

## **The Semliki Crossing**

### **The writings of RC and DL Palin**

Available online from [www.lulu.com/content/1280839](http://www.lulu.com/content/1280839) price £15.99 plus P.&p.

This is a vivid account of two people who went to Uganda with the Church Missionary Society CMS in 1933 and 1934 respectively. Dorothy Clayton (born in Uganda) went as a teacher to Toro Girls School in Fort Portal, Western Uganda, which prepared the most able pupils to become teachers in the 20 bush schools for which she was also responsible. On the other side of the great Rift Valley, Reg Palin, a clergyman was located to Mboga in the Belgian Congo to consolidate and develop the pioneering work of Canon Apolo Kivebulaya the Ugandan evangelist who had just died.

For both Reg and Dorothy travelling meant walking - long foot safaris with many porters to help them. The three-day march between Mboga and Fort Portal entailed a huge descent onto the waterlogged plains of the Semliki River, a hazardous crossing by dug-out canoe, followed by a mountainous climb over the northern slopes of the Rwenzori mountains. Even in the 1930s the extent of such pioneering was unusual in CMS Uganda, where road travel, schools, colleges and hospitals were by then well established.

The book has been compiled by the Palin family from their parents' (and grandparents') diaries of daily work and travel, letters to their parents and friends in England and letters published in home parish magazines, also their more formal annual reports to CMS. Reg and Dorothy married in 1938 and continued in Uganda to the point of national Independence in 1964. They had a distinguished career, Reg holding the post of Archdeacon of Uganda from 1950 and becoming first Provincial Secretary of the newly created autonomous Church of Uganda in 1962.

Two things make this book of special interest. First, it documents in great and sometimes daily detail the early growth of the Anglican church in the Belgian Congo and Western Uganda. Reg records every move, every safari, the places, distances, names of evangelists, teachers, trainees, numbers of baptisms and confirmations from an era where probably no such information now exists. At that time he was the one ordained Anglican priest in the Congo. This record fills the gap from Apolo's death in 1933 to the early 1950s. Today in spite of all the war and violence in recent years it is a national church with eight dioceses and tens of thousands of members. Likewise Dorothy led and shaped girls' education in Toro, later Bunyoro, requiring close liaison with the colonial government, which wished to see both the highest standards maintained and the rapid establishment of a national network of schools. Both Reg and Dorothy admire and affirm their African colleagues, the real builders of the new church.

Secondly, there is a unique and surprising account of the early spread of the East African Revival movement into Toro and Bunyoro. Most such accounts are from within, as it were, documenting a wonderful and rapid spiritual movement from Rwanda into Uganda and beyond. By then Reg was a church official, the bishop's representative, whose task was both to welcome and contain the new movement in the church. It was a hard and painful task with many misunderstandings and setbacks. The message was right, but the methods and assumptions could easily have fragmented Christianity in Uganda, Reg in Western Uganda and Bishop Simon Stuart in Kampala quietly and patiently held things together. Reg initiated a new programme of retreats, quiet days, in-service bible training and the like to support and affirm the clergy and ensure that the heart of the Revival movement remained available for all.