GRANNY'S BOOK

'The Land of the Lake'

Part 5

By Mary Brill

Settling into Blantyre and a Growing Social Life

When we arrived back in Nyasaland we were posted to a dingy rest house situated on the banks of the river Shire, it was really awful, not a fit place for a baby so young. I could not take her out for walks in the pram. Thank goodness I was still able to feed her myself. This I did until she was seven months old, she then drank from a cup, she never had a bottle. Reg was out on the river most days from dawn to dusk, I feared for his life on a river full of hippos and crocodiles. The awful mosquitoes drove us mad in the evenings, we could not enjoy sitting out. The evenings could have been so lovely by the river. My saving grace was again our faithful 'Houseboy', Handwatch, without his help I would never have managed at this awful place. Eventually the powers that be saw my plight and we were moved into a bush house in Blantyre. This was a lovely little house just out of town at Michiru. These houses were owned by Hallcrow's (Sir William & Partners) and Ernest Latham (Water Development|) who we had got to know quite well by this time was also living out there and was then joined by his wife Betty. We became great friends (later when Ken was born they became his God Parents). We kept up this friendship over many years until they died in the 80's. We were at Michiru for only a year and then during the riots Reg joined the Nyasaland Police (1953).

We then moved to a lovely old house on Hospital Hill in Blantyre. The children just loved the garden. You could sit on rocks in the garden, which were high above the road looking out onto the town. As the traffic came down out of town it passed through an avenue of Jacaranda Trees which bloomed every October and what a picture that was, just a blue

haze. We spent many happy hours in this house, the scent of honeysuckle floated through the house on a light breeze. It was a wonderful old colonial I louse with high ceilings, a lovely old stoep overlooking a very nice well-established garden. We had a very good cook then called Lapkin, he used to make soup every evening and good meals. Handwatch was still our 'Houseboy' and he looked after the children. It was during our stay in this house that I started working at Mandala Stores, I then had to get a nanny for Maggie but Robert was at school in the mornings. My boss at Mandala was called Bill Lamborn his wife was Ann (who was Robert's teacher) and they had two children, Richard and Tony. We were to get to know this family very well and we met up with them time and time again throughout our lives. I quite enjoyed my work but it was is very tiring, being on my feet all day with no rest in the afternoons. October through December were very hot months and during November the clouds built up for the rains being welcome and bringing relief, especially so for the farmers.

Now that Reg was in the Police we made a lot of new friends. Bob Mushet, Ray Harper and Eric and Norma Bult, who lived in Zomba. Most evenings after work we would go to the Blantyre Sports Club, Reg played cricket and tennis and I played tennis, bowls and

golf. Ann Lamborn and I played golf every Wednesday afternoon, and then on Thursdays we all played tennis. We also used to do quite a lot of fishing in the Limbe Dam and we used to go to Cholo and fish in the Ramans Dam. He was an Indian who had a small estate. He often invited us at the weekend and Ray Harper used to come with us, he was a very keen fisherman. It was great fun and the fish made a great supper. There was the occasion when Reg and Ray planned a day's tiger fishing down at Chiromo on the Shire River, this was not a great success as they spend a whole day in a small boat catching no fish! We also used to enjoy holidays on the Lakeshore, renting a small cottage for a week,

spending most of the days fishing, swimming and sunbathing. These were lovely relaxing holidays. We used to take Handwatch with us to do the cooking and look after us. He loved it; it was a holiday for him. Robert also loved fishing and was really quite good at it. Maggie used to come along with us in the boat. One day when we were out in the boat fishing. Rob caught a fish and was reeling it in when a fish eagle swooped down took the fish carrying it off high into the sky. Rob tried to reel it in but the line snapped and away went the fish and the eagle with Rob’s fish, the line and hook etc. We look back on so many happy days with these wonderful memories.

Maggie had a nanny to look after her while I was at work, but it's hard for a mother to leave a child in the care of others. I always rang up to make sure that all was well. One day while I was working I got a call from Rob to say could I come home quickly as Maggie had fallen and cut her head badly on the corner of our wooden bed. It was lucky that I had the car and was able to dash home to take her up to the hospital and had a stitch put in by the nurse on duty. The worse time was when the children got sick and needed some tender loving care from mum. I was able to get the odd day off from work at these times. So we were coming to the end of this tour and we were now due to go home on leave.

TO BE CONTINUED