

Potted History of the Pillingers (2)

For the last couple of weeks you've been biting your nails, wondering what brought Steve and Johanna together after Johanna turned him down like a bedspread. We will now put you out of your misery.

As we said last time, the idea was first mooted (in Steve's mind) while we were both doing our training at the UK Wycliffe Centre. The courses ended, and we went our separate ways — Johanna to Bible college, Steve to Kenya and the Rendille translation project. (**Aaah!**)

But among the Rendille Steve found that, as a single man beyond the normal marrying age, he was, um, how shall we put it? Regarded with a certain amount of suspicion. Not enjoying this, he finally decided there was only one solution. So completely out of the blue he wrote to Johanna. (**Yay!**)

Meanwhile Johanna had enjoyed Bible college, but gradually realised that partnering with another single girl (fairly common at that time), was not for her. So she drew up a list of requirements for a husband: among other things — yes, you guessed! — 'tall, dark and handsome'. (**Aaah!**)

But then God, with His wonderful sense of humour, turned her thoughts towards Steve. Even though he was short, furry and funny. She actually risked praying that he would write to her.

The fateful envelope arrived. A letter from Kenya! Who did she know in Kenya? Oh. ... No. ... It *couldn't* be... She turned the envelope over and saw the address label. *It was*. (**Yay!!**)

Well, that led to our courtship by correspondence. Steve wrote carefully with a fountain pen (no computers then) about neutral things, like his Rendille experiences. Johanna noticed that the letters were perfect: no corrections or crossings-out. They had clearly gone through several drafts. *Hmmm. Interesting.*

Interesting, too, that Johanna's best friends at Bible college were from northern Kenya, and actually spoke Rendille!

Anyway, Johanna replied, sympathising with Steve's situation, and saying that he must find it difficult not being married [xxx]. The [xxx] was a small word, crossed out. Steve cunningly looked on the other side of the thin airmail paper, and discovered that the crossed-out word was 'yet'!



The fateful letter!



Rendille bride

Anyway, to cut a long story short, Steve invited Johanna out to Kenya to help with food distribution among the drought-stricken Rendille. This was officially sanctioned by the local Wycliffe leadership, with a gleam in the eye and a tongue in the cheek. To everyone's satisfaction (including our own) we got engaged on the slopes of Mount Kenya on the way back to Nairobi after a good stint of food distribution.

And we were married the next year (1985) in Colchester, UK. It was a multi-cultural wedding, with the Dutch bride wearing a Rendille *bukhúrcha* — a necklace of palm fibres decorated with red beads, the trademark of a married woman.

And the rest, as they say, is history (*to be continued in our next instalment*) ...