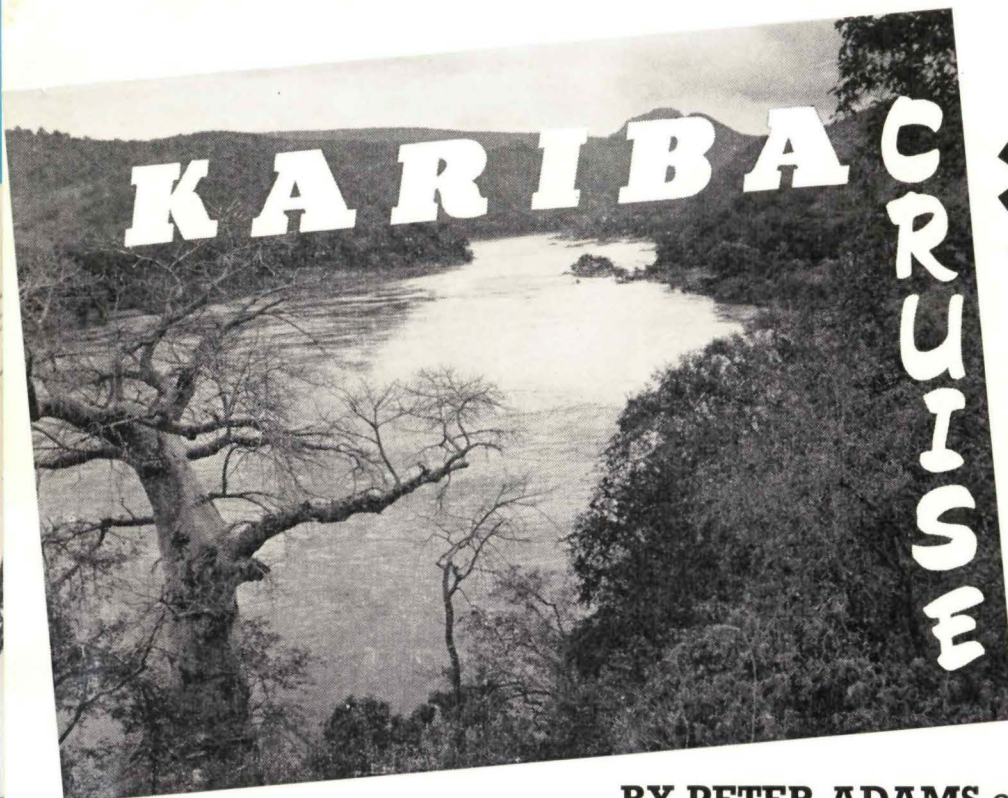




\* Two men in a small dinghy, a GP14, have fun during a sailing and camping jaunt on the swelling waters of Southern Africa's newest cruising grounds.

Pictures: Federal Information Department.

BY PETER ADAMS and DAVE GRANTHAM

THE idea of a sailing cruise up the newly formed Kariba Lake was one that had tickled the imagination of the crew of *Frolic*, a G.P.14, for many months, and plans finally bore fruit early in June when we loaded *Frolic* onto a lorry, setting course for Kariba and 10 days of sailing and fishing. As far as we knew, this was the first cruise undertaken up Kariba Lake under sail.

The crew, Dave and Peter, are members of the Karoi Sailing Club, situated about 100 miles from Kariba by road. The Club organises its sailing on the local dam, where very active and exciting racing takes place over the week-ends.

Both of us had previously sailed on Kariba at the Kariba Sailing Club's regatta a year previously. The object of the present venture was to prove whether a small sailing dinghy would be practical for a cruising holiday. Results, as far as we are concerned, satisfied us not only of the practicability; the pleasures and complete change are experiences which surpassed our wildest expectations.

We must, however, add that Kariba sailing is not for the novice, and also that a general knowledge of weather interpretation is absolutely essential.

From our very limited experience, and we emphasise "limited experience," we have drawn various conclusions about what is needed. The first and most important is safety first. The second is a rational attitude of mind to put the first into practical operation at all times. This, in our opinion, is most important.

When embarking on the cruise it was our intention to take no chances and never to sail more than a mile or so from the coast line. However, with experience and observation of the weather pattern, we found that the open lake was perfectly safe and in fact crossed it several times. Still, it is emphasised that the crew must always be on the alert and have plans prepared to meet untoward and unexpected eventualities of weather, allowing ample time. By limiting "time" one might have to take a chance—which could be the last one.

The third conclusion we drew was: an outboard motor is absolutely essential. The wind can, and does drop very suddenly on the Lake, and to be out in the middle without secondary means of propulsion could be dangerous, particularly as flat calms can precede violent weather changes. A pair of paddles are also very useful for manoeuvring the boat into, and out of camp sites, which at the moment are quite a problem due to the vast areas of partially submerged bush, especially along the flatter parts of the coastline.

The fourth need is full buoyancy. This speaks for itself. The fifth need is a crew, both of whom is a helmsman, not

subject to panic. Some experiences can be unnerving. Once we were completely lost in the bush at night, afloat and far from home. Anyone who has ever been "bushed" under more normal circumstances will no doubt appreciate the situation in which we found ourselves.

It happened on the second day of the cruise. We had decided to sail up the Sanyati River. Owing to the inundated bush area we had considerable difficulty in locating the river mouth, but eventually did find it (in point of fact it was not the Sanyati at all, but the Nyodza, but we did not know this at the time). We sailed up its meandering course inland; owing to an anabatic breeze we were able to goosewing for the whole trip up.

The experience of silently gliding up the winding river under sail was fascinating. The river is bounded by extremely dense and absolutely impenetrable bush. Bird life was considerable and quite varied, and the indications of animal life, particularly crocodile and hippo nearby, all added to an atmosphere of tranquillity that is most difficult to describe and could hardly be experienced elsewhere or under other conditions.

Eventually we could go no farther, having run aground on a sandbank across the now very much narrower river. A few yards beyond, we observed a flock of a dozen or more saddle-bill storks, who were quite unconcerned by our presence. We estimated that we had sailed up about 10 miles. As it was getting late, we started up the motor, whereupon the saddlebills took off rapidly, and we headed downstream again, eventually arriving at the river mouth, or thereabouts, just after sundown. We were confronted by the usual miles and miles of semi-submerged bush, which is quite dense, thus making negotiation of a masted craft through it, at night, a tricky piloting problem.

Peter, as navigator, stood at the mast and armed with a torch coned us this way and that, searching for an outlet to the open water. After an hour or so of frustration he decided we were completely lost. For a few moments, the realisation of our weird predicament, bushed, in a small boat at night and God knows where, were a trifle unnerving. But we did realise that we could tie up to a tree (and there were plenty of them), eat a tin of bully beef and await the dawn.

However, as we were "having fun," we decided to press on. Dave took over navigation and ultimately by a sheer fluke (according to Peter) coned us out into the open lake.

Imagine our surprise when we saw that the lights of Kariba Heights shining across the distant water had absolutely no right to be in "that direction;" as a matter of fact, one of the crew had doubts if they were Kariba lights at all.

Having at last got our bearings we set course for the camp site of the previous night, and eventually landed after 13 hours afloat. The points we would like to make are that owing to a slight error (very slight, we were only up the wrong creek) in navigation, we were 30 or so miles from where we imagined ourselves to be, and thus the time factor was reduced below Safety First requirements. Also there was no need for panic. Had we decided not to press on we would have been perfectly safe moored to one of the thousands of available trees, but fortunately it happened on this occasion to be quite safe and more fun to carry on.

Peter was the angler. It was really exciting to watch him engaged in battle with a tiger fish, with which the lake is phenomenally well stocked. Unfortunately his tackle, at 18 lb. breaking strain was too light, and a large proportion of his bites got away with spoon and tackle. Next time he is going to use 28 lb. line, which should give really first-class sport.

Zambezi Aristocrats were the spoons used, with ball bearing swivels, the fish being caught from the shore by casting and reel trolling. Usually a strike could be expected in one of every three casts. Tiger put up a terrific fight, and justify their reputation as the sportiest fish in the world.

Bream, too, are plentiful, but have to be fished for among the denser bush round the lake fringe. Since this would have entailed unstepping the mast it was considered not worth the trouble, particularly as the fillet of a 5 lb. Tiger, carefully taken, is really delicious eating.

A must for Kariba cruising is to plan this to coincide with the first quarter of the moon phase. The Lake is indescribably beautiful by moonlight. We planned to do some moonlight sailing, but unfortunately had only windless nights during our visit—that is, apart from the night of a storm, when winds of gale force blew up for three or four hours.

We suspected the weather might be going to play up, as we had noticed light frontal conditions drifting in from the north on the previous night. During the day winds were variable and light and we watched with interest the built-up cumulus cloud over the south shore mountains. About three o'clock the wind dropped completely, and the Lake became flat calm. We were adrift, becalmed on the south shoreline. Within about an hour or so the cloud formations were building up rapidly to angry looking cu-nimbus.

As camp sites in the area on the south coast line are very difficult to find owing to the flat nature of the country, and thus the vast areas of inundated bush, it was decided to beat a hasty retreat from the vicinity. At this point the Lake is between 10 and 12 miles wide, which we calculated allowed us ample time to cross to the north shore under motor in safety. We therefore started up the engine and set course for the highest peak visible on the north coast line, and went for it flat out.

On approaching we observed, through binoculars, that it appeared to have some buildings on its peak. As we were by this time some 50 miles up the Lake we were intrigued.

On getting closer we realised that we were fetching up to a

beautiful island, cone shaped, which rose invitingly to a height of about 200 feet.

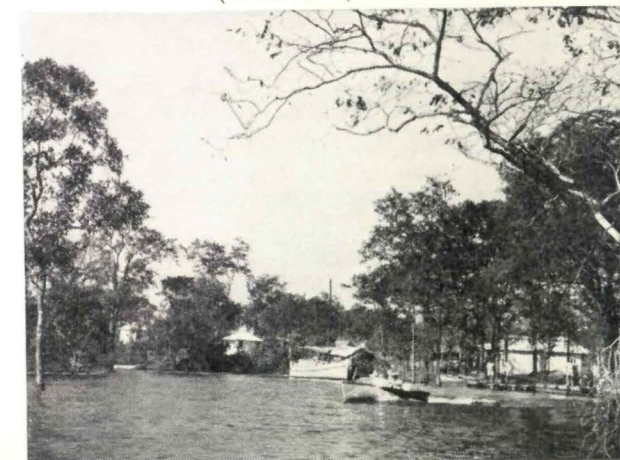
Obviously it was, or had been occupied. The scrubby bush had been cleared out, and the large trees left standing. It really was an attractive picture in the late afternoon light; on arrival we scrambled to the top of the hill and found the island unoccupied, but that two large thatch huts had been erected up there. These were obviously European built, and commanded a magnificent view over the whole lake and in every direction. We concluded that the island must have at one time been a camp, fairly recently used by the "Operation Noah" types. Incidentally, the bird life was quite incredible, both in variety and numbers.

It was decided that since the island was so steep and we had left the dirty weather well behind us on the south shore, we should camp down at the water's edge. Peter had some exciting Tiger fishing while Dave prepared camp. Dinner soon after sundown, and so to bed; no sooner had we turned in than we heard thunder from across the Lake, and a cold gusty wind started to blow a few minutes later. In a very short time the wind had increased in strength, and lightning flashes accompanied by thunder became more frequent and much closer. We decided to make a dash for the hilltop and shelter.

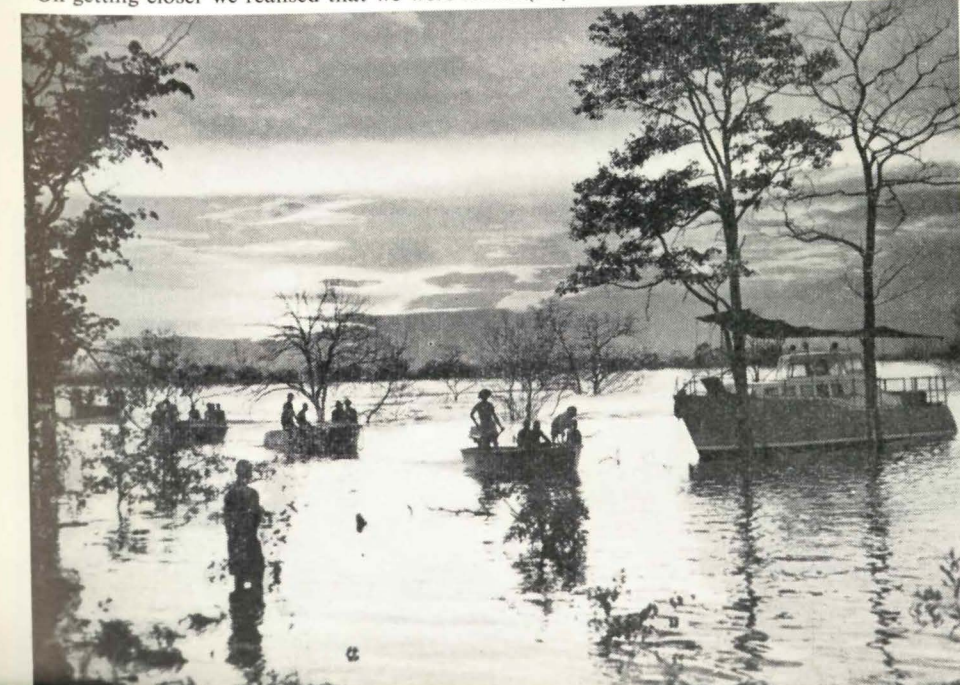
Beds were smartly folded one on top of the other, and we started to struggle up the hillside, buffeted by the wind. It then started to rain hard, the wind velocity increased to a gale. With the trees thrashing around violently, and lightning flashing on all sides, we were obviously in the path of a violent tropical storm.

By the time we reached the hilltop we were both drenched and bitterly cold. The one member of the crew who was wearing pyjamas (the other was not) abandoned them, as he

(Continued on page 38)



ABOVE: This is the haven at Venture Cruises, where the GP 14 *Frolic* started and ended its Kariba holiday jaunt. The authors strongly advise emulators to check in and out here, to pick up local lore and so that they do not lose touch with civilization in the event of possible mishaps.



LEFT: "The usual miles and miles of semi-submerged bush." This is the scene that often confronted the dinghy voyagers when they came ashore at night and had to thread their way to a suitable camping site. This particular picture was taken during the Game Department's recent animal rescue operations, as the rising waters marooned game on the hundreds of new islands.

## KARIBA CRUISE



Fishing at Kariba is good and the dinghy cruisers had fine sport with tiger fish and bream. Their jaunt was a stag party and without photographers handy to record moments of triumph but this publicity picture shows that even the girls can haul them in.

(Continued from page 37)

found this a trifle warmer. The beds were, of course, sopping wet. The huts had obviously been designed as sun-shacks and were consequently porous; we also feared that they might be carried away by the wind.

Above the noise of the gale we could hear waves crashing on the shoreline below, and realised that something must be done to save *Frolic*. We stumbled and slithered back to the camp site and found her plunging and cork-screwing violently between her fore and aft warps. She was moored a little way out between two trees and was taking the considerable seas abeam. Owing to the steep slope she was lying in comparatively deep water which meant that one of us would have to swim out to free the stern rope.

The job fell to Dave, who found that total submersion in the Lake water at a temperature of about 70 degrees was a relief after the perishing cold of the wind and rain.

After a tussle against waves and wind we managed to get the boat ashore. This was done by allowing the waves to lift her in, then holding her to the next wave to lift her shorewards again until eventually we managed to get her well above the water line. She was safe and so, incidentally, were we—for had she been smashed, which she would undoubtedly have been if left to the mercy of the storm, we would have been in a rather difficult position, marooned on an island more than 50 "crow-fly" miles from Kariba.

By the time the wind abated and the rain eased up, the topic of conversation had turned on the point of the suddenness with which the storm had blown up, its ferocity and what we would have done had we been caught out on the lake.

Our summing up was that to have run for it ahead of the storm would have ended in the boat, out of control, fetching up into a tree-line at a rate of knots guaranteed to snap the mast and hole the boat. We decided the approach to shore should have been made by drifting in with the sails down and a sea anchor out to hold the boat's head to wind and waves. For a sea anchor a full four-gallon fuel drum might have been used, or perhaps a kit bag or blanket roll, and, at worst, the mainsail could probably be rigged as a drogue. Drifting in, stern first, the first tree to come to hand would have to be grabbed and the boat secured to this; uncomfortable, no doubt, but comparatively safe.

The alternative, a wrecked boat with all gear and food lost would, in this case, have meant that we would have been stranded probably 150 miles by foot from Kariba. A journey of this nature through thick bush in Zambezi climatic conditions—where owing to animal life, nights would prudently have to be spent in a tree top—would probably take two or three weeks to complete, if it could be managed at all.

The normal weather pattern during our 10-day cruise

was that it was virtually windless in the early mornings until about 9 o'clock, after which a strong steady breeze would spring up, sometimes suddenly, and the wind would then blow until 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoons. Sailing under these conditions was exhilarating, particularly on a broad reach. The "sea" would build up about four-foot waves which were very short and choppy, with the result that one could not sail too close or the boat would simply dance mainly on the chop without making much forward progress.

Winds were very steady on the open Lake, and runs of two or three hours on one tack were usual—the GP performed wonderfully under these conditions, impressing us both with her speed and stability, in spite of her comparatively heavy load—with crew and gear, including motor and fuel, totalling round 650 lb.

The cruise started and ended at Venture Cruises, the boating, fishing and holiday camp very efficiently operated by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Stokes. Their camp is on the south bank of the Lake, within a few miles of Kariba township.

It was most interesting to listen to their discussions on the flora, fauna, and particularly fish.

Mr. and Mrs. Stokes are most emphatic on the safety factor. They both strongly advise that people who intend to sail on the Lake, tell them where they are going, and anticipated time or date of return so that, in the event of an overdue return, they at least know where and when to commence search operations.

*Frolic's* crew urge those planning a cruise on Kariba, however short, to call in at Venture Cruises before starting. There is a lot of useful information about weather, fishing, and places to visit available there.

Be well prepared for any eventuality, make your plans carefully, allow yourselves plenty of time, and never under any circumstances take any unnecessary chances. Above all, do observe all the rules of Safety First. If you do these things, you will enjoy an unforgettable experience under unique conditions of beautiful scenery, wild life, excellent fishing and good sailing.

### ... and also Sir Roy

The amenities offered by Kariba are emphasised by this picture of the Lake's most distinguished yachtsman, the Federal Prime Minister Sir Roy Welensky, seen at the wheel of his 25-ft. motor launch, *Elizabeth*. The launch, named after Lady Welensky, was presented to Sir Roy recently by Federal Members of Parliament and well-wishers who felt he should have every opportunity of getting away from the cares of State on occasion. *Elizabeth* is a 3-tonner, diesel powered, cruising at eight knots. Designer was Commander D. T. Collumbell, and the craft was completed in six weeks by the Salisbury firm of C.B.R. Bentall. Unlike the dinghy cruisers, however, Sir Roy will not escape entirely from everyday affairs. A complete radio telephone—presented by Philips Rhodesian (Pvt.) Ltd.—is installed beside the helm.

