

Kanye Hospital, the Kalahari and the Bushmen
July 1, 2001
By Allen Fowler

Barry:

I read the short chapter about your grandfather's experience with the bushmen.

I had opportunity to visit the bushmen when I was the administrator at the Kanye Hospital in Botswana.

I took 3 of our volunteer nurses (2 Swiss & 1 Scottish) from the hospital and we drove 850 kilometers into the Kalahari to a bushman camp in west central Botswana near a place called Ghanzi. Sure glad to have my trusty 4x4. One section of the track had worn into the sand to the height of the windows on my vehicle. The sand was very soft and it was all the poor old 4x4 could do to make it through. It would not have been the best place in the world to have been stuck in the sand! Hundreds of kilometers from nowhere and precious little traffic on that track.

We had a wonderful time with the Bushmen. There was one girl in the camp who had been to the outside and had gained some education. She was able to speak English, Setswana (the Botswana version of the Bantu Language group) and Bushman language (with all the clicks). She did all the translating for me.

When I started to speak to a group of them we started out by having a local Botswana translate the English into Setswana and then the Bushman girl would translate it from the Setswana into the Bushman language. This went on for a while and I could see that the whole process was breaking down and they were not understanding very well what I was trying to say to them. I explained the problem to the translators and the Bushman girl said that it was not necessary to go through the Setswana as she knew English as well as the Bushman. Things really picked up after that.

I read the chapter you posted about your grandfather Burton's experience with the Bushmen. I would really like to hear "the rest of the story". Is his book available anywhere that I could get ahold of it?

Livingstone's original mission station in Africa was located just 20 miles from the Kanye Hospital. the foundations of the original mission station are still visible. It was called the Kolabeng Mission. It was raided by the South African Boers while Livingstone was away on a safari. They killed 60 of the locals who had built a village around the mission and ran off 600 head of stock. After that Livingstone abandoned the mission and moved on. The English and the Boers were contending for dominance in Southern Africa at the time and missions were fair game as they represented an unwanted British presence in the area.

One of Livingstone's children is buried at the old Kolabeng Mission in an unmarked grave. She was born at the mission and succumbed at 6 weeks of age.

I was Administrator at the Kanye Adventist Hospital in the early 90's. Kanye is located at the eastern edge of the Kalahari. There is a small range of hills where Kanye is built that mark the eastern extremity of the Kalahari in that part of Botswana. The locals claim that it was on the hill where Kanye is built that the great African missionary Robert Moffat stood and gazed out across the African landscape and said "I have seen the cooking fires of a thousand African villages that know not Christ". When Livingstone heard Moffat say this on one of his return visits to Scotland it is said that he determined that he would go to Africa and answer that call to take Christ to heathen Africa. Moffat was Livingstone's father-in-law.

Well I have probably already bored you enough with things that you already know. Love to hear from you.

Allen Fowler