

**THE ANGLO - AMERICAN ISHAM ANCESTRY ASSOCIATION
UK
JOAN's**

RAILWAY JOURNEYS TO COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY

TWICE YEARLY FROM 1951 TO 1954

FROM UMTALI, RHODESIA TO GRAHAMSTOWN & CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

As there were no University Colleges in Rhodesia at that time, and because Joan's father was serving in the Rhodesia British South Africa Police, the Rhodesia Department of Education allowed Joan to study her desired Teacher Training Course at Grahamstown College, followed by

a final year studying a Hard of Hearing Speech Therapy Course at the University of Cape Town, where she was privileged to have met the then well-known Helen Keller, who was born totally deaf and blind and travelled with her carer Annie, who helped her learn to actually speak & communicate.

Umtali (now Mutare) is on the eastern borders between Rhodesia and Mozambique and Grahamstown is near Port Elizabeth on the southern coast of South Africa.

This rail journey took four nights & four days to travel the approx.2,000 miles involved, which is roughly the equivalent in distance between, say, Berlin and Gibraltar or New York and Denver or Buenos Aires and Tierra del Fuego or, even, John-o-Groats and Lands End and back!

Joan would board the train in Umtali, where, then, her father was Chief of Police at the Umtali Police Camp, in the evening and arrive in Salisbury the following morning where she was met by the Newhams, who took her to their home in Highlands. Her great family friend Marion Newham would join her to board the train again in Salisbury to, overnight, arrive in Bulawayo where they were met by the Whites in their Humber Super Snipe to go to their farm near Figtree, to see her Granny, Aunt Edna and Uncle Leslie for 3 hours, returning to catch the South Africa Railways Bulawayo-to-Cape Town train at Figtree Station, which required a brief "request-stop".

They shared a first-class two-berth compartment (student ticket was £10 return!) and took their own packed meals with them for the two-night journey through South Africa passing through Mahalape in Bechuanaland where the train stopped for 3 hours to coal & water and let off steam while Joan and Marion got off to watch the African dancing at the station and the African youngsters who were selling to the passengers the very small night-apes known locally as "Pookies"- small enough to put in your pocket! The journey continued overnight towards Mafeking for an hour halt to coal & water to set off via Vryberg to Kimberley for a 5-hour halt, which allowed time to see a matinee film at the local "Bio", visit the "Big Hole" and enjoy a slap-up steak-and-chips with ice-cream before boarding again for the journey on to De Aar, where they changed trains to eventually arrive in Grahamstown, east of Port Elizabeth, after a three-nights-&-three-days journey! Amazing! The South African educational year was divided into four terms with two short 10-day vacs so Joan and Marion went to stay with friends or at hostels up-country or at the sea-side for those holidays, as it was not practical to go home by train for such short breaks.

In her third year Joan ended her journey at Cape Town station on Adderley Street and then went to a student hostel in Rondebosch to attend the final-year course at Cape Town University, where Joan met Norman!

This rail journey was slow because the engines were coal-fired steam and the gradients steep, with many heavy first (including dining-car), second and third class carriages, baggage & guard's vans. These South African Railways and Rhodesian Railways steam engines and carriages were, in those days, made in England with sleeper compartments having a stainless-steel corner h&c wash-basin, a pull-up seat-back upper-bunk suspended on leather-covered chains, a punched leather strap for the drop-down opening window, leather upholstery and a separate shower and lavatory at the end of each carriage, while the dining car was in attractive polished hardwood panelling throughout with wide tables for two and four seated.