

Trixie, John, & Delia Edmuns, and the move to Rhodesia

Christmas 1955



1956 – March to April – Valerie's Diary

These diary entries, which were made by our nanny Valerie Sparke, tell of Delia, who was then about 3, being affectionately shunted out of the way to our family's house at 10 Aldenham Grove, Radlett, Hertfordshire, so that her parents could get on with their preparations.

Delia was clearly somewhat anxious and disturbed by the big change coming on. The little family was emigrating to Rhodesia, to live in Salisbury, John would be working for Andrew Chalmers or one of its subsidiaries out there.

N.B. Spelling of Edmonds in the entries is Valerie's; the correct spelling was Edmuns.

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March-April 1954

Monday, 26th

Lovely sunny warm day. Children out all day. Big wash. Mrs Mack picked up Delia in afternoon. Quite happy all afternoon and went to bed well. Woke at 9.30 pm but settled. I hope!! (Also woke up about 10.15 pm and 11.15 pm.

Tuesday, 27th

Mrs Edmonds came to collect Delia who is quite happy. She is not now staying tonight but coming with Mr and Mrs Edmonds on Friday to stay till they leave.

Friday, 30th

Mr Mack at home, rather depressing sort of weather. Busy getting ready for all the family coming to stay. Mr and Mrs Edmonds and Delia arrived for lunch. I took all four children out in the afternoon. Delia would not settle for some time. Richard in my room.

April, Wednesday, 4th

Trixie and John very busy finishing packing. Leaving 3 pm. Mrs Mack driving them to Southampton, staying tonight, back tomorrow night.

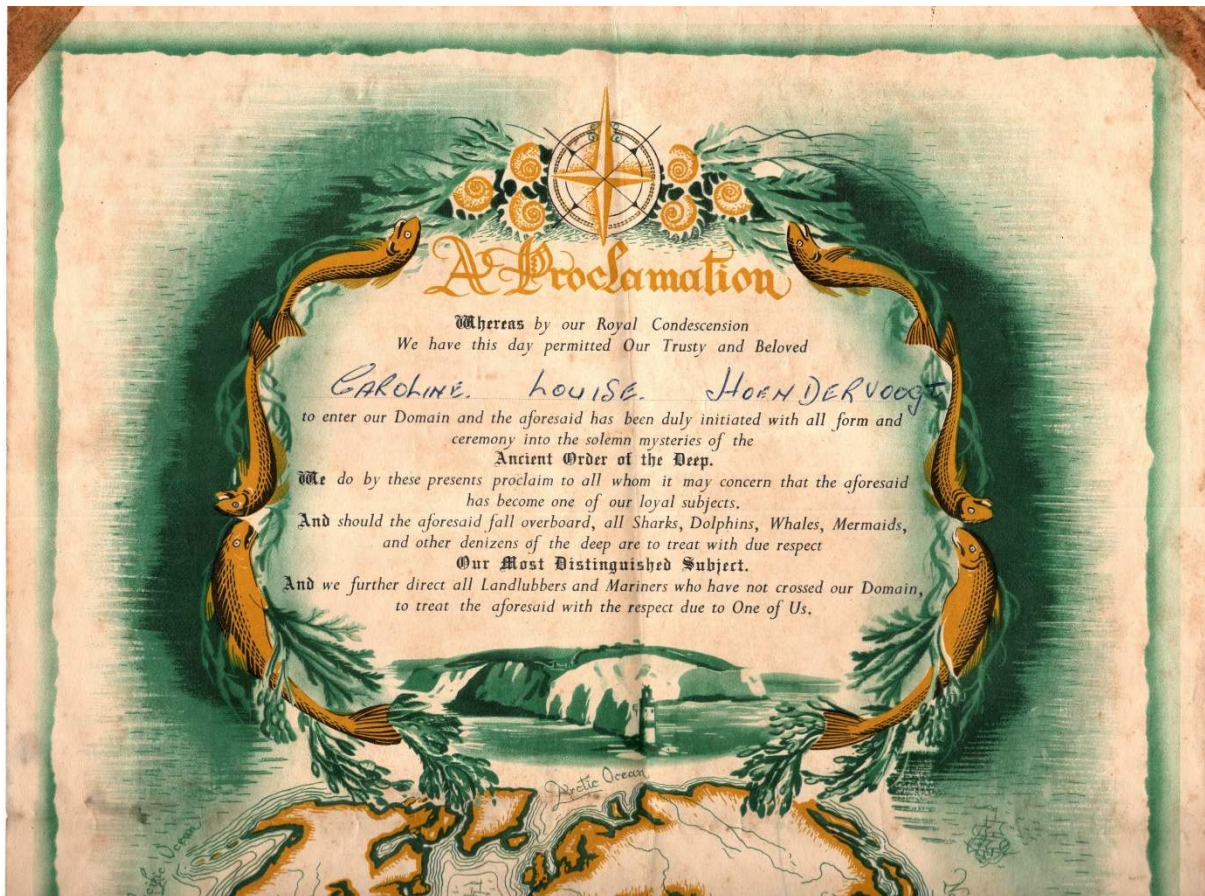
The Journey to Rhodesia

It is highly likely that Trixie and her family were travelling to Rhodesia on the Union-Castle Line of mail ships (probably on the Capetown Castle or the Edinburgh Castle), the regular route for travellers before air travel became cheaper. It involved sailing to Cape Town and then a train to Rhodesia. Their leaving on a Wednesday for Southampton, as noted in Valerie's diary, seems to confirm this, as outbound Union-Castle Line ships sailed on Thursdays.

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Every Thursday at 4pm a blast from the siren of a Union-Castle Mail Ship would herald the departure of one of the lavender-hulled ships from Southampton on their passage to South Africa. About sunrise on a Friday morning another Union-Castle liner would arrive in Southampton. This was the routine of the Cape Mail Service throughout the 1950s and up to 1965.¹

The sea passage took around 17 days. After crossing the equator, probably around 15 April, Delia may have been given a certificate like this from one year earlier, on 15 April 1955, awarded by the captain of the Capetown Castle and signed by him and, in an amusing touch, by Neptune.



¹ Shipping Today and Yesterday, article by Ian Richardson, The Union-Castle Southampton to the Cape Service – <https://shippingtandy.com/features/every-thursday-at-4pm/#:~:text=Every%20Thursday%20at%204pm%20a,an%20account%20of%20these%20ships.>

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Trixie and her family would have arrived in Cape Town around 21-22 April. They probably then had a brief rest at Cape Town before taking the train up to Rhodesia. This train journey in itself was a lengthy business, travelling about 1,600 miles, on the South African railway system before transferring to Rhodesian Railways. The journey sometimes included overnight stops, so it is possible they did not reach Salisbury until close to the end of the month.

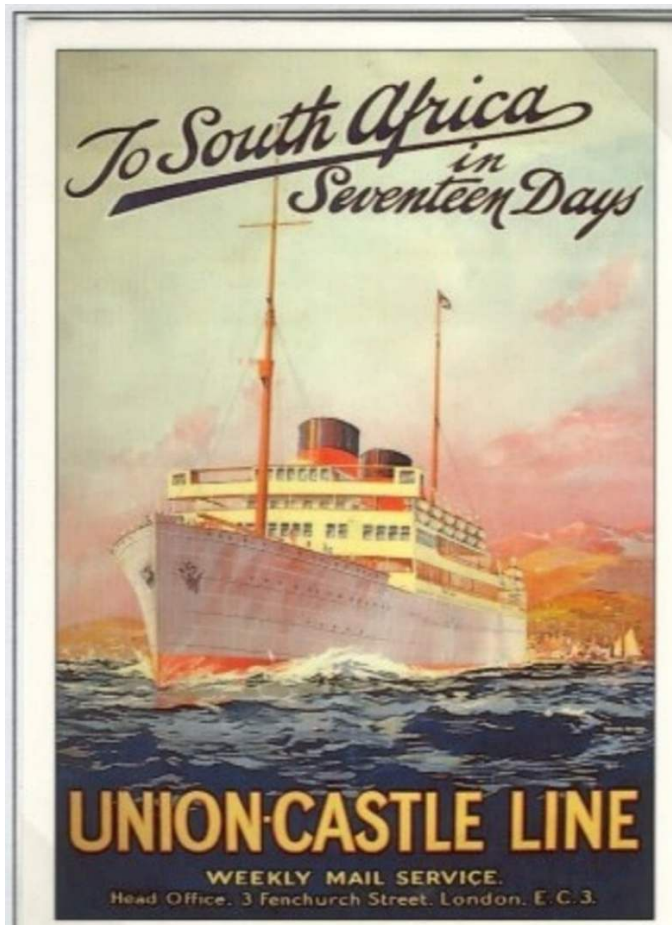
Presumably all the effects they had taken with them travelled by a goods carriage route.

Trixie and John settled in Salisbury, and had two further children, Michael and Kim. John worked at Andrew Chalmers (Salisbury) and then at Mashonaland Tobacco.

Their house in the mid-sixties, which may have been their original house on emigrating (this is not known), was 3 Danbury Avenue, Mabelreign, Salisbury.

JENNIE MACK GRAY

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For an excellent Facebook page about Union-Castle, see this:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/388186711249176>

Map of the trip from that Facebook page:

