



208 Squadron in Kenya

By Peter McLeland

The Cover Picture...

- ...is a composite. The background is a real photograph that I took from a Venom FB4 in 1959. It was taken in the Great Rift Valley over a soda lake called Magadi.
- I was holding my camera on the gyro gunsight and I pressed the shutter release button whenever I thought a good picture was in view.
- It would have been dangerous to look through the viewfinder at this low altitude.

208 Squadron in Kenya

- **In 1959 a Fighter Squadron was formed in Nairobi, Kenya.**
- **It soon acquired the number 208.**
- **I took some colour transparencies during my tour and I have recently converted them to digital images, so here they are...**



Our base for the period that we had Venom aircraft was Eastleigh, Nairobi and this picture shows the officers' mess.



This is the old "Standard Flying 9" motor car that I purchased for £25, shortly after I arrived.



This was taken after some air displays by the formation aerobatic team at Bungoma and Entebbe in Uganda on 4th and 5th December 1959.

Afternoon tea at the Entebbe Hotel...Left to Right, Pete Biddiscombe, Bob Ramirez (Commanding Officer 208 Squadron), George Ord, Paddy Thompson. (our Engineer Officer) and that is a bit of Sam Key's head beyond him.



This is the Entebbe Hotel where we were based for our displays.



Pre-flight inspecting a Venom at Eastleigh.



Tim Cohu climbs into his Venom FB4.



I think I am just getting out.



Somebody drove the Boss's Venom into a storm drain one night when we were practicing night flying!
Nobody was hurt, but I don't think the Boss was too pleased about it.



208 Squadron is older than the Royal Air Force itself...It was originally R.N.A.S. 8 Squadron. So when we got the squadron number we also inherited some very handsome silver.



The Brown Trout Inn, up in the Aberdare hills, North of Nairobi.



Sam Key and myself on one of the very English lawns.
Many of us in those days smoked Players Clippers!



George Ord and Sam Key...We had some friends visiting from 8 Squadron in Aden...



...So we brought them to the Brown Trout Inn for some R&R.
Left to right, Back Row...Barry Raffle, George Ord and Cyril White.
Left to right, Front Row...Mac McLeland, Sam Key and Doug Bebbington.



I can't remember whose car this was but the chaps look pretty weary after their day out.



That hill we are passing is called "Kinangop", which I believe means "Elephant's back".



That volcano in the Rift Valley is called "Ol Longonot".



Liz, Neil and I took this bungalow, outside Nairobi, for our first few months in Kenya.



Tim Cohu on a fishing expedition.



A trout stream up on Mount Kenya.



This is a Kikuyu village up on Mount Kenya and we used to get the young boys to act as ghillies for our fishing trips...This one was on a Mount Kenya river called the Thiba.



This party were more keen to photograph game.
Left to right, Dinga Bell, our Driver, Terry Hill and a Visitor.



A picnic...George and Tamara Ord with son, Nicky and Derek and Sheila Bell.



Tim Cohu scanning for fish, watched by Neil.



Picnic at Thika Falls.
Elizabeth, Nurse ?, Margaret (a friend) and Neil.



The Ords, the Bells, Neil and Elizabeth.
The cars are Dinga's Lagonda and our Standard Flying 9.



The next three photographs are of "Fourteen Falls".



Fourteen Falls.



Fourteen Falls, this one greatly enhanced by the Lady in the Sari.



A view from the "Escarpment", of the Rift Valley with Ol Longonot.



A nice catch of Brown Trout.



A telephoto lens view of Ol Longonot.



An even closer view.



This is Thika Falls.



We are going on detachment down to Rhodesia.

Since Roy Morris is a Rhodesian, he can have special leave in his own country. So he and I are the advanced party for the detachment and are driving South in his MG TF.



I'm not sure about the name of this volcano, but it might be Meru.



We kept the car open all the way so we needed to dress accordingly.
Roy seems to be wearing my flying gloves!



Roy took this one of me, with some pretty hills in the distance.



We crossed a lot of rivers on our very long journey.



The bridges were...



...impressive.



Another river!



There is our shadow on the ground, racing along beside us.



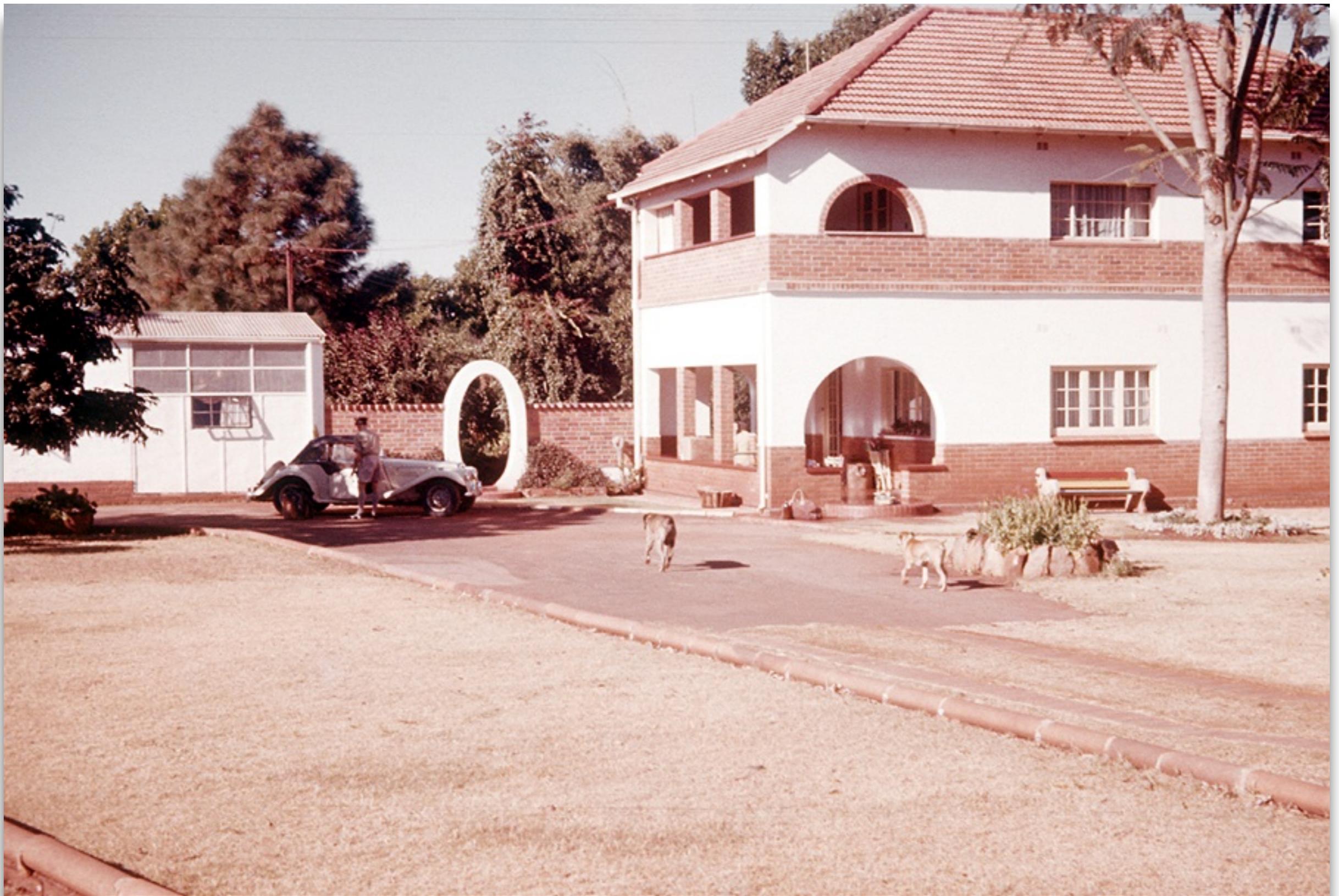
Some children with primitive hoops.



Stopping to top up the petrol tank.



We stayed at this pretty cottage on one of our night stops.



Our destination at Roy's parents home in Rhodesia.



Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.



A Kopje near Salisbury.



While on detachment at Thorn Hill, Rhodesia, we borrowed an old banger to drive down to Bulawayo for some R&R. Unfortunately the engine threw a rod through the side of the block, and here we are broken down at the side of the road and hoping for a lift.
Left to Right: Dicky Brown, George Ord, Des Melaniphy, Sam Key and Alastair Macnab.



Here are some of our Venoms armed and ready to fly "Air to Ground" 20 mm cannon firing exercises on Kutanga Range.



The Armourer's task is pretty tough with the Venom re-arm, as all the work is done lying flat on his back underneath the aeroplane. One of the gun doors is on the ground at the front of the picture and also visible are three Belt Feed Mechanisms (BFMs). The ammunition tank door is open (chap leaning his elbow on it) and a belt of ammunition is stretched out along the wing. The armorer lying down is reaching up to the four 20 mm Hispano cannons above him.



"Mac" McLeland in nonchalant pose...The garters are the leg restraints that would be used, in the event of an ejection from the aircraft, to wrench my legs back hard against the seat and stop them flailing around in the slipstream.



More pictures of the Armourers hard at work.



Here you can see the belt of "ammo" being fed into the "Ammo Bay". The ammunition is belted up "two and two"...The yellow headed rounds are High Explosive (HE) and the White tipped ones are Semi-Armour Piercing, Incendiary (SAPI).



Other things required on the aircraft turn round are Fuel and Oxygen and this shot shows the fuel bowser being used to fill the wings, using over-wing fuelling and to the left is an oxygen trolley, to top up the pilot's breathing supplies.



The Royal Rhodesian Air Force were kind enough to loan us some Vampire T11 two-seaters for dual instruction. Here a Rhodesian instructor (closest to the camera) is about to take Terry Hill on a recce of Kutanga Range.



Here is Kutanga Range from the air...Reasonably easy to find.



A bit of Rhodesian bush terrain!



As well as armament practice on our detachment, we embarked on a goodwill tour and this shot shows a Venom at Livingstone, where we took in the Victoria Falls (pictured later in this presentation).



Here we are refuelling at Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia.



Here we are at Blantyre in Nyasaland.



To end this section on the Rhodesian detachment, a Sunset at Thorn Hill.



208 Squadron at Salisbury, Rhodesia in 1959.

The pilots in the front row are from left to right:-

Alastair Macnab, Terry Hill, Dinga Bell, Tim Cohu, Roy Morris, Dicky Brown,
George Ord, Boss Ramirez, Sam Key, Mac McLeland, Pete Biddiscombe,
Des Melaniphy, Mike Telford, Stu Grieve and Paddy Thompson (our Engineer).



Away in the opposite direction for our next detachment, to Aden and the Arabian Peninsula.

This shot is a rather scruffy beach in Aden.



And this one is in town near Steamer Point.



Steamer Point, Aden by Day.



Steamer Point, Aden by Night.



Two pictures of the North Arabian coast.



North Arabian coast...I can't remember exactly where,
but I took them from the cockpit of my Venom.



I think this might be at Sharjah.

Left to Right: Stu Grieve, Huck Sawyer, Mac, Sam Key and Pete Biddiscombe.



Under canvas at Bahrain.

Left to Right: Tim Riddihough, Alastair Macnab and Tim Cohu.



A bunch of Trucial Oman Scouts helped us to run the range we built at Ras Sadr.



Here is a burst of 20 mm cannon fire, from a Venom, knocking the targets over.



Another burst knocks them all over.



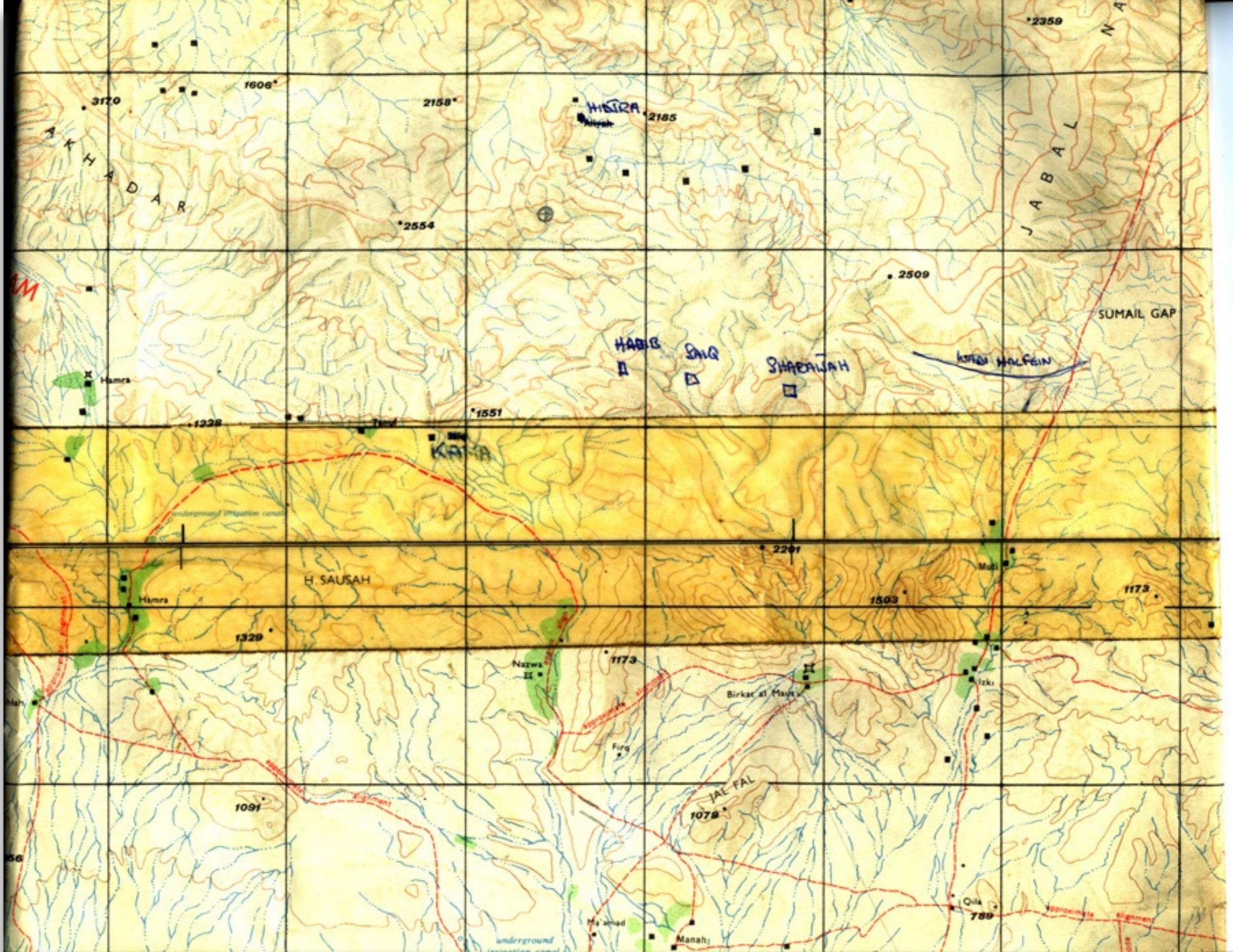
The Scouts stand them up again...You can see the holes made by the "Ball" shells (Solid non-explosive practice rounds).



Here a Concrete headed practice Rocket Projectile (RP) hits the sand just short of the targets.



A Venom makes a low pass over the range before returning to base.



Here is a map that I used to recce the Jabal Akhadar area.



Returning from the detachment I had to ferry a Vampire T11 two-seater, from Khormaksar to Nairobi. It did not have enough fuel for this distance and I'm refuelling here at Mogadiscio...the times were:-
Khormaksar to Mog...2 hours 15 mins and Mog to Eastleigh...1 hour 50 mins.



Back home, and a jar or two with Smithy...I seem to have a fair old tan!



George Ord with son, Nicky and Sheila Bell.



Tamara Ord.



Neil.



Neil.



Neil's pedal car changed from Green to Tractor Red while we were here.



Elizabeth.



Bubbles.



Elizabeth wearing a newly made Cheongsam.



Me at Fort Granite Flats in Nairobi...Our new home since the lease on the bungalow expired.



A Punch & Judy show at Neil's birthday party.



Tamara Ord with Nicky, by the orange tree in her garden.



I think these trees were taken from her garden as well.



Tim Cohu at Nakuru Motor Races.



I used to race my Austin Healey BN1...That's me in number 7 going past...I never won a race but I did get a Second and a Third.



Nakuru Motor Racing Circuit



Drinks outside the Eastleigh Mess Bar...Left to Right:-
Visitor, George Ord, Visitor's Girl Friend, Mike Telford and Terry Hill.



Drinks in the bar...Left to Right: Pete Biddiscombe, Alastair Macnab, Sam Key, Mike Telford, George Ord, ? Miers, and Bebe Sharman.



Picnic in the Ngong Hills...These ladies are Nurses from Nairobi Hospital.



The Ngong Hills picnic...



The Ngong Hills picnic...



Some sort of froth blowing competition!



Looking down into the Rift Valley, we spotted the glint of a distant waterhole...Tim and I took a visual spot to fix our bearing on, as the waterhole vanished from sight before we reached the floor of the valley. Then we marched to find it and here we are congratulating ourselves on success!



The following eighteen pictures are of Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



The chap on the left looking at Livingstone's statue is Sam Key. I think the other chap is from Aden.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



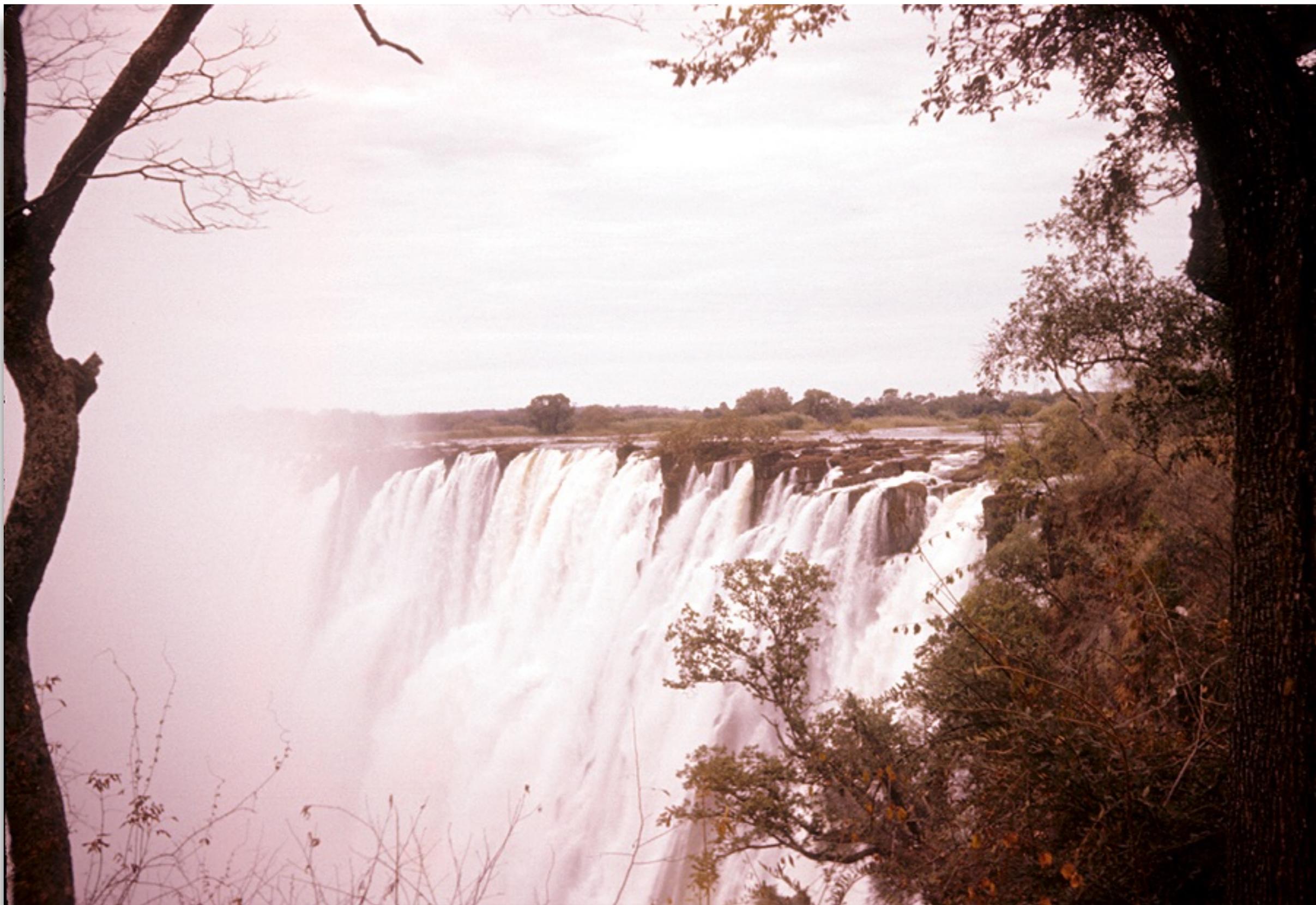
Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



Victoria Falls.



These next fifteen pictures are of the Great Rift Valley.



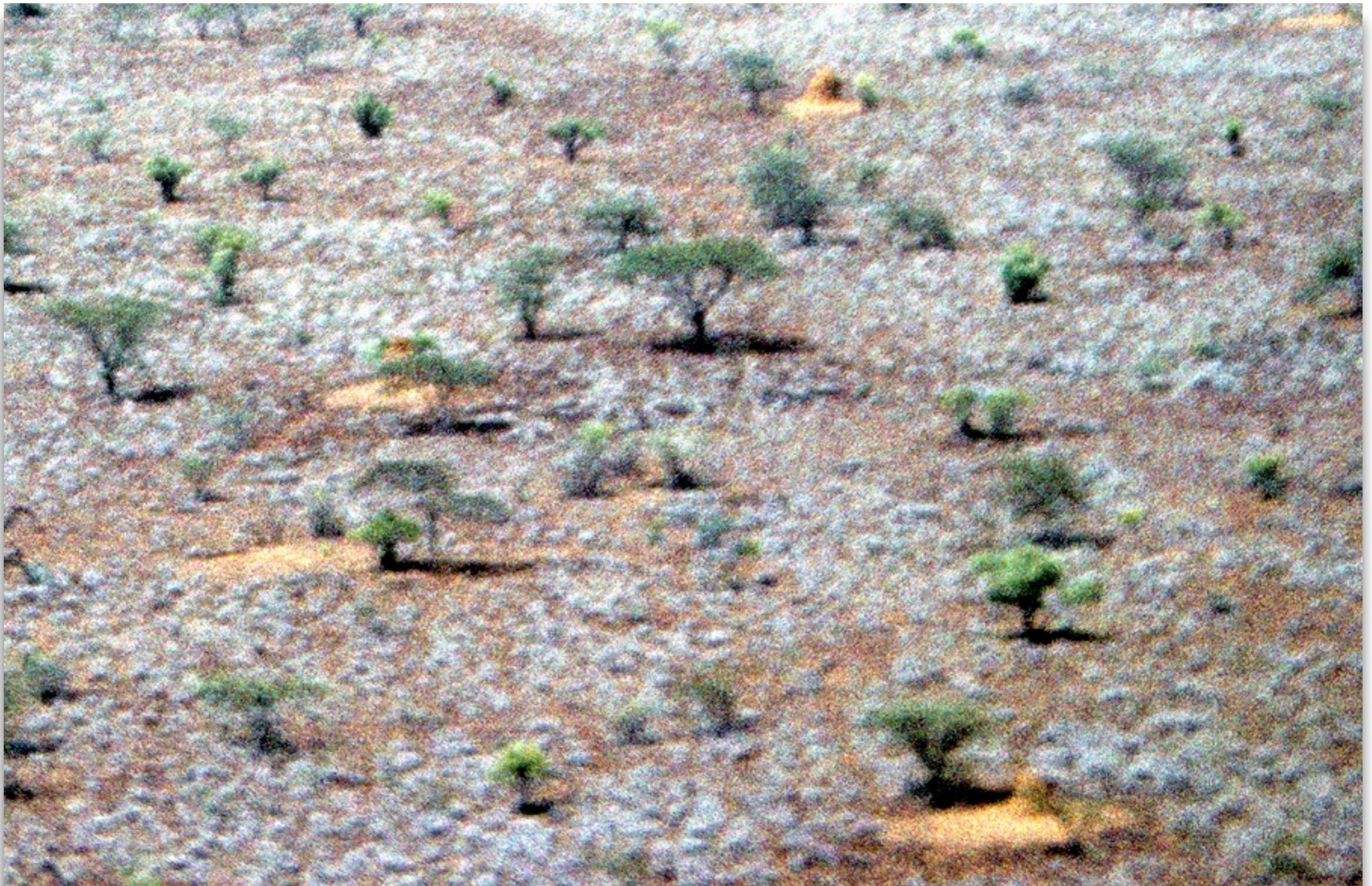
Great Rift Valley



A crop from the previous slide showing tracks on the ground and some people.



Great Rift Valley.



A crop from the previous picture showing thorn trees and termites nests.



Great Rift Valley...I'm turning in this view and the gunsight aiming graticule has drifted into view.



A crop from the previous showing a track.



Great Rift Valley.



A crop from the previous showing a Masai Boma on the left and a cattle trail passing near.



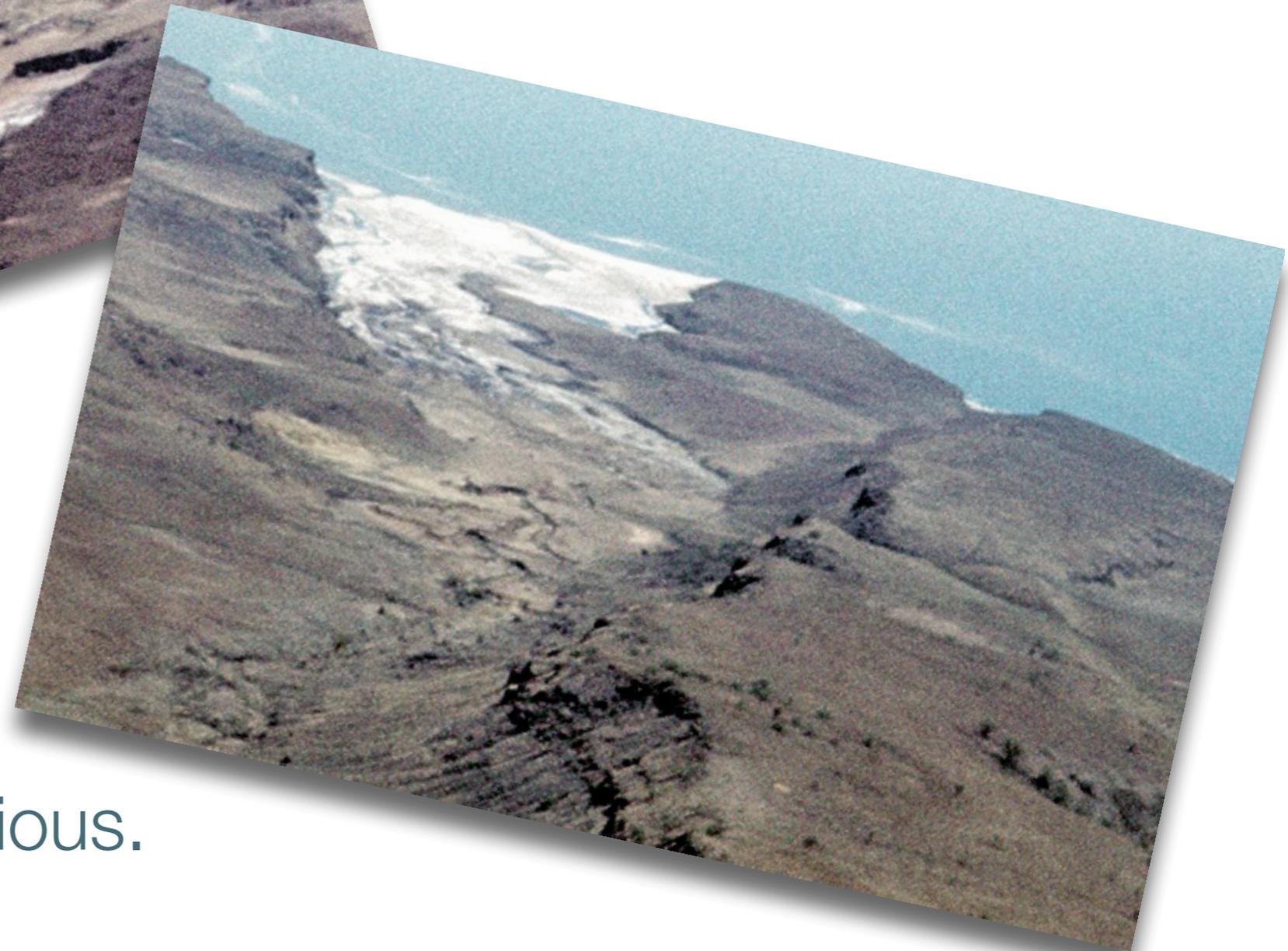
Great Rift Valley.



A crop from the previous showing details of vegetation on the hill.



This is Lake Magadi, a soda lake. I chose this picture to use in constructing my Cover picture.



Two crops from the previous.



The Gyro Gunsight aiming graticule is showing in this shot.



A last crop from the previous.



Well the Venoms have reached the end of their "Fatigue Life" and they have been scrapped. We all flew home to England in a Britannia and collected a full set of new Hunter FGA9s.



We flew them back out from England, routing Stradishall - Luqa, Malta - Nicosia, Cyprus, - Teheran, Persia, - Sharjah, Emirates, - Khormaksar, Aden - Embakasi, Nairobi, Kenya...Eastleigh was too short for Hunter operations.



The flight out from England to Kenya took us three days...June 1st to 3rd 1960.

Here we are being welcomed by the Masai (who looked after our practice target, out in the Rift Valley).



That chap with his back to the camera is me, Paddy Thompson is touching his cap and Dicky Brown is looking a bit bored.



We gave them quite a parade and everyone was delighted!



"All aboard for Africa!"

This picture came from Pete Biddiscombe...It was taken by a press photographer, of his aeroplane being "Tried for size" by a Masai warrior!



This is our new Crewroom at Nairobi Airport and we eat in the main airport restaurant.



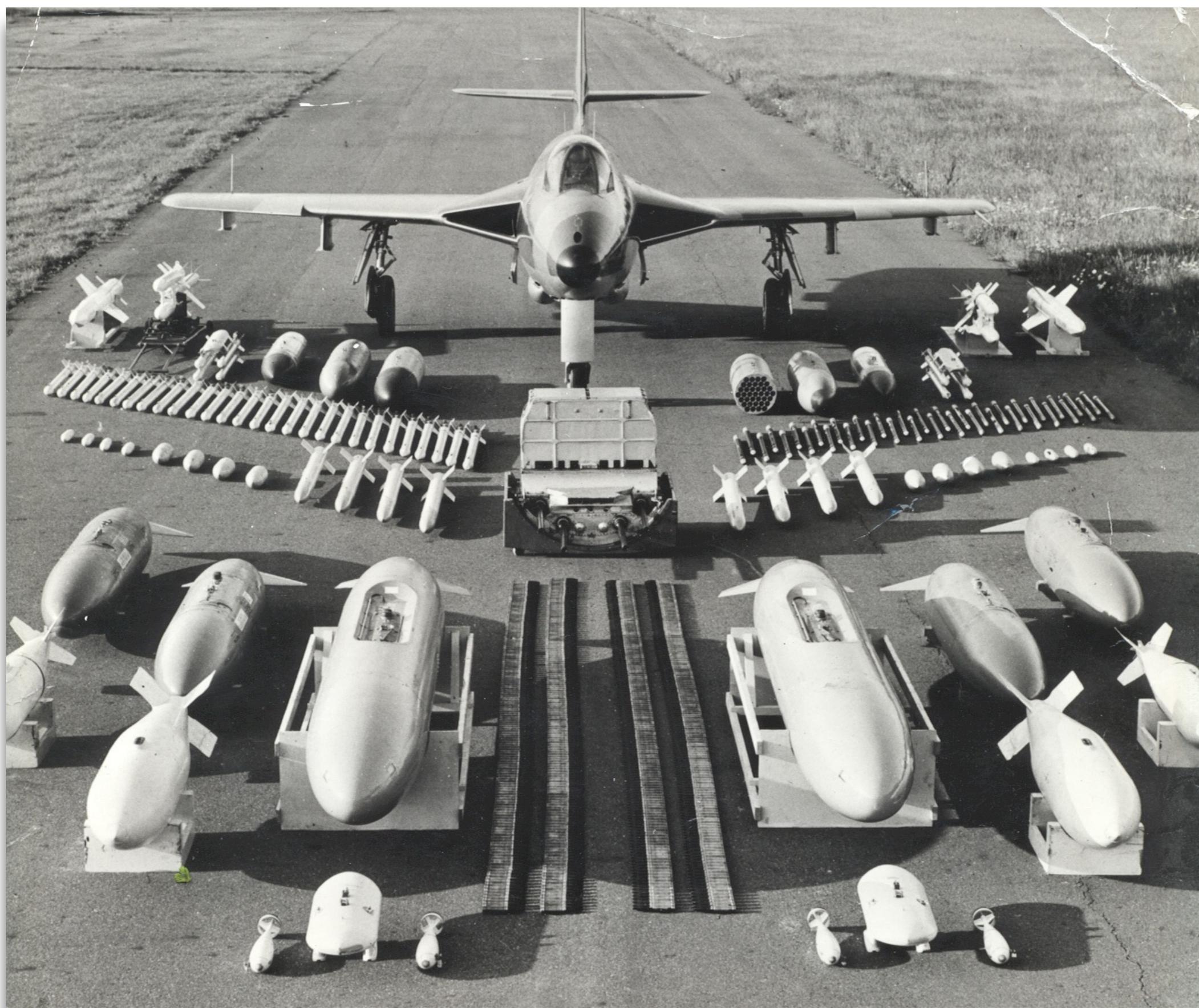
The Squadron accommodation was two clusters of three "Al-Tents", making six rooms in total.



"This is Daddy's aeroplane, Neil!"



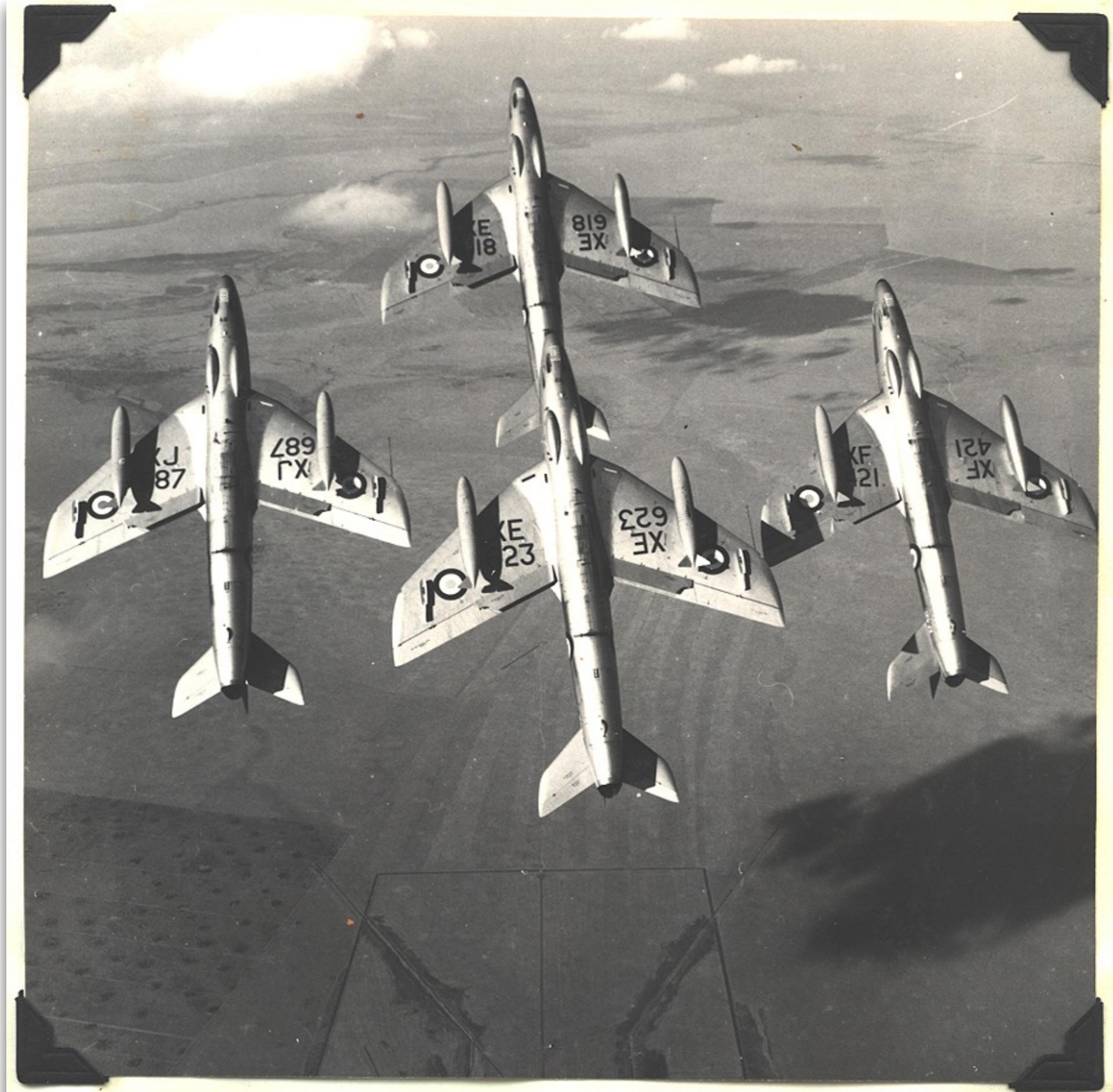
Not much room for two, on a single seat!



This shows all possible armaments for the Hunter FGA9...Not all at once though!



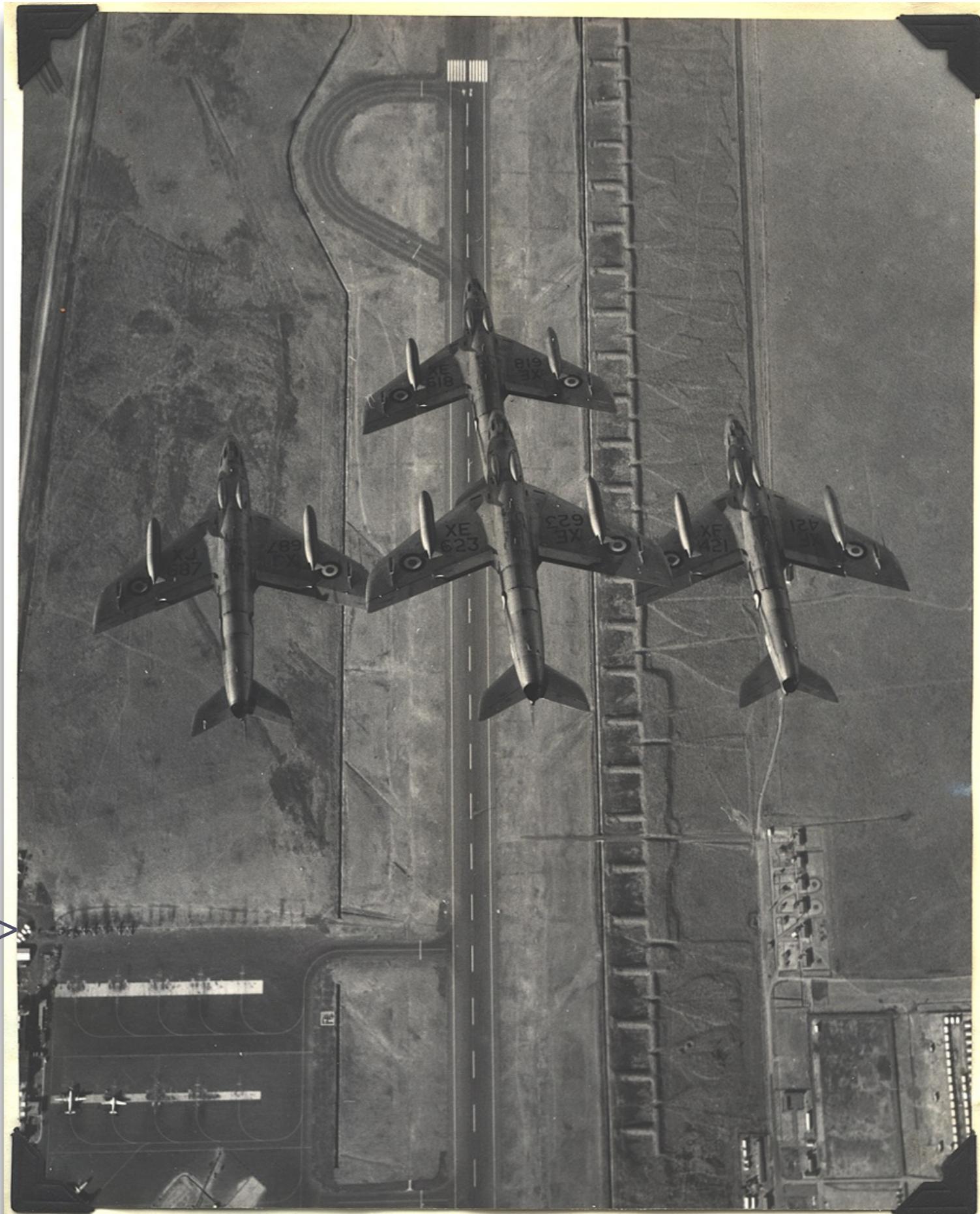
An air display "Box Take-Off" at Khormaksar Open Day, November 18th 1960.



A Formation Loop sequence...



Over Embakasi Airport, Nairobi...



Here >

The Squadron dispersal is near the bottom left corner and the two groups of three white dots are our "Al- Tent" buildings. There is a line of Hunters to the right of them.

here >



It can be seen again here.



Here is the last shot of the sequence as we pull tip streamers on the last part of the loop.



The Team...Left to Right:-
Boss Ramirez, Tim Cohu, Pete Biddiscombe and Mac McLeland.



This is our favourite aerobatic team photograph.
Looping over Kilimanjaro.



Party time! Elizabeth, Pete Biddiscombe and Mu Cohu.



George and Tamara Ord.



The Children having a special tea before going to bed!



Derek Bell and Alastair Macnab but I can't remember the lady's name.



I get to dance with my wife...The party was at Tim Cohu's house and I can't remember what it was about or what the rig was supposed to be...There must have been some confusion for me to be wearing my pyjama top!



I think Mike Telford has just said something disgusting to the lady!



Don't know what has happened to Alastair but people seem a bit concerned.



Liz dances with Stu Grieve while Dicky and Morag look on.



Boss and Kim Ramirez are just leaving.



Alastair tripping the light fantastic with Sheila Bell.



That's Terry Hill with his back to us. Don't know who Dinga is sharing his beer with.



Maybe it was a fancy dress party!



Well whatever the rig was, the party is starting to swing now.



Here is one of those crazy stunts that someone dreams up for a photograph...Don't know who the corpse or assailant are but that is definitely Mu taking his pulse! Of course that is a handful of ketchup.



Looks like end of party time...Plenty of smoke!...Tim Riddihough is chatting to Pam Melaniphy at top right. I can't believe that Dinga is going to drink any more of that whisky!



Change of scene, to just leaving the Nairobi Game Park in just about the first Mini in Africa.



I won't fill this booklet with my Game pictures but here are a few of my favourites.



Favourite Game pictures.



Favourite Game pictures.



Favourite Game pictures.



Stop for a "brew up"...We are on our way from Nairobi, Kenya to Durban, Natal in South Africa. We covered 3005 miles going and 3126 miles coming back. Each way took 7 days and we had 7 days in Durban. Liz and I shared the driving, 2 hours on and 2 hours off and Neil had the back seat to himself.



This little booklet is dedicated to "Flick" Hennessy, killed in Kuwait July 1961. The only images I have of him, are in memory but I look at them often...

Well half a Century has passed since this photograph was taken of me standing beside Echo's nose, so I certainly don't look like that now. I was 26 then! However, compiling this little booklet has made me feel young again and I hope that reading it will bring you happy memories of a wonderful period in your life.

