of them had been published by 1921, so when Cecil arrived in Nigeria in 1922, he would have had access at Minna to a 'fairly thorough yet manageable condensation' (Kirk-Greene) of his province's history and current status.

In 1925 a new Lieutenant-Governor of Northern Nigeria, H R Palmer, decided that the first Gazetteers needed updating, and might even, if well written, be of some interest back home in the UK. A distinguished African historian, he had written one of the earlier Gazetteers himself and had ambitions for the new series beyond its being just a record of information. But of the planned new volumes, only one was ever published in book form, and that was the 'Gazetteer of the Plateau Province', 'compiled in 1932 by C G Ames, Assistant Judge of the High Court of Nigeria, (formerly District Officer).' Somewhat abridged, it was published in 1934 in book form, just after Cecil had moved on to the next phase of his career.

It is a substantial book, running to 358 pages even when abridged. Cecil's former boss, H. Hale Middleton, the Resident, or Senior Officer, of the province, writes the preface: 'For over two years now Mr Ames' work, in its unabridged and typescript form has served as a valuable guide and "vade-mecum" to administrative officers in the Plateau, but there is an increasing demand amongst the public for a handy reference book on matters of local interest and it is to meet this demand that the present volume is being printed.'

It was proudly produced by the young Niger Press in Jos, and this glossy picture, loose in Cecil's collection, looks like an official photo recording the event:



Press photo of work under way at the Niger Press, Jos

Hale Middleton says that in preparing the book for publication he has 'made as few verbal alterations as possible' and has 'left Mr Ames to tell in his own words the results of his personal investigations in the field and of his careful analysis of our official records.'

Forty years later, in 1972, when Nigeria had been an independent country for 12 years, Cecil's book was reissued along with the other earlier Gazetteers as the last, and easily the fattest, of four handsome red volumes. These republished 'Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria' were aimed at the growing number of students of African culture and history in and beyond Nigeria and they are still to be found in specialist libraries. I have Cecil's complete set, and so can see how his book conforms to, and differs from, those which had preceded it. I shall try to give an idea of its content and tone in what follows, using more of the unlabelled photos from Cecil's albums where they seem appropriate.

6 'Gazetteer of the Plateau Province' (i)

The book is divided into three distinct and very unequal parts. The first, 45 pages, describes the physical features of the province, its population, history and present system of administration. The second, 230 pages, 'Units of the Province', is a detailed anthropological survey of its many tribes. The third part, 'Economic and Miscellaneous', 37 pages, concerns agriculture, industry, religion and education, and the book's ending, unexpected but prescient, is a Guide to Visitors.

There are four Appendices: a list of the 'principal events' of each of the previous eight years, a list of the province's Residents, then statistics of population and livestock. Forty-one distinct tribes are listed, with a total population of just over half a million, and in 1933 there were (recorded for tax purposes, I assume) 177,336 goats, and 172,213 cattle, of which all but 2,342 were the humped cattle of the nomadic Fulani people, like the white bull below.



A Fulani Bull and Pagan Bulls.

(The caption to the above photo from the Nigeria Handbook is not a joke; the smaller cattle belonged to pagans, people who were neither Christian nor Muslim. The Fulani were Muslims.)

There were originally two maps at the back of Cecil's book. The one stuck in is anthropological and hard to read, a scatter of names on a blank background; the other, loose in an envelope labelled 'Provincial Map A,' is a larger map showing towns, the very many villages, hills, roads, rivers and the small section of railway running from the west to Jos. I recently bought online a further copy of the book which had both maps intact, the first such I had seen.

After a brief note on the administrative history of the province, formed in 1926 from bits of other provinces, and the smallest of the northern provinces, Cecil kicks off with a flourish: 'For variety and wealth of scenery of surpassing beauty the Province can have few rivals.' Of the hills to the east of the Jos Plateau he writes: 'This is the neighbourhood of waterfalls and mountain torrents, tumbling down the hills, often hidden in dense combes and only detected by their roar, and thence running rapidly along valleys between hills terraced for cultivation and bearing on their fertile soil a wealth of oil palms and other trees.'



Country scenes in the Plateau Province

He describes the area to the south which held the largest of all the province's districts: 'To the South of Shendam the country slopes gently down towards the River Benue, with an increasing quantity of trees and bush until it becomes a vast forest, thick and sunless except for the open spaces of its many swamps, uninhabited by man but the home of bush cow, antelope of many kinds, an occasional lion, and the tsetse fly, and visited annually by elephant'.

There is nothing like this in the earlier Gazetteers.

After a description of the rivers and climate, he turns to the people, largely immigrants over time, and from several different directions, resulting in an extraordinary linguistic and cultural diversity among the various tribal units; even if they share features such as initiation ceremonies and ancestor cults, they all do them slightly differently.

But now even here change is coming, he says: 'Living in their own villages and preferring their own company, they are still largely spectators of the approach of civilisation. But just as in the past Tribes have sometimes adopted a custom from a neighbouring Tribe, so in recent years many of them have shown an increasing tendency to avail themselves of the amenities of civilisation where they see a distinct advantage to be gained.'

There are more recent incomers too. The 300 Europeans, including, rather surprisingly, 75 women, are mostly employed in the tin mining industry, but there are also traders, government officials and missionaries. Africans too have come to work in the mines, and about 8,000 of the nomadic Fulani people pasture their cattle on the plateau. He estimates

the population density as 80 to the square mile on the plateau around Jos and 50 elsewhere.

Next comes the region's history, and he examines the different migration routes which brought the current inhabitants to settle here, and the extent to which they were, once settled, affected from the sixteenth century on by the rise and fall of various external African powers and peoples, which overran and oppressed the outer parts of the province. The peoples of the Jos Plateau itself remained relatively unscathed by these intrusions, though they were often engaged in their own inter-tribal warfare instead.



A small settlement in the Plateau Province

An account of how the British arrived on the Plateau follows. It takes for granted what was then common knowledge, so for those coming new to the subject, I'll provide some of the backstory, drastically simplified.

The British had long been familiar with the coast of Nigeria through the slave trade and then through enforcing its abolition. They had taken Lagos as a Crown Colony in 1861, and in 1886 given to the Royal Niger Company 'authority to govern' areas where it traded further inland. This the Company did in such a way as to extend the British sphere of influence. In 1900 the British Government took back control from the Company, and the inland part of Nigeria became a British Protectorate, which, together with Lagos, was later called the colony of Nigeria. Now back to Cecil's narrative.

In 1903 a Mr Laws, of the Mining Dept of the Niger Company, arrived on the Plateau in search of the tin-fields which he knew must exist there. Laws came with two assistants and seven (African) soldiers in support. All seemed to be going well, despite the illness and departure of one of the assistants, and they took time off to celebrate Christmas.

But when during the following year the remaining assistant also became ill and disappeared from the scene, 'the hitherto unconquered tribes on the plateau soon wanted to put to the

test the power of this solitary white stranger in their midst', and prospecting for tin 'became more and more hazardous.' The Niger Company informed the British Administration of the predicament facing their man, and a military force was sent to show who was boss.



An occasion when army backup was needed

Over the next few years, the area that would in 1926 become the Plateau Province was brought into the British sphere. Efforts were made to encourage co-operation, but if traders, trade routes, government representatives or indeed the wider peace of an area were threatened, reprisals followed.

Cecil presents the official British version of this period, referring to 'military measures' or 'punitive patrols', but he is not triumphalist. He spares a thought for the Plateau peoples, commenting, when he has reached 1909: 'Nevertheless in spite of all this lawlessness and the hostilities which it caused, ... very real progress was being made all the time in establishing a peaceful administration among these very spirited peoples, whose history in most cases had for centuries past ... been one of successful evasion of any form of outside control.'

He looks at the current state of 'peaceful administration' in this diverse and segmented province, where structures were gradually being established to support indirect rule as it was usually practised. Among these were the Native Treasuries, seen by the British as key markers of progress. These Treasuries received half the tax collected in each tribal area (the rest going to the British Adminstration) and the money was kept and as far as possible administered by the Africans, and used to pay for local projects and the salaries of the paid postholders such as village chiefs.

The justice system, as it then (1932) stood, was more of a work in progress: 'The policy in regard to Judicial matters is to establish a properly constituted judicial tribunal for every tribal and sub-tribal unit; in some few cases these are still not yet sufficiently developed to enable them to have their own separate court, and so mixed tribunals, composed of the heads of two or three neighbouring units, have been set up with satisfactory results.'

It was courts such as these, fifty-three of them, that were seen as forming the nucleus of a 'responsible local Government ... through which the administration of the tribal area can be effected with as little direct interference from Government as possible.'

What did the 'teeth' behind this administration look like? There was no military station in the province, but police from the two national forces were in charge of law and order. The Central Native Police were present in each of the five divisional centres; in three of these they were already under the primary control of the local head chiefs, though British officers were there to approve or veto the chiefs' decisions. There were also about 200 men of the armed Nigerian police, similarly stationed.

Cecil comments that this armed constabulary is 'still necessary for the preservation of peace and even today their mere presence is not always sufficient to effect this purpose, occasions still arising where their active intervention becomes necessary for the suppression of inter-tribal hostilities and other forms of lawlessness'.



Market scene in the heat of the day

7 Making the headlines

I am now going to jump to the end of Cecil's book, and include here some of the 'Principal Events 1926-34' that form Appendix 1. Readers wishing to get ahead may skip them, but I have found their more specific information fascinating. I imagine it was some senior official who had the final say on what should be included, and what not, but comments providing sometimes an extra detail or update, sometimes a touch of irony, have surely been added by Cecil.

To give an idea of the format, at the end of this chapter I've reproduced 1932 as it appears in the book, complete apart from its last item, the opening of a new mission station by the Seventh Day Adventists. Otherwise, I have bunched up my selected events in paragraphs by year.

1927 The Nigerian Eastern Railway achieves the first through Boat-Train from Lagos to Jos. A telephone exchange with 50 lines is opened, also at Jos. Then, 'First intensive vaccination campaign in the Province. In subsequent years there have been other intensive campaigns until nearly every part of the Province has been covered.' A new ward of 54 beds is added to Jos African hospital. A Forest Reserve 'approximately 15½ square miles' is created in Pankshin Division. Unrest in one area is balanced by another's removal from the list of 'Unsettled Districts'. Jos is visited by its first two aeroplanes.



Rice fields?

1928. An 'intensive campaign for treatment of natives suffering from sleeping sickness started. This campaign has been continued in the following years, as it brought to light the existence of very high percentages of infection amongst the natives of the Jemaa and

Southern Divisions and a small part of the Jos Division.' Successful experimental importation of rice from British Guiana (now Guyana) for local growing. (Cecil's photo above may record the cultivation of this new crop.) A road bridge is reconstructed and a foot suspension bridge built, the latter paid for by the Jos Native Treasury, over a river where 'drowning fatalities were formerly of common occurrence.' A party of the Royal Engineers completed triangulation of several parts of the Province.



Bridge building?

1929 The arrival at Jos of three planes that have flown from Cairo is still a newsworthy event. A thanksgiving service for the King's recovery 'from his long illness' is held in St Piran's church, Jos, with the church 'filled to overflowing'. Then 'Whole of Ganawuri tribe successfully, and surprisingly so, persuaded by Government to move to a new site on a bank of the Kaduna river, owing to the very heavy infection of sleeping sickness in their old town.' 'Completion of new Jos Market, at cost of £12,000.' 'Chief and elders of the Gerkawa tribe (Shendam Division) decided on their own initiative that the time had come when the tribe should abandon their former custom of marriage by exchange of women.' Cecil comments elsewhere that '1929 was the first year which was entirely free from open revolt or hostilities of any kind.'

1930 was very different, with the revolt of the Dimmuk tribe, who killed a British official and injured eight of his (African) police escort of 11. One of the latter was awarded the King's Police medal 'for his fearless and wise leadership of the party' and all the others received lesser awards. It took four months for another police patrol to restore order in the Dimmuk Hills and to enforce a decree moving the hill villages to the plains. There were two other 'affrays', on one of which the senior officers of a special native court submitted 'a detailed report which would have done credit to a European Commission.'



Prisoners under guard

Also in 1930, 'Persistent and widespread rumours that the Government was intending to quit the country gained much credence and caused restiveness amongst the pagan tribes in several parts of the country,' and an increased police presence was needed 'to enable a state of quietude to be restored by Government.' But there were other things to record too: locusts arrived, a new elementary school was opened, also a new native court and a new immunisation centre, a road was completed and Jos Market got new 'Hide and Skin Drying Sheds'. Last but not least: 'District head of Rukuba ... joins the side of Government in its endeavour to put a stop to certain customs of the Rukuba tribe which necessitate the practice of abortion in about half the cases of expectant mothers.'

But away from such major events, men still gathered in the shade, to enjoy a quiet game:



A traditional game attracts onlookers

1932.

- 1 Reduction of tin quota to 33½% of 1929 output with corresponding reduction of labour employed on Minesfield.
- 2 Revival on a large scale of traffic in children between nomad Filani and the pagans of the Kaleri and Ron Districts in Pankshin led to the conviction of 98 persons for slave dealing.
- 3 Ceremonial murder of 2 Native Administration employees in Pai District necessitated police escort which resulted in capture and public execution of 10 ringleaders.
- 4 Opening of Wase River Bridge on Jos-Yola Southern route.
- 5 Appointment of titular religious head of Anaguta tribe (Jos Division) as District Chief.
- 6 Opening of Karshi-Wamba road, thus connecting the last of the Divisional Headquarters with Provincial Headquarters.
- 7 Opening of Dispensary at Fadan Karshi (Jemaa Emirate).
- 8 Development in gold mining led to further exodus of labour from tinfields to gold fields.
- 9 Conversion of Ibrahim, Alkalin Jos, to Christianity and resignation from the Presidency of the Moslem Court. Succeeded by Abubakr, ex-Alkalin Gombe.
- 10 43 persons struck and killed by lightning in one hut at Zagun (Achakka District).
- 11 Demarcation of boundary between Faram District (Jos Division) and Gindiri (Pankshin).
- 12 Retirement of Mr. E. A. Langslow Cock after holding the office of Chief Inspector of Mines for 22 years.

8 Locusts and other disturbances

1930 was a difficult year for the British, and, to add to its problems, in May there was 'the first serious invasion of the province by locusts and the beginning of an anti-locust campaign'. Fifty years later, one of Cecil's talks was on locusts and his part as a DO in the battle to control them. Sensitive readers may want to look away for a page or two.

Locusts are large grasshoppers, which for most of their lives live as harmless single insects, but under certain conditions gather in huge swarms and eat every green thing in their path. They breed twice a year, and so, once arrived, require twice-yearly counter measures which, writing in the Gazetteer, Cecil says 'have increased in success as experience has been gained and the antipathy or apathy of the natives has been overcome.' A year later, the 1931 list of events records a successful new strategy, the use of poison. Clearly locusts were an important subject for the DO to understand, as they wrecked the food crops and animal feed of those living in his district.

Here is my mother's locust sketch, done much later to illustrate Cecil's talk.



Jean's locust

In later life he remembered a locust swarm flying past, perhaps a mile wide, as 'very soothing and beautiful', though by that stage it was too late to stop the destruction; you

needed to catch the locusts as ‘hoppers’ before they became airborne. The method used in 1930, it seems, was to get everyone to dig trenches in the direction of travel of the hoppers, encourage the insects to fall into them, then tread them down, fill in the trench and bury them.

But this required more speed than was usually possible against their vast numbers, which were ‘like a lot of hot water boiling’ in the trench. Even after local people had taken as many as they wanted for their own food supplies (locusts are a delicacy in many parts of the world) a large residue would live to develop their wings, becoming much more difficult to deal with: ‘To catch a locust: there must be such a very heavy dew that their wings are too heavy with wet to enable them to fly. V. difficult because they jump. Swarm on such a day is a wonderful sight — up stalks of grass, on trees everywhere, wet wings shaking in the sunshine. Shimmering shiny silver. [You] can catch enough for breakfast but has no effect on swarm.’



Sentries on duty outside an official building

From 1931, locust control became more effective with the use of arsenic. Here again it was necessary to plan ahead, and notice the first signs of likely swarm behaviour. On one such occasion, Cecil says he ordered in a ton of arsenic, 1,000 tins of evaporated milk and some nailbrushes, and asked everyone living near to collect their sweepings of chaff, grass, and horse droppings and bring them to a barn to await the arrival of the arsenic. Large water pots were used to mix the two together, the correct dose of arsenic having been weighed out on Cecil’s kitchen scales. The mixture was spread out to dry on the ground, then ‘Sent it to all towns and villages, with milk. Nailbrushes for the factory.’ He comments ‘Much easier, less commotion, the hoppers not frightened.’ There was no need to use great amounts of the poison either, as the first locusts, having died, were eaten by those that followed, who then also died, and so on.

But there were disadvantages too, as the poison could not be used near houses or domestic animals. Apparently, a few antelopes died, the 'most interesting casualty being a lion which ate an antelope while the poison was still in its system.'

A very important part of the operation was the training of instructors to go out to the villages to spread information on how best to deal with locusts, what Cecil calls a 'propaganda tour'. Clearly nailbrushes would be useful, but what was the evaporated milk for? Was it a present to encourage co-operation, or was it some sort of antidote in case any of the poison got accidentally swallowed? He comments enigmatically: 'No casualties among Africans so I cannot tell you if tinned milk would do all that it was supposed to do.'



Plateau Province elders

As we have seen, 'disturbances' were not infrequent, either inter-tribal or against the Administration. I remember my father once or twice describing an occasion on which he had had to walk between two tribes confronting each other, in order to prevent active hostilities, but he also had personal experience of at least one uprising against the British. After his death in 1977, Mr H. O. Mohammed, Cecil's colleague and friend from 1946, whom I met in Bath in 1964, wrote to me with memories of my father. He told me a story I did not know, given to him by Cecil long after the event. Cecil was at the time, he says, the Administrative Officer in charge of Pankshin Division where the incident took place. 'It seems that there had been a sort of rebellion by members of a pagan tribe who were at that time real cannibals. They lived on top of high mountain ranges which were most difficult to climb even by the inhabitants. During the rebellion, some native officials,' that is, Africans, 'and a Native Authority Chief of Police were killed. People were so terrified that no one would risk his life by going up the mountain. But your father, without any weapon in his hand, went up the mountain alone. Everybody believed he was going to be killed by the cannibals but to the surprise of everyone, there was he coming down with the culprits, including the leader of the rebellion.'

9 Anthropologists and Ethnographers

Ethnography: 'The branch of anthropology that deals with the scientific description of individual human societies.'

Back to Cecil's book, and a bit of background to its central and biggest section.

Family tradition and books he bought towards the end of the 1920s suggest that Cecil did a short course in anthropology in London during one of his UK leaves. The Nigeria Handbook envisages specialist UK 'courses of instruction' in anthropology, entomology (insects) and phonetics, as well as in work-associated technical subjects. Such a course would have enabled Cecil to understand and present the material for his book in the most up-to-date manner. The School of Oriental and African Studies, today's SOAS, had since 1916 been providing courses for the benefit of Britons working in Africa, so he may have studied there.

It was Herbert Richmond Palmer (1877-1958) who as Governor of Northern Nigeria from 1925 had decided that the old Gazetteers of the early 1920s needed to be updated and rewritten for a wider public. This 1926 photo shows him in his somewhat basic office in Government House, Kaduna.



Herbert Richmond Palmer, as Governor of Northern Nigeria from 1925-30

Palmer had started out as a DO in Northern Nigeria under Lugard, rising to become Resident of Bornu Province in the extreme northeast corner of the country. He was an indefatigable student of people, their history, languages and culture, and had personally written the earlier Bornu Gazetteer, which, republished with the other volumes in 1972, contains a twenty-four-page study (including a bibliography of a page and a half) of its peoples' origins in north Africa, going back more than 1000 years. He took a keen interest in similar work by others, writing the introduction to another book in Cecil's collection, 'The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria' by S. J. Hogben, published 1930. Did he also encourage Cecil in his writing?

Another influence on the central part of Cecil's book was Charles Kingsley Meek (1885-1965). He too had been a DO in Northern Nigeria, and his interest in its peoples got him the newly created job of Government Anthropologist of the region. He was put in charge of a census held in 1921, with instructions to gather not just the census data but also as much information as possible about the lifestyle and customs of the various peoples being counted. He organised this additional material into a book published in 1925, 'The Northern Tribes of Nigeria', which Cecil bought and used, marking certain passages in pencil. Everything interested Meek, and included in the book were some of his own photos and sketches. Here are various shapes of hoe, from the section on agricultural tools:

Angas woman's hoe is peculiar. The blade-head runs into the angle of the shaft, the shaft-head overlapping the top of the blade. The Jukun large hoe is similarly fitted, and bears a resemblance to hoes used by the ancient Egyptians.

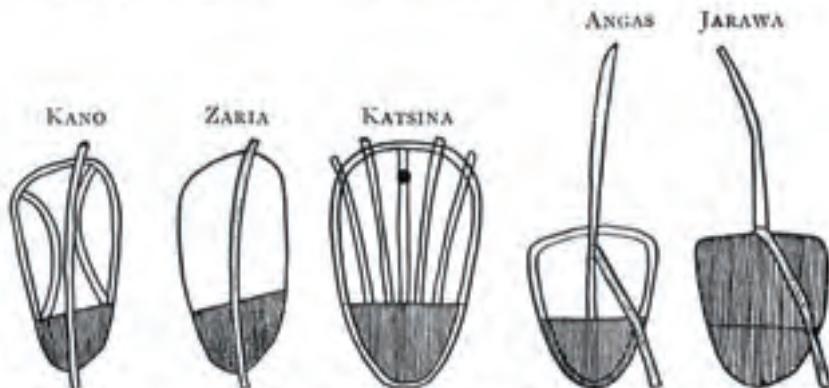


Fig. 48. Sketches of hoes

In his preface, Meek writes: 'It is hoped that in the near future, anthropological work of an intensive character may be carried out in the Northern Provinces, before the tribal institutions and customs have become affected by alien influences. The Nigerian Government is fully alive to the value for administration of a thorough knowledge of native institutions; with this knowledge comes that respect which is the basis of all good government. It will be seen by all who have the patience to read through this book that even the most primitive Negro peoples are in their public and personal life governed by

highly organised and surprisingly complex political and social institutions, which deserve the most profound study and consideration.'

Cecil also bought a copy of 'The Golden Bough' by Sir James Fraser, one of the founding fathers of popular anthropology, and, as he often did, he wrote in it his name and the date, November 1927. It's a big book, running to 756 pages, but had been hugely popular and influential ever since its publication in 1890. Dealing with the recurrence of religious and mythological themes and practices across different cultures, it was still in 1927 a must-have book for students of anthropology and we meet some of Fraser's ideas in the central part of Cecil's Gazetteer.

Like Meek, Cecil took photos, and some of them are clearly of tribal ceremonies. They did not make it into his own completed book, but this circle of young men performing some ritual or ceremony, is one of them:



Young men take part in a ceremony

10 ‘Gazetteer of the Plateau Province’ (ii)

In the course of 230 pages Cecil describes, in comprehensive detail, the more than 40 tribes of the Plateau area. There are none of the family trees of rulers going back ten generations that featured in some of the earlier Gazetteers, because there were none to record; what we have instead is a description in five sections, one for each administrative division of the province, of the cultures of its tribes, their internal organisation, their ceremonies and rituals, their religious beliefs, their systems of rewards and punishments, and, at the end of each of the five parts, a note on their recent history since the arrival of the British.



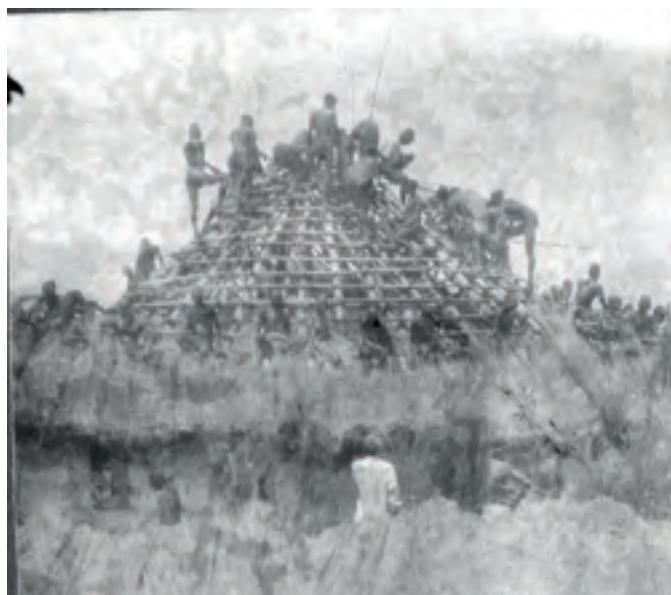
Dressed for a special occasion

Even after at least five years in the province, Cecil could not possibly have done all the research himself. This must be where the ‘other hands’ of Hale Middleton’s preface come in, and in fact the section on the Southern Division is directly attributed to the notes of another DO. But his editorial voice is clearly audible in the rest.

It is not the easiest of reads. The material is arranged geographically tribe by tribe, rather than thematically, which makes it more fragmented than Meek’s book. In addition, the anatomy of a tribe is a bit like that of the human body, fascinating to the specialist but often less so, even distasteful, to the general reader. Times have changed, too, and details like dress, or more often the lack of it, may be seen as demeaning by their descendants today. (Meek, under the title ‘anthropogeography’, commenting on mountain areas like the Plateau, says ‘it is worthy of note that it is in the coldest regions of Nigeria that the people

wear no clothes.') But the function of Cecil's book was, first, to provide information for members of the British Administration, and only secondarily the general public, and as a handbook for the new officer with his patch to learn, Cecil's tribe by tribe approach will have worked very well.

To give a flavour of the original, I have chosen passages to quote which contain the author/editor's personal voice, even if only very briefly, starting with part of a long and admiring description of the houses of a tribe in Jos Division. He has clearly seen what he describes, and I think three of his photos record the occasion, though their quality is very poor. 'The huts are large in area, oval in shape, with very low walls and a single small entrance in the front, and the whole is covered with a very high and well-made conical thatched roof, which slopes from the front at an angle of about forty-five degrees up to the peak which is nearly over the back wall and from which the back and side parts of the thatch slope down at a very steep angle indeed ... nearly perpendicular. The inside of the thatch is protected by producing the low walls upwards below the thatch.'



House building

'The interior of the house is divided into portions which might be called rooms if they were a little bigger, and in the cone of the roof is an upper part which can be used as a store, containing the mouths of the large corn bin which is built inside the house and helps to support the inner mudceilings. In front of the house is a small area which is beaten and covered with a resinous liquid to bind it together and which is kept scrupulously clean.'

'This type of building is found also in the Moroa, Kagoro, Kaje, Kagoma and Jaba tribes of the Zaria Province, and reaches its perfection in the last, where the huts of the compound are both larger and more steeply roofed, and arranged around a spacious courtyard which is so carefully beaten and glued together that it looks like a black concrete.'

At other points in this section of the book, one seems to be overhearing one DO talking to another off the record, so strongly expressed are the author's preferences, as here about a tribe in the Pankshin District:

'Their twelfth chief ... was so unpopular and lacking in personality that his reign was brought to an untimely end, only a year after his accession, by his subjects, who made him a prisoner and sold him into slavery. The present chief is a man of outstanding personality... They are a very likeable tribe, and their district is a pleasant stretch of open undulating country with a wealth of oil palms. The tribe is very slowly but surely dying out, their birth rate being probably the lowest in the Province.'

A section on a tribe's careful system of land tenure, in the Jos area, ends:

'The ownership of game is very important to these pagans. It is usually the property of the man who kills it, which often becomes a hotly contested point. Several people are entitled as of right to various parts of the animal. The head goes to the head of the family of the killer, unless it is a fierce animal, when the chief gets it, together with the skin in some cases. The family head also gets a quarter of the meat. The wife's brother, father or uncle is usually entitled to a forequarter, the maker of the bow with which it was killed is sometimes entitled to the underneath part of the stomach, and so on until one wonders what the killer gets except the kudos for his skill. To omit to give the carcase or skin to the chief when he is entitled to it is tantamount to rebellion.'



Young men attending a community event

A tribe In Pankshin Division, about 14,000 in number, caused the British a lot of trouble at first:

'As a tribe, they are and always have been warlike, impetuous and irresponsible in an extreme degree, and yet extremely likeable withal. Their appearance conforms to their character. Skins are worn and preferred to clothes or loin cloths, although both of the latter

are seen, while necklaces of iron links, ridges of hair along the the centre of the head, with small white feathers sometimes stuck into them and bangles at the fancy of the wearer are all worn. Teeth are chipped, although only some of the sections into which the tribe is divided were cannibals and their cannibalism was connected with magical rites and ceremonies in which women could not take part.'

(Over the page, and rather spoiling the effect, he says that they have since 1920 been peaceable and have settled down to 'agricultural pursuits'.)

We hear a lot about pagan religion of course, and its various rites and ceremonies, as here, of another tribe in the Pankshin area:

'It may be of interest to enquire how a new town is founded. It has already been said that the ancestors are revered. They are also feared, because most of the misfortunes of this world are attributed to either ancestors or to Tsafis [sacred objects] who require constant propitiation. It is therefore necessary to take a stone from the circle of stones which is to be seen in every family burial place, and to use that stone as the basis on which to build the burial place in the new town. This ensures continuity and connects the ancestors of the old place with the new one, thus enabling all ceremonies in connection with the ancestor cult to be done at the new place'.



People moving house to a new area?

As often in this type of ethnography, there are some details that are not for the squeamish, but in one instance it is Cecil himself who declines to reveal all. He is describing the initiation rites of a tribe in Shendam Division:

'The Bori dance is exceedingly popular and men of all ages take part. It has many different and complicated steps and the dancers revolve in lines like the spokes of a wheel. They are usually naked from the waist upwards and hold coloured cloths in their hands, the arms being extended to the front. The steps and movements of the body are graceful and very fascinating to watch.'

At this point he has put a footnote, that some of the villages of a similar tribal origin have women's Bori societies, who also hold public dances. 'Their dances', he says, 'are both unedifying and unpleasant to watch although not in any way indecent or immoral.'

And the climax of the initiation proceedings which follow the men's dance contains, he says 'an unsavoury detail which may well remain undisclosed,' 'unsavoury' being a word he often used, half humorously, for 'distasteful'. This detail, whatever it was, is by no means the book's only instance of its kind, but following Cecil's example I shall draw a veil over the rest. The curious may borrow the book and read for themselves.



Dancers

Women play a subsidiary role, it seems, an impression no doubt given by the tribe's male spokesmen to the male DO collecting information. But there were exceptions. In one area, the women have more money than their menfolk because they do most of the work on the farms, including selling its produce. In another, it is the women who are the witch doctors

and the potters, though if they make enough money to buy a horse, 'the horse illogically becomes the property of the husband.'

And daughters are welcome (and often bespoke for marriage from an early age) because in most of the tribes, a man has to earn his bride either by an extended period of labour on his prospective father-in-law's farm or by substantial gifts to him, or both. In a final extract from Cecil's book, we hear how one group of tribes carry the bride-earning idea to extremes:

'Wives can leave their husbands when they wish, except that if they leave before the end of five years, they have to refund the presents paid by the husbands to the wife's family. Marriage ... is very expensive to maintain owing to this power of desertion which the women have. A husband after his marriage has to make annual presents to his wife's family in order to bribe them into using their influence to make the wife stay with him. Also, of course, if the presents are considered inadequate, the wife's family will take her away... These presents have to be continued until the death of the wife, or her desertion, and after the death of her parents have to be given to the heir of her father ... and it is a continual and justifiable complaint of the younger married men that they live in a condition of bondage to their fathers-in-law and never cease to be indebted to them.'



Three generations

By the time Cecil's book was printed by the Tiger Press in Jos in 1934, he himself had moved on. He was no longer part of Nigeria's Administrative Service, but learning to be a judge. That will be the next chapter of his story, and the beginning of my own.

11 Change of direction

Cecil's name appears for the last time in the list of Administrative Service personnel in his 1933 Nigeria Handbook. Is that why he bought it? Possibly. It had been a never-to-be forgotten-period and one that bound him to Africa for the rest of his life. But he may also have felt the need to reconnect with the rest of Nigeria, where his future now lay as a judge.

Here he is in everyday judicial dress, with the short wig, cooler than the full bottomed wig he wore on ceremonial occasions. I don't know where or when it was taken; perhaps it was for his mother, the kind of studio portrait she had enjoyed when he was in the army.



He would have already proved himself in the courts at district and divisional level, since every DO was involved in the cases heard by the local Native Courts; indeed, this was perhaps the most important aspect of the DO's role, since mismanagement of a case could cause local resentment and seriously embarrass the Administration on appeal. His familiarity with the way in which a DO might apply both native and British law locally would stand him in good stead as an assistant judge, as he moved into the management of justice at national level.

The Handbook explains how the wider judicial system worked. Cases that were too serious for the Native Courts, and appeals from decisions of the latter, went to the Provincial Court, whose appeals were heard in their turn by the national High Court, which Cecil was now to join. The High Court moved from place to place, holding sessions in many of the major centres, so its judges found themselves doing substantial amounts of travelling.

At the top of the legal pyramid was the Supreme Court, based in Lagos, and in 1933 consisting of four 'Puisne' (pronounced 'puny') judges presided over by the Chief Justice. Cecil later became one of these, who were 'puny' only in the sense that they ranked below the Chief Justice.

The law itself was basically British Common Law as it stood in 1900, the year in which Nigeria officially became a colony. But in the Native Courts, native law and custom were to be applied, ‘so long as it is not incompatible with the natural principles of justice and equity or contrary to local enactments’. There was Islamic law too which applied in many Native Courts in the north.

Cecil had already qualified as a solicitor in the UK, so was an obvious candidate for a legal job at a time when more judges were needed. But it turned out that after he had qualified, in 1921, he had been so certain he would not practise as a lawyer, that he had never completed the formalities of registration with the Law Society in London. Having done that, however, in November of 1933, he was ready to start work.

Judges had other public functions in addition to their court duties, some of which appear in what follows. And since the High Court was a touring court, its arrival in the various centres where it held sessions was an occasion for a bit of ceremony, and well covered by the local press, as evidenced by three glossy press photos of court personnel, one of which I have used later. The picture below may be a fourth, or is perhaps of a different occasion. Other illustrations, whose precise context I do not know, have been included because they seem appropriate at a particular point in the story.



Cecil with court personnel (?), Nigeria, 1930s

12 Matrimonial

On 10 July 1937 Cecil's mother Louisa died at the age of 68. With her throughout the twenty-one years of her widowhood had been the youngest of her children, Cecil's sister Hesper, first as a schoolgirl in Bath and then as live-in companion and carer to her mother in London and Weymouth. She was now 34.

With Louisa gone, Hesper was ready to move on, and she took a job at a Social Centre in Ealing, W. London. She needed a holiday too, and, perhaps through social work colleagues in London, she joined a group in a rented house on the Llyn peninsula in North Wales. It was an energetic holiday, involving serious walking, swimming, even a picnic on top of Mount Snowdon.

I know all this because I have in front of me the photos of that holiday at Abersoch. They are not Hesper's pictures, however, but are stuck into an album belonging to one Jean Miller, another member of that holiday group, and carefully labelled by her. Hesper appears in two of Jean's photos.

Jean Miller (below) became Cecil's wife and my mother.



Cecil's sister Hesper was befriended by Jean, nine years her senior. She moved to join Jean in the East End of London, where Jean lived and worked as warden of the Presbyterian Settlement in the East India Dock Road. This was a poor area, and the Settlement provided a range of social services for the needy. Rooms at the Settlement were available to outsiders fairly cheaply in return for help with community projects. Hesper took one of these, and on his next leave Cecil visited her there and was introduced to Jean.

Jean Miller

Exactly what happened next is unclear. During the four months of Cecil's leave, Jean started a new job in Oxford, and Cecil, no practised suitor, managed to leave the UK without having asked the vital question. His other sister, Des, wrote that it came by telegram from Nigeria: 'Will you marry me?'

They were neither of them youngsters, he 40 and she 43. The evidence of her photo albums is that she had had a particular man friend for a number of years, but that he had remained only a friend. She clearly liked to travel, and though she enjoyed the British seaside as much as anyone, she had also visited some of Europe's high spots, Venice, Provence, Oberammergau, the Italian Riviera. And if she needed encouragement to spread her wings

further, she had only to look to her two older siblings, Scott, working in the ship building industry in New Zealand, and Mary, teaching Muslim girls in India.

In August 1938, Jean fitted in a last holiday, walking with a friend in Switzerland. She sent a very matter of fact, unemotional card of Lake Geneva to Cecil at the High Court in Onitsha. Then it was back to Oxford and to the many necessary preparations, until finally, probably in early November, she embarked for Nigeria with a wedding dress in her trunk.



They were married at All Saints' Church in Enugu, at 4.30 pm on 21 November 1938, exactly a week after Jean's 44th birthday. A buffet reception followed, with the traditional British wedding cake which Cecil cuts in the photo below.



Jean was quickly involved in Cecil's public life. A fortnight after the wedding, he sent a photo card from Ibadan to his sister Des, with a picture taken just after he had made a presentation. Jean was among the spectators, he says. The card shows his back view in full costume, long wig and shiny shoes, and I see that the table in front of him has the British flag spread over it.



Cecil makes a presentation, Ibadan 1938

Their ten months together in Ibadan, 75 miles to the north of Lagos and well to the west of Enugu, is recorded in photos at the start of a small album. They took pictures of each other in the garden, and gardening. One of Jean shows her with their West African grey parrot on her shoulder. She got out her watercolours to paint a view of the corner of the house with the garden beyond, and took a picture of Cecil up a ladder, cutting back the creeper.

At home in Ibadan





Sabo's youngest daughter, and her mother too, I assume, visited, and the toddler was photographed beside Cecil. There was some travel too, and a remarkable picture records what was perhaps Jean's first Nigerian ferry crossing: she stands beside their car as the raft on which they are travelling is pulled towards the riverbank. Enlargement shows that she is wearing her new white mosquito boots.



Jean on river ferry

In June 1939 Cecil's sister Des wrote to her husband: 'I had a letter from Cecil yesterday and what do you think was in it? – Jean is going to have a baby in December! Cecil is simply thrilled – it brought tears to my eyes – "not only am I blessed with a wife, but I am to be blessed with a child as well," was one of the things he said ... Now I'm so fearful that Jean won't be able to carry the baby –a first one at 44 is pretty steep; if she doesn't, it will be such an awful disappointment. Almost better then if it had not happened at all. – But I'm not thinking about that. Jean is awfully strong and they can afford the best doctors. She's coming home in September, two months before Cecil. He's very sorry for himself about that!'

In mid-August Cecil sent Des a photo-card, showing people waiting for their turn to greet a dignitary, the British men in their best white suits and sun helmets. Cecil says he was "to swear in a new Chief Commissioner of..." – of Police, perhaps? The next words are blurred. This time wives too are shown, and Jean, now five months pregnant, stands beyond Cecil to his right, as he bends forward to shake the dignitary's hand.



Cecil and Jean (beyond him to the right) at the appointment of a new Commissioner

The card also tells Des that Jean's departure has been brought forward. She must have arrived back in the UK just as war was declared on 1 September.

Cecil himself continued to hear appeals in the High Court. On 20 September he gave judgment in Abeokuta on the legal validity of documents used in a land transaction, in which, relying on his memory of a recent Indian case that had reached the Privy Council in London — he was away from his base, he said, so without the details— he overruled the objections.

On 5 December I was born at the Forbes Fraser Nursing Home in Bath.

13 In time of war

Cecil did not get home in time for my birth as they had intended. It was wartime, and the regular shipping services were already disrupted, with passengers having to wait until several ships were ready to sail together as a convoy under naval protection. But finally, in February 1940, he was able to join Jean and me in a flat in Henrietta Street in the centre of Bath.

Bath was new territory to Jean, but Cecil knew it well from visiting his mother at her succession of addresses there, and perhaps suggested the area around Laura Place, where Louisa had lived for a time and where Jean did indeed find them a flat.



I was baptised Jennifer Mary on 20 February at the parish church of St Mary, Bathwick, and Des came to stand in for Jean's sister Mary as one of the godparents. She wrote to her husband: 'the baby is lovely – a beautiful forehead and the Trotman [Louisa's family] eyes, and, more important than anything, great vitality. Jean looks well and is completely absorbed – I don't think even the war exists for her. Cecil is sweet – all his inhibitions have gone in one fell swoop, which just shows you!!'

Cecil started putting photos into a baby book, presumably to create a record to take back to Nigeria. It runs from February to August 1940. Six months was a long leave but perhaps he was due extra from his extended previous tour of duty, and he may also have had to wait for a convoy to be ready to sail.



They made good use of those six months, buying and moving into a house on Beechen Cliff, at a time when houses were going cheap because of the war. Weymouth House was, and is, a late Georgian, three-storey house with one of the finest views in Bath over the city below. Jean liked views.

Jennifer at Weymouth House, Bath



Above, my mother and me in the old walled garden of Weymouth House, with nappies hanging out to dry on the right, and beyond us at the bottom of the garden a glass-roofed area we called the 'Sunny Spot'.

In August, following Cecil's return to Nigeria, and as the Luftwaffe's bombing onslaught began, Jean's new photo album shows us staying for two months with friends in Salisbury. Then back in Bath. But now the war had really started to impinge on civilian life and from November there followed six months of nights wrecked by air-raid sirens as German planes flew overhead to bomb Bristol. My mother remembered fearful hours spent in the cellar of Weymouth House. In May 1941 she took refuge with friends from Settlement days in the Cotswolds, at Burford. She found a house to rent, joined a choir and was still there in December. It seems to have been a happy period, though she did not expect to see Cecil that year.



My evidence for this period in our lives comes from a small number of picture postcards. Most are written by Jean to Cecil at the High Court in Ibadan or Kaduna but two are sent by Cecil from the USA, when in May 1942 the war routed him home, extraordinarily, via New York. His cards have the briefest of greetings, like the censored cards he had sent home from Palestine in WWI. Perhaps the form of this 1940s correspondence by picture postcard was also imposed on them by the wartime need for international messages to be open and available for checking. If there were letters too, they have not survived.

Cecil's cards from New York went not to Weymouth House but to an address on Combe Down, further from the city centre. For in April and May 1942 the Germans had bombed a selection of England's historic cities, of which Bath was one. A friend of Jean, who wrote to me when Cecil died, remembered sheltering in the cellar with us as the bombs fell. Weymouth House itself was not hit, though the glass roof over the Sunny Spot was shattered, but the damage in the city was very substantial and that had favoured a move further out.

Cecil seems to have been in Nigeria for the whole of 1943. In July, my mother and I (I was now 3) shared a seaside holiday with Des at Clevedon on the Bristol Channel. Jean wrote three cards to Cecil in Kaduna, having left me with Des to paddle in the rock pools on the beach. She walked up to the top of a small hill. 'If we had come here in 1940, we could have had some quite good little stumps [walks] and no doubt we shall yet, when J is old enough to stump with us! Perhaps she will scorn our elderly limits!!'

In August she was happy to be with a friend in Farnham, but could not escape reminders of the continuing war. 'Our only snag is the host of bombers which swarm over here at bedtime and back in the early morning. And our only regret is that you are not here.'

By their fifth wedding anniversary at the end of 1943, they had spent less than two years together, separated by my arrival. For there was no question of my joining them in Nigeria. The 1933 Handbook is quite clear: 'Owing to the climate and the difficulty of obtaining suitable food, the country is not suitable for European children.' Especially a late born, only child, and in wartime. But a solution to their separation was in the making, in the village of Bickton in Hampshire, where Jean's younger sister Annie and her partner Margaret had in 1943 bought the 'big house' for themselves and their two elderly parents, to run as a guesthouse. Might Bickton House provide a home for one small girl as well?



14 Being a judge

Back to Nigeria, where by 1943, Cecil seems to have become a full judge. In February, a British colleague stationed at Makurdi sent him a card addressed to 'Mr Justice Ames, The High Court, Aba... Sorry to have missed you ... at Makurdi, not aware you were passing through... MacBride told me you were with him.'

It was easily done. As a High Court judge, Cecil spent much time criss-crossing central and southern Nigeria between the principal towns in which the court held sessions. He might stay with a British colleague, such as MacBride, or, failing that, he could go to a government rest house. He also had a nominal home base in a town such as Ibadan or Kaduna, but nothing permanent and always in government-owned accommodation, because with a few exceptions around the original colony of Lagos, the British did not own land in Nigeria. The African system of land tenure was community based, and it was decided at an early stage that land should be held in trust by the Governor for the people of Nigeria. So any properties built by the incomers, including the government, were held on a maximum lease of 99 years.



In May 1943 he was again in Aba, south of Enugu, and was given the photo above. On the back is written, in careful black lettering, 'With Compliments of Registrar and Staff of the High Court Registry, Aba, to His Honour Mr Justice C G Ames. 5/v/43'.

Among my father's books are five slim volumes of 'Nigeria Law Reports', covering, with gaps, the years 1938–1950. They record judgments in the High and Supreme Courts that were considered legally significant and are mostly appeals against the decisions of lower courts, often turning on abstruse points of law. Included are twelve judgments given by Cecil, of which about half concern procedure: is the case being tried in the appropriate court? Was the right to appeal correctly given? The others concern the laws on property transactions and tenancy, inheritance and marriage law. Four of those which are not about procedure touch on the interface between native law and custom and British law. The principle here, stated in a 1930 judgment in Vol. XIV of these Reports, was that 'the verdict

and sentence of a Native Court which is an integral part of our judicial system, carried out in accordance with procedure enjoined by native law and not obviously inequitable, will be accepted even if the procedure is widely different from the English Courts.' But it was an area that frequently needed further clarification. Cecil heard one such case in December 1943, in Kaduna. It was an important case legally and for that reason seems to have come straight to the High Court, without any previous hearings.

It concerns a father and son, Christians, who live in Lagos. Like the majority in south-west Nigeria, they are Yoruba by tribal group. The son's work moves to Jos, so he moves there, leaving his girlfriend Miss Y behind in Lagos. Not long after, she writes to him that she is pregnant. Father and son exchange many anxious letters, the son asking his father on the one hand to 'rescue me from the trouble I have got myself into' and on the other saying 'I have to enter married life before my scheduled time. But God knows best ...' Father declares 'we shall endeavour to wriggle out of the difficult position' but in the end decides that the way ahead is for his son to go through the Yoruba marriage ceremony of 'Idana' to placate Miss Y, who, he fears, 'will not prove a wife that can be easily managed.' The Idana was the traditional form of wedding in Yoruba law, and Christian Yoruba usually performed it before being married in church. Son cannot be at the ceremony in person, so father stands in for him, a perfectly acceptable arrangement in Yoruba law provided the absent party knows and has consented. Had the son done that? It was not quite clear.

Somewhat later, the son, still in Jos, falls in love with a Miss Z, and when she too becomes pregnant, they apply to marry under British law, at which point there come objections from Lagos that the son is already married.

Cecil as judge had to decide whether the Idana ceremony did in fact preclude a marriage under British law, particularly given the son's conflicted state of mind. Or was it perhaps more of an engagement? The issue involved him in considerable research, with the expert advice being that Idana was indeed a full marriage ceremony. He accepts that under normal circumstances this is so, but finds that, regardless of the son's attitude, on this occasion it could not be considered as such, because the bridegroom had not been there. It lacked, he says, 'the custom or practice followed by the majority of mankind, by which an essential part of a marriage is the giving of the bride to the bridegroom.'

So since, with the bridegroom far away in Jos, Miss Y was never taken to her new husband's home, the son has not been through a valid marriage under Yoruba law and is free to marry his new partner under British marriage law.

It was a ruling that stood to undermine the validity of many a proxy marriage in Yoruba society. Did it have repercussions, I wonder, or was the decision of a British judge in a British court simply irrelevant, too distant to impinge on the established customs of several million people?

15 Bickton

Bickton House was to be my second home for many years: it must have seemed to my parents a very safe haven, and especially so in wartime. Set back at the end of the single village street, its grounds bordered a farm track, beyond which was one of the many shallow waterways typical of that part of Hampshire; it lies behind us in the picture below, where I appear with Jean and Cecil, my mother's sister Annie and my grandmother. Sometimes in the evening the cows belonging to the neighbouring farm were to be seen wading home through the water. To the other side of the house, gardener Jefferies looked after a large area of kitchen garden, with fruit cages and two long greenhouses, an espalier peach tree in one and a nectarine in the other. I remember chickens, ducks, beehives, a black cat and the West Highland Terrier, Jim, who belonged to Annie's partner Margaret.



Bickton House, 1945, Annie and my grandmother seated in front of Jennifer, Jean and Cecil

There must have been a pooling of resources to buy the substantial red-brick Edwardian house and its 2½ acres of grounds. Neither Annie nor Margaret had that sort of money, having been pianist and domestic science lecturer respectively, but their two elderly parents had had properties to sell in exchange for a sheltered home, and they hoped paying guests would come. Their guests, however, were mainly friends, single women with limited incomes, and rooms were often empty. The possibility of another long-term visitor must have been very welcome, even if her needs were rather different from those of their normal household.



Bickton House

One of my earliest memories of Bickton is of a teatime occasion in the main drawing room, to the left in the photo above, with a veranda opening onto the garden, when Aunt Margaret, as I called her, persuaded me to drink my milk, something my mother had just failed to do, by putting it in a miniature china teapot, with a little teacup and saucer to match. I remember too Annie's grand piano, at the end of this room, but rarely played by her now she had become seriously deaf and had had to give up her professional career.

Adjacent was the long dining room where residents and guests sat at individual square tables, card tables, I think, arranged in two lines facing each other. Each table had on it that person's weekly ration of sugar, butter and jam and a bowl containing a small moss garden dotted with flowers, prepared by my grandmother. There was a hatch through from the dining room into a pantry, and beyond that lay the kitchen, Margaret's domain, leading to a scullery where Annie peeled the potatoes and did the washing-up. A back stair went up from the scullery to the bedroom where Annie and Margaret slept, as did I when I had whooping cough, and above that there was an attic room for me.

Off the dining room was a large winter garden, or conservatory, above right, full of greenery. It had chubby, low radiators just the right height for a child to sit on.

Of the five guest bedrooms, my grandmother's was the smallest but had a superb view out over the garden and to the river, and it was there that I learnt to read and write. Margaret's father had a room on the ground floor, but he spent most of his time in what had been the

stables at the bottom of the drive, where he had a forge for working wrought iron and a machine for putting fizz into the guests' drinking water. I loved the way the water made my nose tingle.

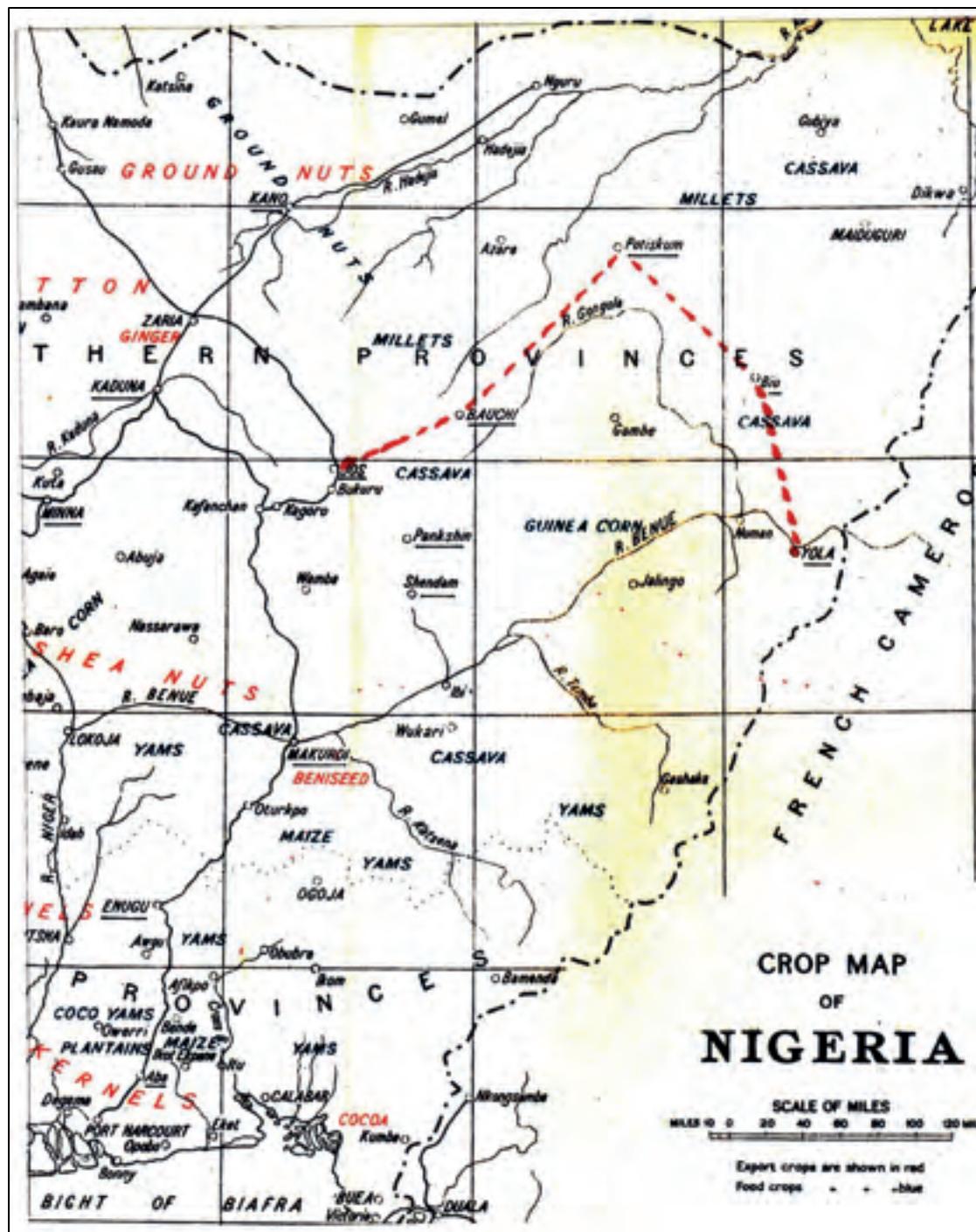
The aunts had a little car with a collapsible roof. For Annie the car was a necessity, as she had been born with a hip defect and had to wear a special shoe with a built-up sole on one foot. She became increasingly lame, while the clumsy paraphernalia of the hearing aid round her neck made her, for all her cheerful affection, a poor recipient of confidences. Margaret had a quirky kind of humour, and could be fun, but she ran Bickton and was always busy. On the days when she had time to take Jim for a walk in the water meadows beyond the mill, I went with her, but often Jim and I were left to our own devices.

Bickton was my home from autumn 1944 to April 1945, and quite often for school holidays after that. Later on, Jean was sometimes there, occasionally Cecil too, and his rare visits called for a family photo such as the one above, probably from 1945. The picture below, taken in Fordingbridge, is earlier and I date it to my first period at Bickton in 1944.



I remember the dress as being of brown velvet, almost certainly, in times of rationing, made by my mother from the material of some other garment. Margaret was responsible for my change of hairstyle, part of her campaign to bring out the tomboy in me. She was quite often at odds with my mother. I am glad to see I have my teddy Alastair at my side.

16 Map of eastern Nigeria, for Chapter 17



The shape of Nigeria does not sit well on an A4 page. So for this map, taken from Cecil's invaluable Nigeria Handbook, I have removed the western third of the country, including Lagos and Ibadan. Places I have mentioned are underlined, and the route described in the next chapter is shown by a red dotted line. The original purpose of the map was to show crops, with those for home consumption in blue/grey, and those for export in red.

17 Through Jean's eyes

By 1944 the risks of the sea voyage to West Africa were much reduced and, having left me at Bickton, Jean joined Cecil in Nigeria. She was always a good correspondent but In October that year she wrote an exceptionally long letter to her mother, my granny, at Bickton. She asked her to keep it, to be a record of a journey she and Cecil had just completed from Lagos to Yola, near the eastern border of Nigeria, a distance of more than 800 miles.

Her previous experience of Nigeria had been limited to the south, Enugu, where they had been married, and Ibadan, where they had lived for the following ten months. The court session in Yola, in the far east of the Northern Region, must have seemed a good opportunity to introduce her to some of the places in the north that Cecil loved most.

The three surviving photos from this trip were all taken in Bauchi. The two sepia ones are originals; on the back of one Cecil has written 'Sabo's friends and relatives and his car', while the other shows Sabo himself. The third is a recent reprint from negatives which have survived the years inside a twist of brown paper. The watercolours are by Jean, who had been an art student before becoming a social worker. I have used them as seems appropriate, though they do not necessarily show the places mentioned in the text. She uses the word 'boy' for 'servant', normal then throughout West Africa.

Given the huge distance, they began by taking the night train to Jos, along with the Crown Counsel, a Mr Cole, a pleasant Irishman who, Jean notes, played the harmonium in church, a fact that Jean's musical family would have appreciated; she was herself a competent cellist.

The accompanying lorry had been sent off earlier in the evening, loaded up with their luggage, including 'trunks, stores, camp furniture, books, Cecil's robes, all the four boys' bedding [they too travelled on the lorry], buckets, lamp boxes, portable bath etc.' The train left late, and broke down in the middle of the night, but eventually they reached Jos, 'the high spot I had heard so much about and always hoped to see. It is in the middle of high rocky hills, and some of the scenery is quite like the Highlands. There are a lot of Europeans round Jos and that has turned it into a sort of "land flowing with milk and honey" for stores.'



They were to stay at the Jos rest house, a large disused hospital, in which they had a self-contained flat. After a cup of tea, they went to explore the grounds around the Governor's residence nearby. It was 'beautifully cool' she says: 'I almost imagined I was in an English park... such beautiful shady trees and green lawns, and long walks of wonderful flowers, dahlias, carnations, verbena, antirrhinums, and many more, and a great climbing rose like the cream one at Bickton.'

That evening they dined with the magistrate and his wife, also Irish and 'very easy people', who were able to advise Jean that her unsettled stomach was probably due to mepacrine, the version of quinine being used at the time, and that taking it in divided doses during the day should improve matters.

The next day was to be a long one, but in a comfortable and roomy government car, with space for one of the servants too, plus a picnic basket. Following half an hour behind the lorry, but overtaking it on the way, the 'very efficient' driver 'averaged about 42 miles an hour and where the roads were good, we hardly noticed how fast we were going. That bit of scenery, a stretch of about two hours gradually descending about 2000 feet, sometimes in hairpin bends and roads cut out of the side of the hills, quite on the Swiss pattern, was the best bit of the whole trip. We looked out for baboons, which live in the hills, but did not see any. We stopped at one spot and heard one or two of them barking. Cecil has seen as many as a hundred crossing the road. There are leopards and hyenas too but of course we didn't see them.'

'Our first stop, to pick up some milk and stretch our legs, was at Bauchi, where Sabo's home is. The Rest House was a small tidy thatched place, mud walls, very thick and cool. The first thing we saw was eight small children, ages about 2-12, in little or no clothes, awaiting us. The minute they saw the car they rushed to a table beside a hut and hastily struggled into an array of great splendour and variety. Two-year-old was rather fat and came a bad last but solemnly offered his shirt to an older child to have it put on.'



Sabo's family at Bauchi

'We left the lorry there, for a rest and a meal, and did another 40 miles, to another rest house, and oh! What a difference! Of course, it is only fair to say that we were not expected, but nobody could have made it look anything but squalid and depressing, the mud partly covered with peeled-off whitewash, cracks all over the place, filthy floor. Anyway, we were provided with water and firewood quite quickly, our boy boiled a kettle, and we had an excellent lunch, cold bacon and egg pie, tomatoes, bread and cheese, and bananas and tea.



Sabo's friends and relations and his car

'We stayed about an hour, and then set off again, a very hot afternoon, a very straight and apparently endless road for 100 miles, with the same flat bush country, very few trees anywhere. Conversation dwindled to nothing, and we just dozed and dripped till four, when we finished our 200 miles as planned. We had tea with the District Officer, and by that time the lorry had arrived and all the loads got unpacked, and we found ourselves in a charming little bungalow built of local brick, thatched, with a semi-circular veranda big enough for meals and our camp beds as well.' This was Potiskum.

'But the charm was very soon found to be superficial! We went over to the DO's house for drinks at 7 out in the garden, and I noticed a good many earwigs running up my sleeves and skirt, and Cole had them careering around the rim of his glass! When we got back to our lamp-lit veranda, we found the place alive with them, swarming on the dinner table, dropping from the thatch, and on the floor. We seemed to eat with one hand and swipe them away with the other. By 9 o'clock we decided to go to bed inside the mosquito nets, and at last got some peace.'

'Cecil was up early the next morning, swept a lot of bats' droppings off the dressing table, and we had our tea tray about 6. I took the cosy off and about 20 earwigs dropped out. Then I found four more floating in my cup, fished them out and found three more at the

bottom. I lost interest after that, but Cecil went gallantly on to the end. We still don't know if the earwigs ran in from the cosy or were brewed with the tea leaves! All our luggage was full of them, every bag, newspaper, shoe, face flannel and garment, so we were longer than usual packing, but we got away in good time, on a cooler day, with only 144 miles to do.

'Cole had a different pest, stink bugs, inside his net. They don't bite but if you touch them your hand smells and a dead one is extremely smelly. Unfortunately, we have to go back there in a few days and stay three or four nights ...'

Later in the letter, at a pause in Jean's writing, Cecil has written a note: 'The earwigs ... were not because that particular house was badly looked after. It was well looked after. They are the principal form of insect life over the whole of Nigeria north of a certain latitude, about a 100-mile strip across the top of Nigeria from east to west. They are especially prevalent at this time of year. One will visit a place in this part for a few days perhaps, and for weeks after one is liable to find earwigs in unexpected places in one's belongings.'



From Potiskum a long straight road climbed 2000 ft to Biu, where they had lunch and an afternoon sleep in a rest house that resembled a baronial hall or tithe barn, with a high beamed ceiling. It was sparsely furnished, but clean and in good condition. A visit to see the DO's vegetable farm did not materialise because of a sudden rainstorm, almost like hail, in which they got drenched and cold, so that they were glad to return to a hot bath.

The next day, their fourth travelling, brought them about lunch time to a river. 'This time we had to get ferried across a wide, shallow but swift river. ... it was just a raft, propelled by six men with poles and two with paddles. They had to push well up stream first so as to arrive at the proper place. We sat in the car and I ate an orange to stave off my hunger, knowing that the ferry had to spend another 50 minutes and probably more to get the lorry across and we couldn't have lunch until we got to Yola and into our house.' But she enjoyed the scene around her, two small boys messing about in a shallow canoe and some fishing apparatus nearby.

The Yola house promised well, with some quite good basic furniture, electric fans, and 'a proper water supply and bath'. After another picnic lunch, and while waiting for the lorry with the rest of their luggage, Jean had a rest, while Cecil left to see about arrangements for the court. He found a little group sitting on the grass outside, two policemen and a convicted murderer appealing against his sentence, who were duly told when to present themselves, and went away.

'It was nearly dark when everything was dumped somewhere and the lorry travellers had washed all the red dust off themselves. We had dinner and began to find mosquitoes everywhere, and in addition swarms of flying insect of every kind milling round the lights. Under the mosquito net seemed the best idea, but we weren't happy there either, because we had a plague of small black beetles which crawled through the net and fell plop on us and crawled all over us. They didn't bite, and they were quite dry to squash, but how they tickled! Eventually Cecil put the landing light on...'

But the final page is missing!



Sabo with his car

18 A child in Nigeria

Six weeks after my mother's letter home in the autumn of 1944, I had my fifth birthday. When the attendance officer came to Bickton to see why I was not at school, she found that I could read and write and went away.

In April 1945 my parents came back to the UK and I assume that in due course we all returned to Bath. Weymouth House was let when it was unoccupied, and it was not always available exactly when needed. In September, I started at St Christopher's, a boarding school at Burnham-on-Sea on the Bristol Channel, not far from where Jean had holidayed in 1943. I slept in a room with two other five-year-olds, and the headmistress, Miss Watson, whom we knew as Auntie Watty, made it her business to remember the names of our soft toys and to enquire after them when she came to tuck us up at night. I remember little else of my early days at school, perhaps because, despite the daily spoonful of malt extract given after breakfast, I spent much of my time in the sickroom with the infections that other more socialised children had already dealt with. The worst was measles, when I was put in a room on my own with the curtains drawn, and recovery was followed by the fumigation of all my possessions. I feared for Alastair, but he survived.

My mother stayed in England during my first school year, but by the summer of 1946 judged that I was robust enough to cope with a spell in Nigeria after school had broken up for the summer holidays. I was six, and my memories are fragmentary, often sensations remembered rather than events, but the surviving photos taken by my parents fill in some of the gaps.

We flew. Planes were smaller than today's and needed to refuel more frequently. Cecil had flown in 1944, via the Channel Islands, Portugal and French North Africa. Our route was via Tripoli in Libya, an improbable part of my mental storyline, but perfectly possible, I find, since Libya was under British administration from 1943 to 1951. It was nighttime, and I have a faint memory of the bright lights and noisy confusion of the airport building at Tripoli. Next came the long flight to Kano, where the interior of the aircraft, passengers and all, was sprayed with a foul-smelling disinfectant before anyone was allowed to disembark. Then, the shock of the heat outside, as from an oven, before a small plane took us to Jos.



Jos



At Jos we joined Cecil for a short holiday in the house he occupied when there on duty. The insects were a new experience, especially the flying ants, and as I had no mosquito boots, in the evenings I sat with my legs in a pillowcase under the dining table. Photos show us in the country around Jos, paddling in the rocky streams, with at least one picnic (above left). It seems Sabo and another of the house staff came with us on some of these days out (above right). Did Sabo do the driving, perhaps? I remember Cecil was keen for me to see some of the pagan peoples, rapidly becoming indistinguishable from other Africans as they too adopted shorts and t-shirts.



We then went northwest to Kaduna for a fortnight, staying in a house (left) with a rough garden, around which I walked my meals when they were too hot for me to eat. One incident has stayed with me. Kaduna, as capital of the Northern Region, had good facilities for Europeans, and since my father was now working and out during the day, he suggested Sabo should take me to the swimming pool one morning. It was the first time I had been alone with Sabo, and I remember his broad brown bare feet on the pedals of the car. Perhaps I had not noticed previously that he did not wear shoes. When I had splashed about a bit in the cool water, I put my clothes back on in one of the wooden changing cabins but could not undo the plastic ties of my swimming cap which had become knotted under my chin. Nor could Sabo, but in the end, he succeeded by biting them off. I had had little contact with men, and I remember the closeness of that encounter.

Nothing like that happened again. Perhaps Jean – where had she been that day? – suggested to Cecil that there were some situations which Sabo might not be the best person to manage.

When the court had finished its session in Kaduna, a night train took us to Lagos, quite an adventure in our first-class sleeper compartment, where Cecil gave me my first lesson in playing cards. But once arrived in Lagos, we were there until December. And here my memories become firmer, because I spent a further two months in Lagos in 1948 when I was eight, in the same house.

Lagos is partly built on offshore islands, Ikoyi being the island favoured by the British. Our house was typical of those on Ikoyi, a solid two storey structure, built either side of a central staircase. The two ground floor reception rooms were set back for coolness into the heart of the house and within an encircling veranda, and furnished with the high-quality, sturdy products of Lagos's prison workshops. Upstairs were two large bedrooms with balconies, my parents' at one end and mine at the other, with a bathroom each.



The house Cecil occupied in Lagos

Where did Sabo and the other staff live? There were five of them in Lagos, head boy (Sabo), cook, middle boy, small boy and gardener. They had their own quarters, set back behind the house near the kitchen, but I never went there; I think I understood it was a private area. The staff were all, like Sabo, Hausa-speaking northerners, to make a harmonious team.

I don't remember our cook. It was Sabo with whom my mother discussed the day's shopping and meals. We probably mostly ate the English food of the period, as realised by an African cook who had learnt to use local produce to replicate the dishes that made the British feel at home. But on special occasions guinea fowl featured, and at some point, I remember enjoying hump, a delicacy that came from the northern cattle and tasted like ox tongue. But breakfast, eaten on the veranda, was best, with unfamiliar fruit like pawpaw (papaya) and guava, the latter my favourite once I had learnt to swallow rather than chew the pips.



The garden of our house ended at the edge of Lagos's lagoon

The garden (above and below) was striking, grass and flowers near the house, then scrub running down to the palm trees at the edge of the lagoon. There was a narrow gravelly beach (below left), but no bathing, only paddling, and that with care, for across the water was downtown Lagos, though further away than Jean has painted it. But I found a good sitting place at the foot of a palm tree (below right) from where I could watch the fishing boats, and once or twice I joined another girl in the rowing boat owned by Judge Brooke, colleague and friend of my father. It was good frog territory, and they were noisy at night.



At the bottom of the garden



I remember spending much time just outside the front door of the house, in the shade of what would now be called a carport, watching the insect life in the brick-red soil, especially a small creature which made a miniature pit where it was sandy, a trap for its prey, then lay concealed at the bottom until another insect came along and found itself being sucked into the vortex by the little strategist underneath. There was more wildlife in my bedroom, in the form of a small gecko lizard, who lived upside down on my ceiling. Named Lizzy, she was sometimes joined by another, Bizzy, who in the course of my stay lost her tail but continued to come and go regardless. Inside my mosquito net I felt snug and secure.

In the autumn of that first post-war year, there were in Ikoyi enough British children missing the school autumn term for our parents to organise us into some sort of joint educational activity for a few mornings each week, held in someone else's garden.

Jennifer (back row, centre) with her Lagos 1946 'school' group





Spectators, young ...

There was the occasional group outing too, as above, where I can just be seen, fourth figure from the right, peering from behind the toddler standing on the wall. Other more adult occasions were perhaps less fun, as here with my mother and Judge and Mrs Brooke, right and left respectively.



... and older. But of what, I wonder.

In December 1946 we returned to the UK on SS Almanzora, calling at Takoradi, the port for Accra, and at Freetown, and Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. On arrival at Southampton my parents recorded their 'country of permanent residence' as 'other parts of the British Empire'. But our immediate address was Bickton, where we went for Christmas.

19 Beyond Nigeria

I was of course unaware at the time of Cecil's increasing responsibilities. Since 1945 he had moved up from the High Court to be a judge of the Supreme Court, one of the 'Puisne' or senior judges of the country. In 1933 there had been four of these; ten years later, the case records suggest a larger number, but perhaps the total was still in single figures at any one time. Here he is in the judge's full-bottomed wig, essential for ceremonial or public occasions such as the inspection of a guard of honour, as below.



Being a judge in the Supreme Court meant that he was based in Lagos, with less touring. But it also opened to him a judicial field beyond Nigeria, that of the West African Court of Appeal (WACA). Plaintiffs who felt that their case had not been adequately considered by the Nigerian courts, or that there was a legal loophole somewhere in the proceedings, could apply to take their case to this higher court, which covered not just Nigeria, but also Britain's other West African colonies, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone and the Gambia. It was the judges of the Supreme Courts in each capital, including the Chief Justices, who heard these cases, sitting in threes. Mostly they sat in the country whose court they belonged to, but travel between the countries was also common, and in April 1946, Cecil had joined the panel of judges in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone.

Alongside the 'Nigeria Law Reports' on my bookshelf are five volumes of the 'Selected Judgments of the West African Court of Appeal'. Each has a small sticker inside the front cover, on which is written in red 'A poisonous insecticidal solution has been used in binding this book.' It has worked, and the books are in excellent condition.

They run from 1946 to 1960. From January to July in 1946 Cecil's name appears frequently as one of the three judges in WACA cases thought interesting enough, from a legal point of view, to be recorded in print. He probably wrote some of the judgments too, though their writing is not attributed to any one of the judges by name. They are not easy reading, the points at issue being, at the appeal stage, abstruse legal points, hard for the non-lawyer to appreciate, but here are some snippets from two of the more accessible cases, both Nigerian, and both from mid-July 1946, shortly before Jean and I arrived. In both, Cecil 'sat' alongside his friend Judge Brooke and an African judge.

One case arose out of a market inspection by six policemen, where some arrests caused a riot. The police had had to run for their lives, but one of them got separated from the others and was killed. The point at appeal was whether the riot and the subsequent killing were to be considered legally as one crime, as the Nigerian Supreme Court had ruled, or two, in which case those appealing could not be found guilty of murder as well as riot in the same process. The Supreme Court verdict was upheld, and the appeal dismissed.



Cecil inspects a guard of honour, perhaps to mark the opening of a court session

Two days later, the case concerned the unlawful killing of a woman, in 1943, by a traditional doctor. The woman was suffering from stomatitis (mouth infections) and the doctor had given her three injections of his own patent remedy, at her request. The injections were of a mixture containing bismuth, used today in some indigestion medicines. In a statement, which he later repudiated, the doctor had said 'I did give injection to one Owerri-Aba woman in the year 1943, as I was passing by the road. The woman was very sick. She said she had tried many other injections. I did not agree at first, but she compelled me. I warned her very seriously, still yet she said I would not be responsible of whatever might be the result. I told her that she would pay two shillings when she got better, or to leave paying

anything if she did not recover. I did it by favour.' The woman died after the third injection, and the post-mortem showed bismuth poisoning.

The doctor then disappeared for two years but was arrested in September of 1945, when he made the above statement. He had now repudiated it, changing his defence to say that he had given the woman no injections, and that her family had taken action against him out of revenge in connection with another matter.

Was the doctor guilty of criminal negligence, and so of manslaughter, as had been found at the case's first hearing in Aba, a verdict upheld by the Supreme Court?

The WACA judges were not convinced that the judges at previous hearings had seen all the issues clearly, but agreed with their verdicts, relying on a British case of 1859, which had established that although anyone, trained or not, may administer medicine, 'if a person takes on himself the responsibility of attending to a patient when he is not qualified for the purpose, and uses a dangerous drug, he is bound to bring skill to its use; if his education or employment make the use of the dangerous drug amount to a want of skill, and the patient dies, the person administering the drug is guilty of such criminal negligence as amounts to manslaughter.'

In addition, we learn that certain drugs, those requiring 'the most skilful handling', might be used only by those doctors licensed by the medical authorities to do so, which the accused was not. 'The prosecution should have adduced evidence that the accused was unlicensed,' said Cecil and his two colleagues, as it was a further ground for his conviction.

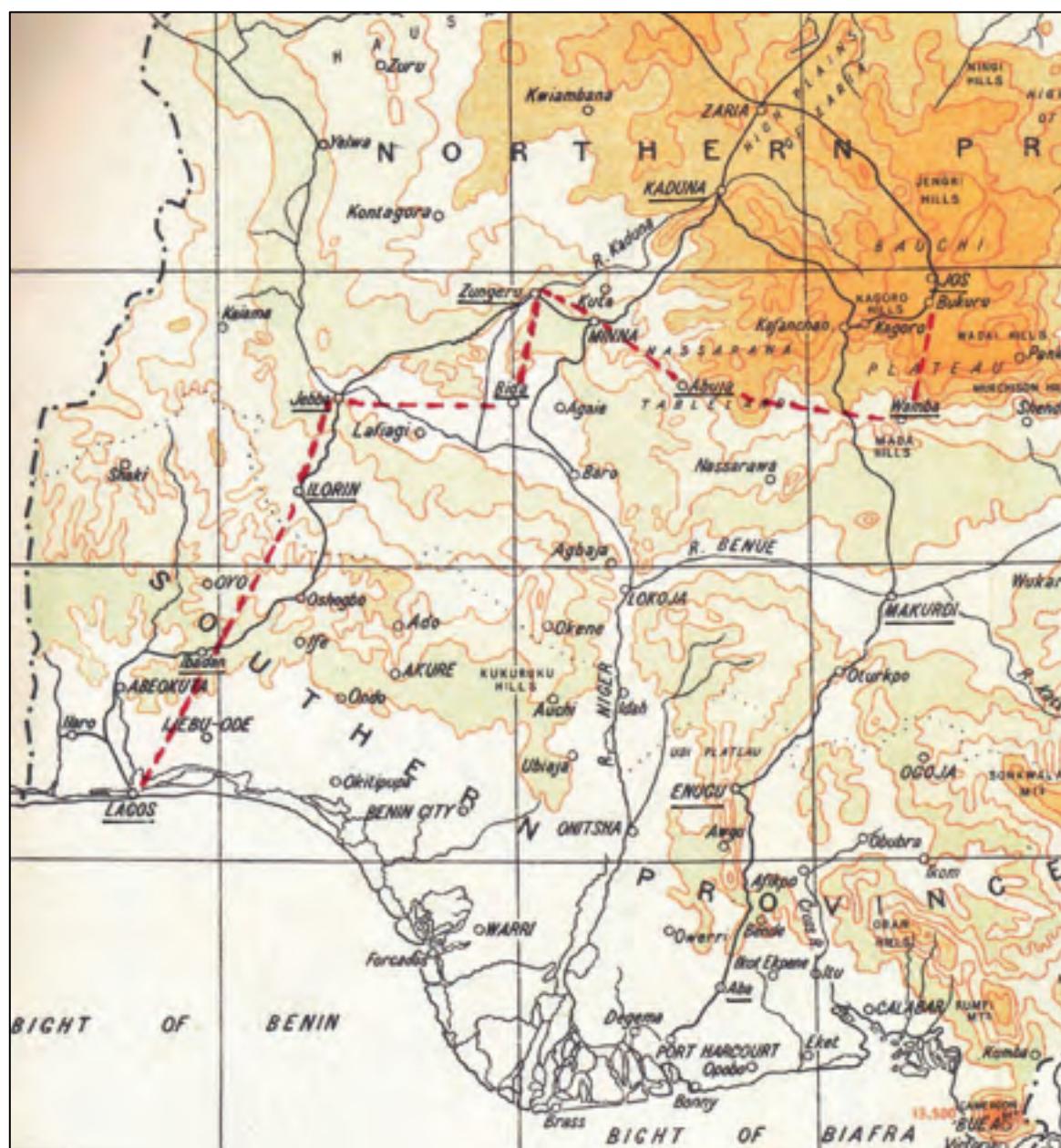
For those who were still dissatisfied with the outcome of their case, one final layer of the appeal system was left, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, a court manned (literally so then) by three UK Law Lords. This was a step requiring determination as well as the money to pay one's lawyer, but some went that way, and those verdicts too are included in my volumes.

The work of a judge could involve research far into the night as well as prolonged absence during the day. What did his wife do in these periods? She had almost no household duties, the social round among the British wives in Ikoyi had limited appeal, and Lagos' sticky heat discouraged any physical exertion. Painting was a good solution, and Jean painted flowers.



20 Incident at Abuja

Cecil was at home with us in the UK on leave from Christmas 1946 until June 1947. Towards the end of that year Jean joined him again in Nigeria. Two days before Christmas, they set out to drive from Lagos to Jos, a journey which Jean later turned into a talk. 'Planning a 770 mile journey [today estimated at 450 miles] by road in Nigeria involves a great many questions... How far is it between supplies of petrol? ... Will the local rest house be an empty mud hut commonly used by sheep and goats or an up-to-date bungalow with beds, mosquito nets and a bath? Is it true that in the last 200 miles several bridges are down and the road closed? What about food supplies over Christmas?'



Map of west and central Nigeria, showing Cecil and Jean's 1947 route in red

There was no government car this time, as it was not an official trip, but Cecil's own modest vehicle, which had to hold sheets, pillows, blankets and towels, a saucepan (forgotten, they later discovered) kettle, bucket and washing basin, two hurricane lamps, a four-gallon petrol can, a picnic basket with cutlery, a dozen tins of milk, many other food tins and a large cake. They took one servant with them, but Cecil drove.

They went north-east, crossing many waterways en route. Jean comments on the variety of their bridges, 'a few being first-class structures in metal and concrete, some small sturdy affairs ... with perhaps an S-bend to add interest, and about ten which were non-existent, having been swept away during the rains or in the process of being rebuilt. Having seen the under-structures of several from the crossing of dry riverbeds on makeshift roads – apparently half a dozen vertical tree branches pushed underneath some planks – my first reaction was to get out and walk over all such bridges.'



The river Niger at Jebba, painted in 1948 by Maurice Fiévet

They later bought a French artist's painting (above) of the river Niger at Jebba, near where it too was crossed by a great, and well made, bridge.

In the rest house at historic Bida they spent a night on the floor, using the cushions from the armchairs as mattresses. Jean admired Bida's handsome red mud walls and gateways which enclosed the compounds {family residential units made up of individual huts) and on another occasion she painted a similar scene, as below.



Jean's painting of a town such as Bida

As they continued north the next day, they met signs of bushfires: 'the blackened bush covered many miles and a leaping flame and column of smoke brought hawks hovering over the stampeding small animals breaking cover. Sometimes, too, it brought the young hunters from the villages with bows and spears hoping to add something tasty to the pot. Monkeys loped across the road and trees with few leaves, but clusters of sealing wax red flowers decorated the scene.' She later painted such a tree (below).

They had a late breakfast at the rest house in Zungeru before turning east towards Minna, where they were able to treat themselves to the 'civilised comforts' of hot baths, cold drinks and lights one could read by. It was Christmas Day. The following morning, they learned that the Zungeru rest house had been burnt to the ground, its thatch set on fire by sparks from the railway nearby. They continued south-east and towards evening they arrived at Abuja, now capital of Nigeria and home to more than two million people. It was very different in 1947:

'One District Officer, with a handful of miners and missionaries scattered over the countryside, is the only European in Abuja, and the affairs of the district are in the hands of the Emir, who, in spite of the remoteness of his realm from all modern innovations, has been to England and speaks some English. The nearest shop for European stores is ninety miles away at Minna...

'The top of a small hill linked with the town below by an avenue of mango trees provides space for several bungalows and rest houses, set in grassy compounds with flowering trees and spacious views in all directions. Our home for three nights, like the one at Bida, was a cavernous barn intersected by mud walls, furnished with a few chairs, a chest of drawers made of petrol boxes and two very comfortable beds, the "spring" mattress made of interlacing rope knotted to the frame, and the mattress filled with soft raw cotton. We slept without mosquito nets and were glad to pull a sheet and blanket over us in the fresh upland breeze.



Jean's painting of a tree with flowers of sealing-wax red?

'We found an ingenious shower bath fitted into the corner of a back room. The thick mud wall was about twelve feet high and a petrol drum was poised on it, with a small pipe fitted with a tap and sprinkler running from it. The drum had to be filled by hand and this

necessitated a ladder from the adjoining room. The water fell onto the cement floor, and was contained by a small cement wall across that corner of the room, flowing away through a small hole in the wall, plugged by a cement sausage. A block of cement at the side suggested the luxury of a bathroom stool, but we preferred to think that there was one flaw in the ingenious idea, namely that the inventor found he couldn't turn on the tap without standing on something!

'The remoteness of the kitchen was something of a problem, as it was about fifty yards from the living room and what cooking was done had to be constantly supervised. The stove consisted of a mud shelf under the chimney, flanked by two petrol tins with the openings facing forward, one of which had an improvised door. There was an ancient grid laid precariously across between them. Moonlight lit up the outdoor dining table, as well as a lamp. And it was pleasantly cool and peaceful ... with an occasional distant burst of drumming to emphasise the stillness.

'The peace, however, was rudely shattered on the second night by a visit from a thief, who found the moonlight equally helpful. He apparently came to a conveniently low window in the bedroom and surveyed our sleeping forms and the position of the suitcases, hardly unpacked... He waited till the moon had set and removed one suitcase and bag to the far side of the sitting room and then came back for the rest. This time his foot touched a piece of paper and we both woke to hear a thud outside and the pad of running feet. The light of a torch showed a suitcase was missing, and while I tried with shaking fingers to light a refractory lamp, wondering if within the shadowy rooms a partner in crime might still be hidden, Cecil was running the car round the hilltop trying to find the watchman, who finally emerged sleepily from a sheltered nook, having heard nothing. The missing case and bag were then discovered in a dark corner, untouched, and everyone went to sleep again.

'The following night the Emir, whose traditional hospitality had been outraged (and who assured us it must have been a stranger!) supplied us with a special policeman who not only wakened us at intervals with a sepulchral cough, which at least assured us that he was doing his duty, but when at about 4.30 a.m. Cecil went to wake our boy to light the fire [to make tea] for our early departure, he was challenged by the policeman with a spear at his chest!

'The Emir also sent us as a gift a paw-paw larger than a football and about two dozen eggs, both gratefully accepted but not easily packed for a 200-mile journey on poor roads...'

They were almost out of petrol when they reached Jos, but I assume the eggs arrived safely as they are not mentioned again.

Jean stayed on in Nigeria into 1948, and there were other travels, as evidenced by the occasional date or place name she put on her paintings. The picture below has '1948' in the bottom left-hand corner. To the left of the house is Cecil's red Singer car, almost certainly the car they used for their Christmas journey to Jos. The house I take to be another rest house, from an occasion when there was time for Jean to paint.



A rest house (?) painted by Jean, dated 1948 by her, showing Cecil's red Singer car

Cecil's junior colleague and friend, Mr H O Mohammed, in the letter he wrote to me in 1977 after Cecil's death, remembers travel with him on court business. 'Except when his wife wished to accompany him on tour, a thing she very seldom did, he did ... his travellings by train and in most cases on hired lorry... In such vehicles there were only two seats in front, one for the driver and one for what they call a 1st class passenger. All other passengers sit on benches or on luggage at the back.... Those sitting at the back were soon covered with dusts to the extent that they looked as if they had bathed themselves in grey or brown flour. But your father never agreed to sit in front all the way. He used to order ... that I should sit in front for one hour while he sat at the back with others. After every hour he and I must change... He was entitled to travel in saloon car as other Judges but would not do so just because, as he said, his clerks, messengers, domestic servants etc. had to travel on lorry so, in his view, he alone could not travel in comfort when others were not.'

21 Back to Lagos

Cecil's official life as a judge was now firmly based in Lagos. He was near the top of the Nigerian judicial tree and frequently acted, or deputised, as Senior Puisne Judge when the post holder was on leave, and as Chief Justice of Nigeria for periods in 1948 and 1950.

In 1948 the opening of the Lagos Criminal Assizes was duly reported by the local press:



His Honour Mr C G AMES, Acting Chief Justice, just before inspecting a Guard of Honour at the opening of the Lagos Criminal Assizes on Monday last. With His Honour in the picture are Mr T V W FINLAY, Commissioner of Police and Mr A A DEAR, Assistant Superintendent of Police; the latter was in charge of the parade.

That year I joined my parents in Lagos for my school's summer holiday. I was now 8 and I flew, by myself but not quite on my own, as one of a little group of children going out to join their parents. We sat in the plane's front seats, where the cabin staff gave us a great deal of their time and attention.



It was the same house in Ikoyi. My parents had acquired another parrot, a West African grey, as in 1939. They are not the most colourful of birds, but the soft greys of their body feathers set off to advantage their fine red tails, and they are intelligent and highly sociable. This one never really mastered my name, despite my mother's best efforts to teach him, but whether in his cage or hopping around outside (his wings were clipped so he could not fly), he seemed to me then to be quite happy as he kept a keen eye on the household's comings and goings, commenting loudly from time to time. He enjoyed extracting peanuts from their shells with his beak, making a great mess in the process. In the evening a cloth was put over his cage and he went to sleep with extraordinary suddenness.

What did we do during those two months? Photos show us by the sea, and on a picnic outside the city. There was some shopping in the big dark Lebanese-owned shops which seemed more like warehouses. Sometimes we joined the large and predominantly African congregation for Evensong at Lagos Cathedral. I remember watching insects catch the light as they flew in through the glassless windows, and the hymn singing, which could be electrifying. My mother's godson, working at a teachers' training college further north, came to stay. A party, with donkeys to ride, was laid on for me (on extreme left below and now with my hair in plaits). I assume it was to introduce me to some other children, but I don't remember any follow-up occasions. What has stayed with me is the house and its lagoon-side garden, with brilliantly coloured flowers, zinnias, cannas, bougainvillea and what my mother called the musical bush, because its greenish-white seeds were like the minims of musical notation.



Summer 1948, a party with donkeys, one led by Jennifer (left)

We had five servants as before, more than enough, but I faintly remember a day when with a sigh my father took on a sixth, to be assistant gardener, knowing the post to be quite unnecessary but unable to refuse the plea for employment. What did they all actually do? Cook and gardener are self-explanatory, but what about Sabo and his two assistants? Life in the tropics imposes its own constraints: I imagine that shopping was done daily, and probably house and car cleaning too. And there was all the laundry from our frequent changes of clothing in the tropical heat. In many households the entertainment of guests at dinner or drinks parties would also keep the servants busy. But in Cecil's house, parties

happened infrequently; he drank little and did not enjoy such occasions, limiting himself to gathering a few people together for drinks before dinner when politeness and reciprocity required. He had good friends among his colleagues, African as well as British, and preferred a quiet chat with them to the social small talk of the white community in Ikoyi. So the starched white table napkins which stood by our places at dinner, folded origami-fashion into decorative shapes, went largely unappreciated.

We travelled home by sea as a family, towards the end of September, which meant that I went back to St. Christopher's after term had started. To my complete surprise and horror, I found I had been moved up not one year but two, into a class which had already settled in and could perform feats of mental arithmetic of which I knew nothing. But I weathered the shock, found in the new group my first real friend, and school began to be more fun.

At Christmas that year we had a Nigerian visitor, pictured below with one hand on my shoulder and holding a bunch of holly in the other. We are outside Bath Abbey, where a helpful poster supplies the date. I don't remember him, but he will have come to the UK for some course of study. He may perhaps stand for the many Africans whom Cecil encouraged to work for higher qualifications, and, if necessary, to do so abroad, which at that time usually meant the UK. Practical help was sometimes needed, and my mother used to say that if he had set out for Africa wearing a warm winter coat, he tended to come home without it.



Outside Bath Abbey, Jennifer and our Christmas visitor, who holds a bunch of holly

22 Giving it up

From 1948-50, Cecil continued as a judge in the Supreme Court, with regular appearances in the West African Court of Appeal.

It was arduous work. The cases to be decided in these highest courts had only come this far because they turned on fine points of law which were capable of more than one interpretation. They required research, thought and, no doubt, where there were three judges deciding the issues as in the West African Court of Appeal, discussion.

Mr Mohammed had accompanied Cecil in his touring days and comments on his habits of work: 'He worked almost round the clock... When we were travelling on the court circuit, whenever he found that accommodation provided for me was unsatisfactory, he always asked me to share his... I usually went and still go to bed at 10 p.m. and in most of the time I was sharing a room with him, when I woke up at 2 or 3 a.m. I saw him writing his judgment or studying the cases he was going to try the following day.'



Cecil in full ceremonial dress

In the spring of 1950, he acted as Senior Puisne Judge, and in summer as Chief Justice. In June, he sent me this photo-card of himself in wig and robes, with his face looking, he said, 'like a squashed orange'.

But in August he retired, and left Nigeria. What had happened?

Because of the perceived health risks to Europeans of life in West Africa, the British working there could retire on a pension at 50. Cecil was nearly 53, so it was financially possible, even if a pension taken so soon was a small one. But there was more to it than that.

According to Mr Mohammed, ‘He would have been appointed to the post of Chief Justice if he wanted. Although I did not discuss this point with him, I learnt from reliable sources that the post was offered to him but he declined to accept it. In fact, according to my informant, that was one of the reasons why he decided to retire from the service voluntarily. Knowing him as I did, the story could be true... He hated publicity and attending official parties. Anybody holding the post of Chief Justice could not avoid that. He did not like living in Lagos because he disliked crowded city life. He liked country life.’

That might well have been enough to bring him home, for he was quite capable of making major decisions unilaterally, as subsequent events showed. But I think that in this instance Jean would have encouraged him in the direction in which he was moving. She enjoyed his status in Lagos more than he did, though she disliked the city’s humid heat, but as a colonial wife she had no role in her own right, not even a domestic one, since Sabo was manager there. For her, as for many other British wives in West Africa, Nigeria had been an interesting experience, but she would not be sorry to return now to life in Britain.

There was also the question of my education. In 1950 I was 10 and still at my boarding school in Burnham-on-Sea. Much nearer to Bath were two good girls’ senior schools which offered weekly boarding. But Jean had been to a day school, South Hampstead High. Bath had a sister school on the same foundation which took girls from 11, and arrangements were made for me to take the entrance exam and to start there in September 1950.



Jennifer in St Christopher's school uniform

Cecil arrived in the UK on 21 August 1950, giving England as his ‘country of permanent residence’. To welcome him home, I helped my mother hang out the bunting left over from the 1945 Victory celebrations from the top windows of Weymouth House.

23 Starting again

There followed a difficult period, in which the exact sequence of events is not always clear in my memory, but whose cumulative impact I do remember.

Cecil had been well paid in Nigeria, but after a relatively short working life, his pension was modest. He was in need of some sort of job to boost our income, and had perhaps assumed that he could revert to the family trade and slot into a firm of solicitors without difficulty. But he failed to find a firm in Bath to take him on, and the note paper he had had printed, headed 'C. G. Ames, Solicitor', remained unused. He looked further afield and for a time worked in a legal firm in Marlborough, but that meant staying away from Bath during the week. He also got involved in the running of his local church, but it was not enough, and his new life felt incomplete.

In his early fifties he was a fit man, having come through the inevitable bouts of malaria and other tropical illnesses without serious damage. It was true that he lived with the migraine headaches he had inherited from his mother, but that was a familiar visitor and not a killer. He had plenty to give still, and towards the end of 1952 he approached the Colonial Office to see what they could offer him. The post of Colonial Magistrate in the Gambia was vacant, and he took it immediately. Did he discuss what he was doing with Jean? My mental storyline says he did not.

It was arranged that my mother and I should live on his pension, and he on his earnings from the new job, so my mother's first action was to move to a smaller, cheaper house on Combe Down, near where she had lived for a time in 1942 after Bath had been bombed. And on 19 February 1953, Cecil arrived in the Gambia, marked in red on this 1952 map:



1952 map of West Africa showing the Gambia in red

The Gambia was by far the smallest of the British colonies in West Africa, just a narrow sliver of land running inland for 300 miles either side of the river Gambia, and in places as little as 15 miles wide. Its geographic position on the Atlantic coast downriver from the Sahara had made it an ideal trading post, not least for the slave trade, and from the fifteenth century on it had attracted European merchants. France and Britain in particular had conducted a long struggle for supremacy in the area, which had ended in 1889 with the British retaining the land along the river within the much larger surrounding French area of Senegal. A post in the Gambia was not a great career move, and for Cecil it never compared with Nigeria, but it was Africa, and that was what he wanted. It grew on him, so that in 1962 he could write that he had come to feel ‘a great fondness for this funny little country.’

The capital, Bathurst, (Banjul), on the coast, was the only town of any size, and for a while he lived there at the Atlantic Hotel, an arrangement which relieved him of the responsibilities of running a house and the staff who went with it, and enabled him to use its central position on the Marina to get to know the town and some of its people. They were a mixed community, with strong French connections, and on this occasion, rather than learning a new African language, he chose to brush up his French. The Anglican cathedral was important in his life: as well as becoming a member of its council, he found a good friend in its bishop, Roderic Coote. Bishop Roderic was a composer of light music in his spare time, and he encouraged Cecil to buy one of the new ‘record-players’ to keep him company after the day’s work was done.

For the job of Colonial Magistrate was less demanding than those he had done in Nigeria. It has been hard to define, as it disappeared without trace even before the Gambia’s independence in 1965, and I think my father must have been the last person to hold the post. It was a relic of the 1902 division of the country into a ‘Colony’, the original European settlements, consisting of Bathurst, Georgetown (150 miles upriver) and a few other small areas, and the ‘Protectorate’, which was all the rest. The job of the Colonial Magistrate had historically been to represent the lower courts in the areas of the Colony. But given the small numbers involved — a 1963 Government publication gives the Gambia’s total population as 326,000, of whom 40,000 lived in or around Bathurst — and the increasing irrelevance of the distinction, perhaps by 1953 his sphere extended to the whole of the tiny country.

Be that as it may, he put plain ‘Government Official’ as profession in his new passport. He was a good bit more than that, but, importantly, junior to the colony’s single judge, who represented the Supreme Court and was also Chief Justice.

However, already in December 1955, during his second tour of duty, he appears as an acting judge in the case records of the West African Court of Appeal, at a session held in Bathurst when three judges were needed who had not been involved in the previous hearings of the cases. Two flew in from Sierra Leone but Cecil was there on the spot to be called on, and for the next nine years his passport shows his regular presence at the Appeal Court's sessions, staying in the various capitals two or three times a year.



Cecil stands on the steps of the house on the Atlantic coast at Fajara, Bathurst

At some point, perhaps early 1957, coinciding with the return to the UK of Bishop Coote and a plan to have me visit Africa again, he moved into this house at Fajara, then just outside Bathurst and on the coast to the west of the town. Its living quarters were on the first floor, and in the picture above, Cecil stands at the bottom of the external staircase. The garden, an area of rough grass and scrub (pictured below) ran down to an empty beach of clean, cream sand, and a sea stretching west to the Caribbean.

24 With Cecil in the Gambia

While Cecil was establishing himself in Bathurst, Jean and I remained in Bath, where I was now at day school. Following the sale of the Bickton guest house, my grandmother came to live with us on Combe Down. She was now 86 and suffering from cancer, and Jean's sister Mary took a room nearby so as to continue as their mother's companion and carer. My grandmother's death in March 1954 brought to an end an unsettled period, and life became more predictable: I continued at Bath High School and my mother stepped up her involvement in the Bath Guild of Social Service. Cecil came home on leave from the Gambia from time to time and, when he was away, weekly letters kept us in touch. In 1955 we moved house again, further into the city centre, to a new house off Bathwick Hill.

By July 1957, I had done my 'A' Level exams, but was still under 18 and so entitled to travel at government expense to join my father abroad. My parents saw this as too good an opportunity to miss, both economically and for my wider education, so at the start of the school summer holidays, I boarded a very small (by today's standards) plane to Bathurst.



Fajara



Yundum airport at Bathurst did not then have a concrete runway, and larger planes had to land at Dakar, 110 miles up the coast in Senegal. My plane was light enough to land at Bathurst, but the limited capacity of its fuel tanks meant that it needed to refuel every three hours or so. For this reason, it flew at a low level, below the clouds, and the view from my window seat was spectacular. We came down first in Spain, then at Tangier in North Africa, where we spent the night. I got swept up in a little group of British passengers for a walk in the town and a taxi journey out to the caves of Hercules, full of bats; I remember their smell, and their mewing sound as the guide's torch woke them. Next day it was on to Agadir in Morocco, before an unforgettable flight south following the west coast of Africa, its outline clear between the blue of the sea and the yellow of the Sahara.



The fort in the desert at Villa Cisneros

Our next refuelling point was in what was then Spanish Sahara, at Villa Cisneros, a military post in what is now the disputed area of Western Sahara. There we seemed to come down onto the sand and stones of the desert itself. I took a picture (above) of the fort nearby, which apart from the tiny airport building seemed to be all there was, with the desert extending to the horizon. As we stretched our legs outside while the plane was refuelled, an approaching group of men on camels became gradually visible in the glare of the light, all swathed in white robes and turbans. Alas, just as they came close, the plane was ready to leave for its final hop to Bathurst, where my father met me and took me his Fajara house.



I was due to take university entrance exams during the following term, so had brought with me some Latin to read, and this I did during the mornings when my father worked on his papers, standing at the chest of drawers he used as a desk. His job entitled him to a policeman on duty at the house (his 'messenger') and he worried that there was almost nothing for him to do. So, since I had never learned to ride a bike and might well have to do so at university, he was given the job of teaching me, running me up and down on the empty beach below the house, a perfect surface to learn on, though I don't recall falling off. For swimming, there were safer beaches elsewhere; here the open Atlantic could be treacherous, with ten-foot-high waves and strong currents, and one had to be very careful.

It was the rainy season, and in the middle of most days, torrential downpours blotted out the view, and brought down ripe fruit from the mango trees in the town, which then lay abandoned in a slippery mess on the pavements. The heat was damp and sticky and sometimes I was grateful for two baths a day in the brown water which came out of the taps. (For drinking, it was boiled and stood in jars in the fridge until the sediment had settled.) But the rain clouds also produced the most sensational sunsets, and to watch these, the European residents along that part of the coast stopped whatever they were

doing at seven o'clock and settled down with a drink, often in groups with neighbours, to enjoy the half-hour spectacle of shifting shapes and colours as the sun set over the Atlantic.

Cecil had a car, which was kept in a garage under our first floor living quarters; I was told off on one occasion for leaving the passenger window slightly open overnight, which meant that the next morning the car was full of mosquitoes attracted by its dark, warm interior. The car meant my father could show me various aspects of the country that he found interesting, – the women doing most of the work in the fields, the fishermen with their boats further up the coast and, at my request, the mounds made by termites, taller than he was.



Farming and fishing around Bathurst

Cecil's single full-time employee at Fajara was Almami Daffeh; he was no Sabo, but Cecil worked hard at their relationship. We visited his home village of Sukuta, where his family were present in large numbers, except for the newest, baby Jenufa, named after me, who was then being cared for by a relative in another village. Below is the picture I took of my father with Almami and members of his family outside his house. Women are just visible in the shadows on the right.



Cecil and Almami (back row, right) with his family, women in shadow on extreme right

Cecil had arranged for me to accompany him on tour during my stay, which in the Gambia meant going upriver, in this case to Georgetown, about 150 miles away. We had a cabin on the top deck of the regular service ferry, the 'Lady Wright', named after the wife of a former governor of the colony, and left Bathurst in the late afternoon. At first the great river Gambia was too wide to see anything other than the mangrove trees along the banks.



But the following morning we became the postal and delivery service to each village on our route, stopping at jetties crowded with expectant villagers, and, it seemed, all the local children, who waved and whooped as the boat tied up. It took the best part of that day to reach Georgetown.

My picture below is from *The Times*, which in 1975 sent a reporter to make a similar journey on the now ageing 'Lady Wright' to mark the Gambia's first ten years of independence:



We stayed for two nights in the government rest house at Georgetown (below left) a simple but entirely adequate bungalow, where I think a local cook saw to our meals. There were visitors, some bearing gifts which included a live chicken, and Cecil talked about the difficulties that could arise if a magistrate or judge accepted such presents. Below right he sits on the steps of what I think became the court building the next day. He had brought with him a court clerk or two, and there was perhaps an interpreter, but it was all a long way from the formality of the Supreme Court.



Georgetown: The rest house and, possibly, the next day's court area, Cecil seated on steps.

The journey downriver was quicker, with fewer stops. I spent much of the time on the bow deck, on which one of the passengers was lying completely covered with a blanket, and I remember my father explaining that this was what the Africans did when they were seriously ill or dying — though he assured me that the likelihood was that this man was 'only' going through a bad bout of malaria, with which he could sympathise, having suffered the same himself.

Also watching the river go by was one of the junior court clerks, nineteen-year-old Lamin Jack, who started a conversation with me about our respective lives and hopes for the future. He came from a family of silver filigree workers, of whom there were and are many in that part of West Africa, but was ambitious to be its first academically educated member. I wonder if he succeeded. I remember much fellow feeling as we both looked forward into the future, and the jolt I registered as I noticed his chipped crimson nail varnish, something that no young man I had met would have worn. I later received from his family a silver filigree brooch in the shape of a flower, which I still have.

It occurs to me now that Cecil probably took the house at Fajara with my visit in mind; it was a large and quite lonely place for a man living on his own, and he soon moved back to a recently built flat in Bathurst, where there was more to interest him. Several loose photos from this period show groups of young footballers and there are church occasions too, with Cecil walking in procession through the streets in the black gown of Chancellor of the diocese. The priest now in charge at the cathedral was another music-lover and wrote to me in 1978 remembering evenings they had spent together listening to music. Cecil's eclectic collection of vinyl discs grew, bought locally from what was available; he particularly liked music that went straight to the heart, and the Caribbean songs of Harry Belafonte could bring tears to his eyes of an evening.

He remained in the Gambia, for another year, acting as Judge and Chief Justice when the sole judge went on leave, and as one of the three West Africa Court of Appeal judges when required, before returning to the UK in July 1958, at the end of a five-year contract.

25 A year in Sierra Leone

But he had not returned for good, and was back in West Africa, in Freetown this time, on 17 January 1959. He had taken on a new job, as 'Commissioner for the Revision of the Laws of Sierra Leone.' It turned out to be the first of several similar commissions, and he remained in Freetown until the end of November, living at the Paramount hotel, with one visit to Bathurst for an Appeal Court hearing.

What did the new job involve? It seems that as new laws are passed, older laws covering the same area are usually not repealed but left on the statute book, which therefore over time accumulates enactments which are 'obsolete, spent, unnecessary or which no longer serve a useful purpose', to quote a writer of 1856. So Cecil's job was to remove such items and prepare a revised edition of the remainder. In the age before computers, the process began by cutting up the books containing the current laws, and then pasting the parts to remain onto new sheets, which were then printed, proofread and finally put before Parliament for approval.

The whole laborious business was completed within the year and the revised laws were printed in London by Waterlow and Sons. They ran to nine volumes, for sale at the very considerable price of 24 guineas each, and came into force on 1 January 1960.

Cecil travelled home on M.V. Apapa,(below) the ship on which I had travelled with my parents in 1948. This time, when he arrived at Liverpool on 1 December 1959, he gave his country of 'intended future permanent residence' as England, as he had done in 1950.



26 Changing times

'Permanent' residence does not, however, mean 'all the time', and he returned to West Africa twice in 1960 for sittings of the Appeal Court. For the October sitting Jean went with him to Freetown, and possibly also to Bathurst, after more than ten years in the UK, years which had seen huge changes in the European colonial empires.

In West Africa, by the end of the 1950s, all Britain's colonies were moving towards independence. Jobs in the Administration previously done by British ex-pats were increasingly done by Africans, a process my father thought entirely right and proper. All the colonies' institutions were affected, and the West African Court of Appeal (WACA) was no exception. When Cecil had rejoined it as an acting judge in 1955, it was still serving all four British West African colonies, but from December that year Nigeria dropped out, having established its own Federal Court for appeals. That left the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, with (in 1956) six judges, full or acting, three Africans and three Europeans, one of the latter being Cecil. But in March of 1957 the Gold Coast became independent Ghana. With only two countries remaining, WACA changed its name to 'The Sierra Leone and the Gambia Court of Appeal', and on 1 July 1960, the London Gazette carried the Queen's appointment of Cecil as its President.

From about the same date comes my first colour photo of him in procession with his two fellow judges of appeal, both Africans, and the full spectacle of their ceremonial robes is now revealed: brilliant red trimmed with gold for the cape and gown, and a broad panel of gold satin on the sleeves.



The appeal judges process, led by Cecil as president

Nigeria joined Ghana as an independent country in October 1960. Sierra Leone followed six months later and in his capacity as Appeal Court President, Cecil was one of those invited to Freetown for the occasion. Its central event was the ceremony in the new Parliament at which the Duke of Kent delivered the Queen's message welcoming independent Sierra Leone into the Commonwealth. The Illustrated London News, a serious magazine which supplied a photo-orientated take on the week's news, chose the occasion as the lead story for its edition of 6 May 1961, giving the scene in Parliament a full-page spread, with Cecil just visible. 'The ceremony was attended by over 1000 chiefs and representatives from overseas', it writes. The extensive celebrations included a State Ball at Government House, and, I think, a formal parade through the streets, for this photo of Freetown's Law Court building shows the balconies crowded with spectators looking outwards and the three Appeal Court judges, robed, standing forward in front of the main entrance, Cecil in the middle.



Freetown 1961: the Law Courts during independence celebrations, with the three WACA judges standing on projecting balcony, Cecil in the middle

27 Return to Nigeria

1961 was a busy year for Cecil, though I was little aware of it at the time. It began with a holiday in Spain with Jean in February, an Appeal Court session in Freetown lasting five weeks in March and April and a return there for the independence celebrations at the end of April. He was just able to fit in my graduation ceremony in Cambridge before returning to Freetown for another court session for three weeks from the end of June.

But on 16 August he arrived at Lagos. He was back in Nigeria.

Nigeria had gained independence on 1 October of the previous year, as a federation of five self-governing regions, the North as previously defined by the British, and the South divided into four regions, Western, Mid-Western and Eastern, with Lagos itself separate as Capital Territory. It was the Eastern Region which had now commissioned Cecil to revise its laws, and it was to Enugu, its capital, that he travelled in August 1961.



Jean joined him there. In the autumn of the previous year, she had gone with him to Freetown for the Appeal Court's first sitting with Cecil as President, as I discovered from a single small photo with a printer's date of Nov. 1960, which shows them walking barefoot by the sea on Lumley Beach, one of Freetown's beauty spots. Now she decided to revisit Enugu; it was, after all, where they had been married twenty-three years before.

She took her watercolours, but used them only first thing in the morning, as she found Enugu's

inland heat very trying. Just before Christmas I got engaged, and she wrote, for the first time, to Anthony's parents, my future in-laws, with whom I had been staying. She wonders, she says, as she sits doing nothing in the stifling heat, if Anthony and I might follow her godson and choose to teach in West Africa, since we were both then doing a year of teacher training; she has heard that independent Nigeria will continue for some years to need Europeans in cultural and technical jobs.

When she returned to the UK in April 1962, Cecil went back to his regular letter writing and I have the seventeen letters he wrote to me that year from June to December.

He barely mentions the law revision, but often comments on world news as brought to him via the Overseas Service of BBC radio, though reception in Enugu is poor. His other source of information is *The Times*, which arrives in batches of three or four, to be retrieved several days after publication from a box at the local store. He is shocked by the atrocities carried

out in Algeria by right-wing French terrorist groups on the eve of the country's independence, and amazed at the American Venus probe, which he says looks a 'ramshackle' affair, with its 'spindle like pieces sticking out here and there'. He cannot see why we need to 'probe' something so far away.

He writes about the books he has been reading, which have included the New English Bible, a translation of the Bible into modern English just out in an edition for the overseas market in countries whose mother tongue is not English. He has read it right through except for the book of Revelation, 'which I have never been able to get on with, too many strange animals with too many limbs'. He likes the new translation, 'much better for the modern generation', and has bought extra copies to give as presents, but he foresees, correctly, that it will not be the preferred version for many African Christians, who may feel that the Bible's force is undermined by changes to its text.

He has, however, been able to discuss the nature of translation itself with the two African Christians in his office, the senior of whom, his clerk Mr Bernard Orakwe, is a Roman Catholic, 'who would not of course be supposed to read it', a comment coming from a time when Latin was still the official language for Catholics, though that was about to change. Was Mr Orakwe given a Bible? It is not quite clear.

Below, Okon



The second member of his office staff is a young man by the name of Edet Okon Nduonyi, known as Okon. I believe the picture here is of him. Officially he is Cecil's messenger, but since there is little for him to do in terms of going to the Post Office or sweeping the floor, jobs chosen by Cecil to give me an idea of what a messenger might be expected to do in 1962, he has plenty of time to study, physics mainly, as he is doing a four-year engineering course at the local technical college, where he attends the last of the day's three shifts, starting at 5 p.m. He has good handwriting and can type, so he also enjoys helping from time to time with clerical work in the office. His non-work reading is Agatha Christie, for which he keeps the office dictionary handy. As a practising Christian, a Presbyterian from the south-east of the country, he has now requested and been given one of Cecil's New English Bibles. Okon is lucky, says Cecil, to have a job which gives him time to study as well as

paying his college fees, but 'I also am fortunate in having him'.

The third (or second?) recipient of a bible is Cecil's 'outdoor servant' who does the gardening but also cleans the car and Cecil's shoes, and runs errands. He is Victor Bokkos, an eighteen-year-old from the north near Jos, and 'a very keen Baptist', Cecil has been told.

The other person working for him is his steward Musa, a friend of Sabo, so a Muslim from the north. His health is not good and Cecil worries about him, wondering at one point if he is being affected psychologically by someone's ill will towards him. At the end of September he writes of a recent incident:

'On Friday, Musa went to the railway station to see off a friend going to Bauchi and taking the parrot which Sabo had asked him to buy for him (they, parrots, are not obtainable in the North, as they come from the rain forest). The train was due to leave at 6 p.m. By 7.30 p.m. no sign of Musa, and a terrific downpour at 6.30–7.00 and still raining at 7.30 quite heavily, and so I set about getting supper. I have a one-hotplate Baby Belling cooker with oven underneath. I heated tomato soup on the hotplate and put some eggs and cheese in the oven and turned everything on full. While I was dishing up, Musa came in, absolutely dripping and shrammed [a "southern English dialect word", I find, meaning "shriveled"] with cold'. Musa's normal route back from the station had been flooded and was impassable, so he had had to go a long way round. 'Heavy rain in the tropics comes down from the upper cold air so quickly that it has no time to warm up and comes down cold, sometimes as hail. I was so concerned with sending him off to bed with a large mug of hot tea and Aspro, to get him under the blankets, that I forgot to turn off the switches on the cooker, until next morning when I came into the pantry to plug in the kettle for early morning tea. I felt heat coming from the kitchen and then noticed the switches. I opened the oven and it was red at the sides and at the bottom. We did not need to use the hotplate until after midday, when we found it would not work.'!

Sabo himself had stayed two nights with him a few weeks before, on his way home to Bauchi from Lagos, and had told him that one of his wives had had a baby just before he left home. He has now written to say that on his arrival home he found that each of his other three wives had also given birth during his absence, so four new babies had all arrived within a month! Cecil comments that not all Muslims can afford the permitted four wives, so ten years on from Cecil's leaving Nigeria it seems Sabo is doing well.

Also from Bauchi has come a letter from Hassan, a native of Ouagadougou in what is now Burkina Faso. Now old and unwell, he had worked for Cecil as cook for six years in his early days as a DO, when touring was done on horseback, and Cecil remembers Hassan's spectacular expertise on a horse.

In November, events 40 miles away at Nsukka have caused quite a stir: Nigeria's first fully independent university had been opened there in 1960 and Cecil and Jean had attended an honorary degree ceremony while she was in Enugu. Now it has temporarily sent all its students down, for 'riotous misbehaviour'. The flashpoint has apparently been the poor

quality and overpriced food; one day each student had been given a single plantain (a type of banana) for breakfast, as part of a day's food for which they had paid a full sixteen shillings. Cecil has been to a dinner party hosted by a government inspector of education who has given him the latest information and told him that at the moment riots in schools too are 'quite the thing': 'if your school has been going for three years without a riot, well, your school is no good and loses face,' she said. Fortunately for the Nsukka students, all but 17 are being allowed to apply for readmittance.

Not all his work was law revision, however, nor was it all in Enugu. In mid-September he is preparing to travel by lorry, with Mr Orakwe, Okon, and the office equipment, to Obubra, 90 miles to the south-east and the other side of a river. It is 80 miles by road to the ferry crossing, on roads liable to flooding after rain, and he doubts if by the time they have loaded up the lorry they will catch the last ferry, due to leave at 11.30 a.m. he has heard. But it seems they managed it, and he is back in Enugu a week later.

It then emerges that he has been conducting the official enquiry into some unexplained deaths at the end of 1959. 'It was undoubtedly a case of cannibalism. It still happens in West Africa from time to time. We had one, on appeal, in Freetown two years ago. I went to the 'cannibal' town, — not all cannibals of course, and the incident is now extra-ordinary. It was a pleasant town, looked quite normal with a Presbyterian school at one end of it.' In his next letter he writes with more of the details, seeing the occurrence as a rare throwback to former customs, the result of a land dispute between two communities.

While he is concerned with Obubra, he has not forgotten that I was about to start my first teaching job. 'I remember my own beginnings on such occasions – a mixture of excitement and apprehension. I have always been apprehensive and somewhat doubtful as to whether I could do the job I was setting out to do...' but 'I have come to the conclusion that any such apprehension is unnecessary, because one would not be going to the new job unless the people sending one there were satisfied that one could do it: and so I have always found it to work out. I mean that I have been able to hold the job down.'

The sittings of the Appeal Court in Sierra Leone and the Gambia also take him away from Enugu and his passport for this period is thick with stamps, but air travel up and down the coast was far from streamlined. It was run by several different companies, and two or three days were needed to get from Enugu to Freetown or Bathurst, with always a stopover at Accra in Ghana. In July his plane from Enugu to Lagos was three hours late leaving because the beaten-earth runway at Enugu was unusable after heavy rain, so that at Lagos he missed his connection to Accra. But he was put on a Comet which had flown from Cairo to Lagos via Khartoum and Kano, and for this final leg of its journey to Accra he had the fun of being its only passenger, and was able to read the latest edition of the 'Egyptian Gazette', an English language paper he had last seen in Cairo in 1919!

28 Talking about it

He came home for Christmas 1962, a period of leave interrupted by an Appeal Court session in Bathurst the following March. Then he was at home in Bath for my wedding in April before returning to Enugu in June and remaining there until the launch of the revised Eastern Region laws on 1 October 1963.

The last stamp in his passport for this period shows him leaving Bathurst on 3 December 1963, where, it turned out, he had agreed to do a third law revision, this time for the Gambia. But he was 66 and not surprisingly beginning to feel that the time had come to slow down and this time a Gambian came to Bath to help him with the proofreading process. The laws were brought in on 1 July 1966, eighteen months after the Gambia had become an independent country.

In July 1965 Cecil was made a Knight Bachelor by the Queen for services to the Commonwealth. His friend and colleague, Sierra Leone's Chief Justice Samuel Bankole Jones, received the same honour, and we are all pictured outside Buckingham Palace in the photo on my Preface page.

But he had decided that his life would now definitely lie in the UK, and later that year or in 1966 he resigned from the Presidency of the Sierra Leone and the Gambia Court of Appeal. Did his resignation have anything to do with a diagnosis at about this time of 'petit mal', a minor form of epilepsy, following a collapse while visiting us in Bedford? Possibly.

I had pictured this retirement as the end of his work on the Appeal Court, but his smallpox certificate shows a revaccination in the Gambia in November 1967, suggesting that he was still available if needed to make up the trio of judges required for the court. Perhaps he took the opportunity while he was there to stroll down to the waterfront at Bathurst, his favourite part of the town, to see what was doing there and chat to the fishermen and bystanders. He kept this postcard:



Back in Bath, and now more or less retired, he found himself invited to speak on West Africa to a variety of groups, from church fellowship meetings to the local branches of the Royal Commonwealth Society and the United Nations Association. He prepared carefully for these occasions and enjoyed doing so, aiming to send his audience away with a better understanding of the countries he loved. I have his small folder of notes just as he left them; they are strong on history, geography and current developments, with personal anecdotes often frustratingly allusive, just the name of a place or person that will trigger a particular story. They are undated, and he reworked much of the material over time, but from internal dating clues they appear to run from 1961 to the early 1970s. He had a small collection of visual aids too, maps and charts, to go with his talks, and a few special photos, all in the same format, which I have used in this chapter. They seem to date from his time in the Plateau Province, two being of the market at Bukuru, just south of Jos, 'on a hot afternoon.' The one below shows Sabo being shaved by a barber.



One of the pictures used by Cecil in his talks, 'Sabo being shaved.'

Up to a point he adapted his material to the likely previous knowledge of his hearers, sometimes starting from what seems a very low base. What did they know already about Africa? Probably only that it was a continent of palm trees, mud huts and black people, he suggests. This last item gets corrected immediately: not black people, just people. And 'you could not find a more likeable people ... in any part of the world'. As to the mud huts, they are there 'not because the people are 100 years behind the times but because they are the cheapest [form of housing] and very nice.'! I suspect he really did think that. Perhaps his mind went back to the beautifully crafted huts he had admired in the Plateau Province, though he spoke as someone who for the second half of his career had occupied the substantial and convenient government accommodation that went with the job, like 'Our house at Jos' below, which I take to be where I stayed in 1946.



Another of the pictures, 'Our house at Jos.'

He sees much to admire too in the community-based traditions of tribal society. It is a classless society, he says, because 'the land is owned communally, and there is only one class, the landed gentry. Everyone is a landed gentleman.' And the extended family acts as a kind of welfare state for its members. 'Persons whom we would regard as very distant relatives or not relatives at all are all members of the extended family', and though individual wealth varies, kinship helps to spread money out among a wider group.

The extended family stands for 'shared responsibility, unlike Western individualism', and operates to allocate the use of family land, to fund the education of its brightest members, to give a home to the children of 'others who have more children than they can provide for', and to care for the elderly and the unemployed. Things are changing of course, he says, and the rise of an educated and highly paid elite living in the towns is already building a class structure. But 90% of West Africans are still poor agriculturalists, dependent on the land, even if 'the traditional society of the extended family has moved with the times, and nowadays they have secretaries and even minutes of their meetings.'

In a talk dateable to 1961, he looks at the struggles for independence bringing 'disorder and bloodshed' to other parts of Africa and sees 'orderly progress' taking place on the west coast, due to the absence of foreign settlers. The mosquito has acted as a powerful disincentive to settlement, he says, even if, with the cause of malaria discovered in 1890, the area is now 'as healthy as anywhere in the tropics.' In addition, 'in British West Africa, land law generally prevents non-Africans acquiring the freehold of land.'

But the continuing poverty in the rural areas which make up 90% of these countries he sees as the fault of successive British Governments from the earliest days of British colonisation, who paid only lip service to the good intentions of mutual benefit as set out by Lugard.

'Interested only in trade, and not prepared to lay out money on development', they had decreed that the colonies must pay for themselves. 'Of course Colonial Governments did develop their colonies as far as their revenue allowed, but mostly to improve the quality of the raw materials for export (groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil, hides and skins, for example)' with 'better roads and railways to get them to the coast, and better education and health services to supply administrative needs'. Not until the period of the second world war 'did the UK adopt a more beneficial or practical [he uses both words on different occasions] kind of trusteeship, and begin to finance various schemes', to which, since independence, other countries have also contributed.



'Bukuru Market on a hot afternoon and no customers'

The 'orderly progress' which Cecil saw in 1961 did not last long, and in a talk dateable to about 1966 he could look at the fourteen independent states of West Africa and find only one, the Gambia, with 'a party system on the Westminster model.' The trend towards one-party states he sees as another outcome of the underdevelopment of the colonial period, which has left the newly independent ex-colonies with inadequate revenue from their mainly poor, rural economies, too few well-educated people and not enough technical knowhow. Now that they are trying to catch up with the rest of the world, strong governments seem the best fitted to tackle the many needs arising, not least of which is to create a sense of national unity in states formed out of many disparate tribes. And a further element in the situation, he says, is the fact that Africans in general 'consider democracy the least efficient form of government', and see an opposition party not as an alternative, 'but as an attempt to sabotage the efforts of the government'.

He is not uncritical of some policies of the new governments, such as their extravagant building projects to replace perfectly serviceable British structures, but he has made a list of many common products, from window frames to patent medicines, which he is delighted to say are now made in Nigeria rather than imported as previously. He takes pride too in the integrity of the judges, ‘who have carried over into independence the tradition and practice of impartiality and fearlessness’ which they learnt from their British predecessors.

Nigeria in particular went through a number of political convulsions after independence, of which the most devastating was the civil war which broke out in 1967, when the Eastern Region attempted to break away from the federation and establish itself as the independent state of Biafra. Military action by the federal government to stop this happening was eventually successful, but only after three years of bitter and bloody conflict. The coverage of the war in the quality British news media whipped up emotions in the UK too: people took sides and raised funds in support of Biafra after reports of starvation there. An informed and impartial presentation of the issues was needed, which Cecil was able to give, having spent eighteen months in Enugu only five years before the war broke out. I have the 24 pages of his preparatory notes on the subject.

He admires the enterprising Ibo (Igbo) people, the largest but by no means the only tribal group in the east: they are ‘remarkable people... Whatever they take up they make a success of... They have acquired technical skills of all kinds’ and ‘have spread all over the country’, especially the north, ‘where all the best jobs were held by Ibos’. The result is that they are widely disliked, a resentment leading to violent clashes and then to the attempted breakaway and war. He understands how it has happened, but points out that the high density of population in the east means that its inhabitants have great need of continued free access to other parts of Nigeria for work and for settlement. It is therefore in their interests to remain in a federation, while it is in the interests of the national government for the oil revenues of the coastal areas in the east to be available for the benefit of the whole country.

A loose sheet which has lost its original context compares the attitudes of the various European powers who had had colonies in West Africa. Of the British, he says they had had ‘a somewhat patronising affection for the people’, but, unlike some of the other colonial powers, did not see them as ‘without culture or civilisation’. On the contrary, the British made use of the Africans’ cultures and traditional forms of government and ruled through them, the ‘indirect rule’ of which Cecil had been a part. He had also, of course, shared in British efforts to learn more about African societies, as in his book on the Plateau Province. Was his affection for the peoples of West Africa patronising? I think not, or, if that is how he had started out in 1922, he had moved rapidly on, to become both confident in their ability to manage their own affairs and convinced of the need for them to do so.

29 Outpost of Empire

An unexpected postscript concluded Cecil's career. It had nothing to do with West Africa, but concerned a group of islands in the south-west Pacific, then called the New Hebrides, now Vanuatu. They were still in 1970 a dependent territory, but, most unusually, administered jointly by both Britain and France as a 'Condominium'. This state of affairs had come about because French settlers and British missionaries had both, but separately, established themselves on the islands, joining the indigenous New Hebrideans. It meant the creation of parallel British and French Administrations, with all specifically national government posts duplicated by each nationality, plus further posts for the services administered jointly such as the marine regulations or the postal services. There were British laws for the British and French laws for the French, in English and French respectively, plus a third body of law, the Joint Regulations, in both languages and applicable to everyone, for the common services. As may be imagined, the situation could lead to complications.



Around 1970, the Joint Administration had decided to do a reprint of the islands' laws and regulations, not a revision, just a reprint. Cecil, who, as well as revising, had read and corrected the proofs of three sets of West African laws, was asked to read the proofs of the islands' British laws, being printed in London by Eyre and Spottiswoode. This he was able to do part-time from his home in Bath, earning £250 in the process.

In March 1974 the British Resident, or Governor, of the islands writes to ask if he will now do the same with the English language version of the Joint Regulations, and, if he can, how much would he suggest as a fee? Cecil accepts and suggests a very modest £400. As to the present state of the Joint Regulations, the Resident does not beat about the bush: 'There

has been no revision of the text in either language, although the printers have been asked to correct spelling errors, there being a good number of these in the English texts as printed'. They will amount to about 750 pages, he says, plus 150 pages more of indexes and tables. A native French speaker will be found to check the French version.



I think he wanted the job. By 1974 Jean's health was becoming a concern, and to make life easier for them both, at the end of 1973 they had moved to a newly built flat in the mews behind Pulteney Street, quite near their first Bath home off Laura Place. Here he is with Jean on the balcony of their new home. By the spring of 1974 they were settled in and Cecil was ready to welcome something to do that he could combine with looking after Jean.

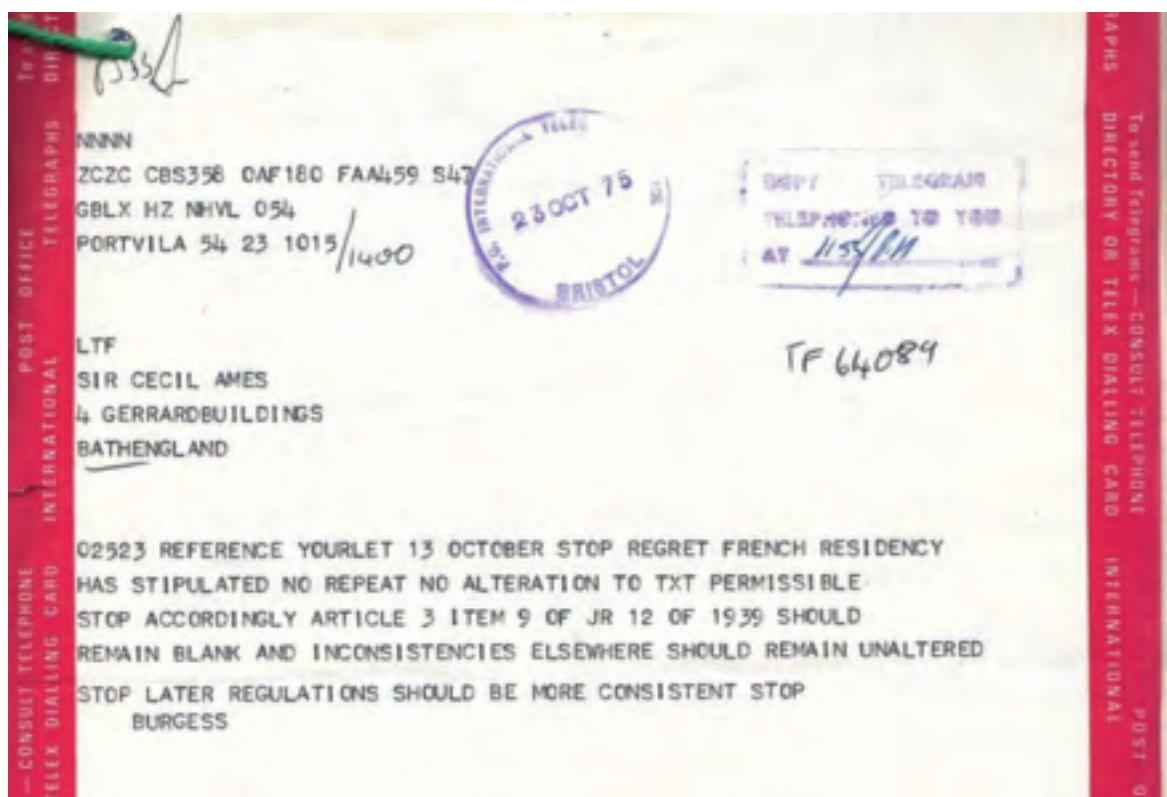
By an extraordinary coincidence, he found that a lawyer cousin of my generation, with whom I had overlapped at Cambridge, was then in the New Hebrides. Simon had

gone there as Crown Counsel but was now acting as Attorney General. He was able to give Cecil a behind-the-scenes view of the islands, which are, he says, 'a lawyers' paradise'. 'Although the service is run on a shoestring (we are very much a backwater in the Pacific), the legal work is most interesting. British law, largely frozen at 1961, for the British (which for this purpose includes Australians, New Zealanders and all ex-colonials) French law for the French and ex-French colonials', and the Joint Regulations, now to be Cecil's concern, for administrative matters. 'Non-British, non-French immigrants or visitors such as Germans or Americans have to opt as to which system of law they wish to have applied!' And the original New Hebrideans had the further choice of customary law for civil matters in the lower courts.

Mr Mothersill, Managing Director of Eyre and Spottiswoode, writes to Cecil in July 1974 'I am delighted to hear that we will be dealing with you on this work as it takes a long time, to say the least, to get answers from the New Hebrides.' 'I think it is the worst manuscript that I have ever seen. The editing is non-existent, and I foresee considerable difficulties in producing it to our normal standards.' As well as correcting the spelling mistakes, his typesetters are going to have to cope with the fact that some pages are photocopies of manuscript in poor handwriting. He is going to ask the Resident for more money, and will not be starting work until he gets it.

Eventually the extra money was reluctantly agreed, printing began and Cecil started work on the proofs. He found much to correct, and became increasingly concerned at the amount of interpretation he was adding. By October 1975 he has reached the 'Dangerous Drugs Joint Regulation No.12 of 1939', which in para.3 of the exemptions included 'Ammoniated

Liniment of Camphor ... 30'. Thirty what? He has checked the French version, but that too has a blank at this point. What word should he supply? He writes to ask Mr Burgess, the British Resident Commissioner and gets a rapid reply in the form of the telegram below: 'REGRET FRENCH RESIDENCY HAS STIPULATED NO REPEAT NO ALTERATION TO TXT PERMISSIBLE'.



So that was that. Cecil never discovered what measurement the '30' referred to, and he had to undo all his corrections. But in a mood between exasperation and amusement that so much money, time and effort was being spent on a text so full of errors, he has an idea, which he tries out on Simon: he has made a list of what he calls the 'imperfections' in what he has read so far. 'Would such a list serve any useful purpose at your end?' he asks. 'Yes', replies Simon. 'Although we are unfortunately unable to touch the Regulations as they are now being printed, it may well be possible for us to produce a general Regulation making all the necessary amendments.'

In March 1976 Mr Mothersill writes: 'The French reader ... has decided to rewrite the material. I have never seen such corrections'. For Cecil's French counterpart had pressed ahead with his corrections regardless of the original terms of the reprinting and had so far achieved 456 pages of corrected proofs. He now writes to the French Embassy that he has made probably some 15,000 to 20,000 corrections; he has not, however, altered the punctuation, 'pretty well incoherent throughout', and only corrected what was

indispensable to a clear understanding of the text. Also, he says, 'I have scrupulously respected the errors of grammar, merely restoring a few articles or pronouns forgotten here or there.' He estimates about 10,000 lines of type will need resetting.

When Cecil writes to Simon in April, he points out that his French counterpart seems to have had instructions differing from his own. Two months later, Simon apologises for the slow reply: they have been very busy, he says, and he himself has been away on a commission of enquiry in the Solomon Islands. He says he understands 'that the French proofreader did not adhere to his instructions and that as a consequence the text has had to be proofread a second time!' But despite the delay, the British Administration is still hoping to publish an amending regulation to deal with the imperfections pointed out by Cecil. In November he writes that they have now received three advance copies of the newly printed Joint Regulations. 'They appear to be most satisfactory, and many Condominium officials will no doubt be pleased to have before them a complete set!'

It took more than a year and two reminder letters before Cecil received his £400, due to an 'oversight in the Condominium Treasurer's Office', but he was finally paid in mid-June 1977, a few weeks short of his eightieth birthday.

By then the Joint Administration was probably preoccupied with other issues. Back at the

end of 1974 Cecil had enquired about the future of the islands. Simon was about to go on leave, but replied that radical change was finally coming. 'At the long overdue ministerial meeting held between the appropriate Ministers of France and England at the beginning of November a programme of reform was agreed. This includes a representative assembly (powers and functions yet to be decided) and unification of the legal system. It is intended to attempt to graft English legal procedure onto a penal code following the Code Napoleon. Other measures will include land tenure reform and greater efforts to unify the administrative structures. All in all, it looks as if I shall be very busy when I return in June!'

The New Hebrides became the independent Republic of Vanuatu in July 1980.

The Father Christmas on Simon's New Hebridean Christmas card of 1975 seems to have caught the island atmosphere.



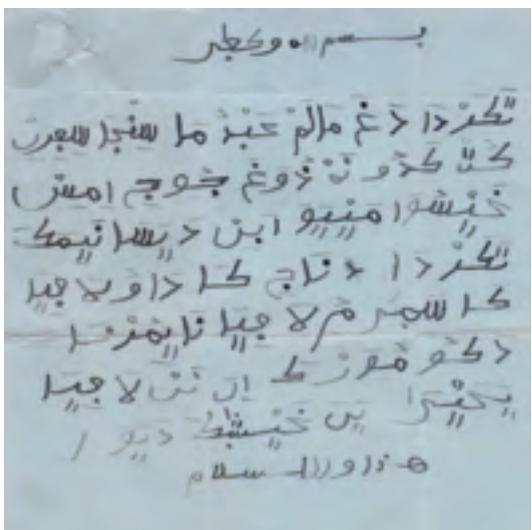
30 Last things

Cecil's involvement with the New Hebrides ensured that his working life continued part-time throughout his final years. But he was busy elsewhere too. He carried out a review for the Bath Law Society to bring up to date the numerous Bath charities. As we have seen, he spoke to various groups on West Africa. He joined the Conservative party. He read *The Times*, writing the obituary of a former Sierra Leonean colleague. Jean took *The Guardian*, and their papers' differing treatments of current events made for plenty of conversation. As always, he played an active part in the life of his parish church, once again St Mary's, Bathwick, where I had been baptised in 1940.

His letter writing continued, even if the arthritis in the arm wounded in 1918 meant he often had to write with his left hand. His correspondence with friends and former colleagues in West Africa kept him well informed about what was happening, and he kept their letters. There were many changes, as jobs that had been apparently secure were lost, especially in Nigeria, where one government rapidly succeeded another. Writing to a newly appointed Chief Justice of the Eastern Region at some point after the end of the Civil War in 1970, Cecil wants to know what has happened to his 1963 revision of the region's laws: was it scrapped in the reorganisation which followed the war? No, he is told, 'we use it here every day and are often grateful for its clarity'.

There are plenty of letters from Africans too, his most frequent and punctilious correspondent being Mr H. O. Mohammed, to whom I owe many details of my father's life. And Cecil in turn used him as an example, in a talk on names in Nigeria, because Hassan Omar Mohammed was, unexpectedly, a Christian. Born in 1914 to a Hausa Muslim family in Northern Nigeria, he had been one of the boys brought up after his father's death by a remarkable Christian medical missionary, Dr W. R. S. Miller, who saw no need for a change of name when the boy was baptised. Hassan worked with Cecil as a legal assistant from 1946, and remained a friend thereafter; in 1964, when he was doing a course at Oxford, he spent Christmas with my parents in Bath, attracting much attention by the splendid Hausa costume he wore to church.

At the end of 1975 he writes to reassure Cecil that he has been unharmed in the latest coup, though he has lost his job. By the following year, however, he is working on the public accounts committee for his state, and on the National Health Service panel, a post which has brought him to Europe, though without the chance of visiting Bath again. In 1977 his work travels take him to China, USA and Canada and his name in the letter heading on his notepaper has acquired an MBE. He feels that Nigeria is developing very fast, and that much of it is good.



It was he who translated for me a small page of Arabic which I found in my father's desk, a lengthy Islamic greeting, 'in the name of the most merciful God', on Cecil's return to Kaduna from leave, welcoming him back and wishing him well. He was even able to identify the handwriting as that of Audu Zaria, a respected senior messenger to the Supreme Court in Kaduna. According to Mr Mohammed, Cecil would have easily read and understood the message, perhaps the last he received from Audu before the latter died.

Mr Mohammed thought the world of my father and gave me more instances of Cecil's good qualities than I have been able to include here. I discovered later that he had himself lost his wife two months before Cecil died, but he set aside his grief on her account to attend to me. I owe him an apology in that I have not smoothed out his written English as he asked me to do if I ever quoted him; forty years on, I prefer to hear the authentic voice of a man for whom English was a third language after Hausa and Arabic.

His story raises a question. Cecil was, in his retirement, an interested and active member of the local World Faiths' Forum. Though personally a practising Christian, he had lived and worked with both Muslims and pagans. What did he feel about the complex impact on African culture and society of Christian missionaries and their schools? It was a topic that, though fairly new then to discussion in the UK, had been an active issue years before in the Nigerian colonial administration, where some of the British, though a minority, opposed the work of the missionaries, seeing its potential for destabilising the indigenous peoples. One such had been H. R. Palmer, governor of Northern Nigeria during Cecil's time in the Plateau Province. For his part Cecil saw plenty of good things in traditional African society: polygamy, for example, opposed by the missionaries, protected widows within the extended family. But the missionary schools had been and still were important providers of education (European style, of course), and he was definitely in favour of that.

He continued to read about Africa, books on African history before Europeans arrived, on the European exploration of West Africa, and contemporary thinking on the fast-disappearing British Empire. He made notes for talks on the mapping of the river Niger, and on the history of Christian missions along the coast, being specially interested in the freed slaves whose settlements on the coast of Sierra Leone eventually became Freetown, and in those of them who became ordained as the first African ministers in the church. I remember him often with a book on his knee, sitting thinking.

But he remained active and generally fit, if a little absent-minded, on a frugal and increasingly vegetarian diet. He shopped at the health food store in Green Street, which stocked the charcoal biscuits and plain yogurt that he liked, while my mother continued to make him his favourite 'cakey puddings', which she and the rest of society were fast abandoning. He had the occasional brush with the Bath hospital, from which on at least one occasion he discharged himself as soon as he felt better and walked home.

He went back to Israel, the scene of his soldiering 50 years before in WW1, on a tour with Jean of the Christian sites of the Holy Land, and from there he visited Petra, which he had long wanted to see. There were other retirement pleasures too, not least seeing in his two grandchildren the stages of their growth that he had missed with mine.



In January 1976, he became ill with influenza and Jean caught it from him. She died in a Bath nursing home on 24 February, and I saw him age after she had gone. They had been often apart, but had drawn together in their final years.

Cecil had long ago provided for his own care in old age, should that be needed, determined that I should not have to look after him as his sister Hesper had had to care for their mother. But in the meantime, while he was still able, he set about rebuilding his life, entertaining friends at home with simple meals and visiting others away from Bath. In particular he was able to see more of his sisters Des and Hesper, the latter now living once again in Frome. Des's husband had died just before Jean, and she welcomed her brother's more frequent presence in her life. So it was with his two sisters that he celebrated his eightieth birthday on 5 August 1977 by watching the Somerset county cricket team play at Taunton. We spoke to him from Scotland where we were on holiday, and he marvelled that his granddaughter had caught a fish. He died in his sleep twelve days later, on 17 August.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my parents for what they did not throw away when they downsized to a flat. Their photo albums and Jean's watercolours moved with them, and Cecil kept papers relating to his life story, some of his law books, two old passports, books on West Africa, letters and a lot of picture postcards. He was a tidy person, and everything was in good order for me to find. He must have wondered what I would make of it all after he had gone: he could not have foreseen the internet, and the way it has enabled me to fill some of the gaps in his story, but I hope he would approve my use of what he left me.

In addition, and in the order of their appearance in the text, I have used the following books:

The Nigeria Handbook, containing Statistical and General Information respecting the Colony and Protectorate, compiled in Lagos and Published by Authority, 10th edn 1933.

Symbol of Authority, the British District Officer in Africa, Anthony Kirk-Greene, 2006.

Tales from the Dark Continent, edited by Charles Allen, 1979.

The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, F. D. Lugard, 1922.

Gazetteer of the Plateau Province (Nigeria), compiled in 1932 by C. G. Ames, printed 1934.

The *Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, republished in London in 1972, has Cecil's book as its fourth and last volume, and introductions to each volume and to the series by Anthony Kirk-Greene.

The Northern Tribes of Nigeria, an ethnographical account of the Northern provinces of Nigeria, C. K. Meek, 1925.

The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria, S. J. Hogben, 1930.

The Golden Bough, a study in magic and religion, Sir James Frazer, 1925 edn.

A Concise Law Dictionary for students and practitioners, P. G. Osborn, 1927.

Nigeria: Law Reports, Vols. XIV, XV, XVI, XVIII, XIX, 1938–50.

Selected Judgments of the West African Court of Appeal, 1946–49, 1950–51, 1955, 1955–60.

West African Law Reports Vol. 1, 1956.

African Discovery, Perham and Simmonds, 1942.

West African Explorers, C. Howard, 1951.

The Travels of Mungo Park, ed. R Miller, 1954.

The Colonial Reckoning, Marjorie Perham, Reith Lectures 1961.

A Start in Freedom, Hugh Foot, 1964.

For a more recent view of the historical background, I have consulted a variety of sources, but in particular

African History, A Very Short Introduction, John Parker and Richard Rathbone, Oxford 2007, and

Ghosts of Africa, Britain's Legacies in the Modern World, Kwasi Kwarteng, Bloomsbury 2011.

I have learnt much from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, 1958, *No Longer at Ease*, 1963, *Arrow of God*, 1965, and from '*Half of a Yellow Sun*', Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2006.

The 'Ancestry' website provided some relevant passenger details from the lists of the Elder Dempster shipping company. I have also, of course, consulted many other websites, too many to list.

Letters I received after my father's death from friends and former colleagues, especially Mr H. O. Mohammed, gave me much useful information about my father's life in Africa.

My father's habit of writing his name in the books he bought, together with the date and place of purchase, has been useful, and it has been a pleasure to rediscover my mother's watercolours and find a context in which to share some of them with other people. And I should like to thank the friends and family members who have helped me through the long process of putting it all together.

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Cecil G Ames 1897-1977
in the Gambia, 1957

Jennifer Ridley (née Ames) 2022