

# Literary Review and Educational Supplement

## (Part 1)

...by Fred Hawtree



I am sure they meant well but I have only just finished the book they gave me for Christmas - *A Walk with a White Bushman* by Sir Laurens van der Post. It is meaty stuff but I invented a new reading system to cope with the tough stretches and to forestall brain damage. I would open the book at random and beaver away until the mind boggled. Then I'd let it unboggle for a time before diving in somewhere else.

Eventually, I began to recognise familiar sections and finally string them together. This is unusual when I am dealing with heavy stuff because my memory tends to be fluffy and, like the filling of a superior *duvet*, non-absorbent and easily washable.

But not only grit and invention drove me on finally to Page 318. I also became deeply anxious that in reminiscing about meetings with such as Admiral Patterson, General Wavell and Lord Louis Mountbatten, other memories might be stirred and the author would point the finger at me because, in 1943 at Bandoeng, I dropped out of his Japanese class after only three lessons.

At the time, I could not believe that I should ever make it through to any sort of conversation and, B.T.C. (British Theatre Company) had just commissioned from me a new Act IV for 'Cinderella' with Sergeant Argent in the title role. Weakly, I settled for the easy way out.

Sir Laurens obviously has no memory problems. For example, he once travelled widely through Russia\* after waiting eight weeks for a visa in London. On his first flight out of Moscow, a Russian sitting next to him rattled off the following useful data, which I condense for convenience.

### RUSSIA

<b>Size of:</b>	2½ times bigger than continental United States. 1/3 smaller than Africa 3 times bigger than Australia 6,000 miles east to west 3,000 miles north to south 800 miles from southernmost point to the equator
<b>Rivers:</b>	Volga 2,300 miles long Yenesei 2,700 miles long
<b>Tides:</b>	Baltic, difference between high and low: A few inches Sea of Okhotsk, difference between high and low: 34 feet
<b>Mountains:</b>	Mount Stalin, 24,390 feet Narodnaya (Urals), 5,000 feet
<b>Volcanoes:</b>	200; 60 are active
<b>Population:</b>	In millions:- Ukrainians, 160; Byelo, 8; Uzbeks, 6; Tartars, 5; Khazaks, 4; Azerbaijanians, 3; Armenians, 3; Georgians, 3; Jews, 2½; Lithuanians, 2½; Moldavians, 2¼; Volga Germans, 2; Turkoman, 1; Kirghiz, 1; Chuwash, 1½; plus two villages of Russian negroes.

See what I mean? Nothing fluffy there at all! The man who can memorise all that and a lot more in the middle of the night can call up several more megabytes than my home computer. He will also know exactly which pockets contain his tickets, passport, wallet, traveller's cheques and could reel off their serial numbers if put to it. I have never managed to do any of those things.

In the near future, Sir Laurens is off to Africa with Prince Charles who also sounds pretty sharp. I can imagine the conversation round the camp fire.

**Scene:** *The Kalahari Desert*

*The Biltong sandwiches and chips, washed down by a bottle of Tweejongezellen and followed by Kendal Mint Cake, have produced that pleasant sense of well-being after a day's march which obliges men to talk ruminatively of their inner selves before turning in.*

**Prince C:** Nice bit of biltong that.

**Sir L:** You can't beat the Takatokwane take-away. Looks like it might be fine tomorrow though, from the size of the Bushmen's bottoms. They're like camels' humps you know.

**Prince C:** (*Wearily*) Yes. You've mentioned it before (*Pause*) Not too tired?

**Sir L:** Not a bit. Wouldn't mind a bit of fireside reminiscence as a matter of fact.

**Prince C:** That's good (*Then, remembering a Wogan interview long ago*) Sir Laurens! You've had a long, happy and successful career. Have you any regrets?

**Sir L:** (*After reviewing the past 50 years*) Maybe, just two!

**Prince C:** And they are.....?

**Sir L:** For starters, I reckon those Russians played me for a sucker way back in the Sixties.

**Prince C:** How come?

**Sir L:** It took me eight weeks to get a visa which I should have had in a fortnight. I now suspect they were making time for that chap on the aeroplane to mug up his facts in the *Soviet Geographic*. (Actually, I mugged them up as well when I got home). Then they let me in and put him in the next seat on my very first internal flight. I was being programmed.

**Prince C:** Could be right. Any other pointers?

**Sir L:** Yes. I was in and out of Tashkent Airport six times and each time, I met someone I knew - An Aussie ex-soldier, a fan of a TV series of mine, a West African envoy, a Cape Coloured boy, a Japanese friend and an Indian official.

**Prince C:** Sounds a mixed bag, especially in Tashkent. Not exactly the hub of the universe is it? And rather a poor Duty-Free if I remember rightly. I bet they were set up to report back to the KGB. But what's the other regret?

**Sir L:** Well, there was young Hawtree in Java. Dropped out of my Japanese class when he had just got as far as saying 'Good morning' with the third degree of politeness. I've always felt I failed him somehow.

**Prince C:** You can't win 'em all. He's an ungrateful cuss in any case. We had him to tea at Buckingham Palace a while back; he never even dropped a line to thank us for the cucumber sandwiches. Come to think of it, neither did any of the other 2,499 punters we'd invited.

\**Journey into Russia*, Hogarth Press, London.1964)

(He spots a lioness creeping up to a tin of Corned Eland and throws a branch from the fire to scare her off. Unfortunately it lands on a reporter's note book and that sets light to all the sound recorder's and T.V. cameras which are essential equipment on safari these days. Pretty soon the Kalahari, too, is no more than a smoking ruin).

\* \* \* \* \*

A likely tale, I hear you saying; and what has all this got to do with golf greenkeeping? My lucky lads, you have been distracted by the coating on the pill. We have been talking about education, which today's head greenkeeper has to consider with all this apprenticeship training and job experience grafted on to his other duties. The raw recruit should think about it too because if he is to progress in an increasingly competitive environment, he cannot learn too much. BIGGA will provide him with lectures and discussions, the Greenkeeper Training Committee will guide his progress, the STRI and some agricultural colleges will provide him with educational courses. But the influence of his head greenkeeper will be paramount in shaping his attitude to a potentially rewarding job.

You will have to wait impatiently until next month before I give you the low-down on education in Part II. Meanwhile you might like to think about how you are teaching your job or how you are learning it. You'll find a few clues in the preceding scenario.

There is a lot of greenkeeping lore which you will not find in the text-books. Watch this space next month to find out how to sock it to them and how to soak it up.

#### Last month's Word Power Test

Robert Dickson from Wanstead has written to tell me that 'Baffy' is also a Northern Scot's name for his slippers. Thank you Robert, that was news to me. Chambers' Dictionary of Scots Dialect says "Baffy" (adj) = chubby: The Oxford (Shorter) Dictionary only gives Baffy - 'short wooden club for lofting'. Chambers' Etymological Dictionary doesn't give it at all.



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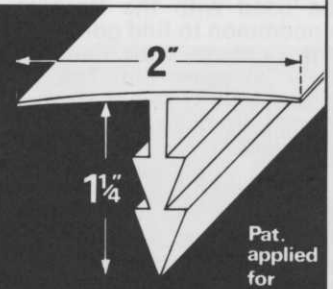
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