

ZOMBA MOUNTAIN



A WALKERS' GUIDE

by
H.M. and K.E. Cundy

P R E F A C E

This little guide is the result of many hours of enjoyable walking on Zomba Mountain. Living on its bouldery slopes, we have had the privilege of knowing it in all weathers and at all seasons, and the knowledge has been rewarding and restorative.

It is perhaps necessary to warn the reader that the state of paths varies very much with the time of the year and with the activities of the foresters. In the late rains the firebreaks can be a nightmarish tangle of smilax with its curving thorns, overarched by Himalayan raspberries scarifying clothes and skin; undergrowth in light forest can be thick and paths barely discernible; grass on the lower slopes may be 10 feet high. But the tracks usually exist and the discerning foot can follow them safely. By June when the dry season is getting established, most of the regular firebreaks will be cleaned out in preparation for the fire-dangers in the months ahead.

Since so much of our enjoyment of the mountain is due to the activities of the forestry, it is a pleasure to express our appreciation in this preamble. Our visitors are unanimous in declaring that Zomba Mountain Forest is one of the best-managed that they have ever seen; and while consideration for walkers is not the main concern of the Forestry Department, nevertheless the regular maintenance of roads, the cutting of paths and firebreaks, and the cleaning of undergrowth which they undertake does much to increase the pleasure of visitors in cars or on foot.

Walkers are welcome; so let us not abuse the hospitality. We should respect young trees, take every care to prevent fire and to avoid polluting the waters. Some of the wild flowers are rare, and few, apart from the everlasting helichrysum, will survive long when picked; it is a wise rule therefore never to pick a flower unnecessarily and unless you can see at least 50 specimens.

We would record our personal thanks to Mr. George Welsh, Principal Forester of Zomba Mountain Forest, for his warm interest in this project, for the loan of maps, and for much valuable advice and information; also to the staff of the Malawi Correspondence College for their skill in the reproduction of this Guide, and to other friends too numerous to mention.

Above all, we praise the Creator who has made Zomba Mountain for us one of those things which we are given richly to enjoy.

The Barn
Grayrigg
Cumbria

MARTYN and KITTIE CUNDY

Box 280
Zomba
June 1975

ZOMBA MOUNTAIN

A WALKERS' GUIDE

C O N T E N T S

	Page		Page
Preface		8. Chiradzulu	13
1. Plateau Areas	1	9. Ngondolo	15
2. The Road System	2	10. Chivunde Valley	19
3. The Main Path	4	11. Mbuli Ridge	23
4. Ways Up	5	12. Chagwa	25
5. The River	8	13. Mulunguzi	27
6. Around Ku Chewe	11	14. Outer Slopes	29
7. Nawimbe Ridge	12	15. Domasi Valley	32

M A P S

1 : 25 000 maps reproduced by permission of the Department of Surveys,
P.O. Box 349, Blantyre

1. CENTRAL BASIN 2. CHIVUNDE VALLEY 3. NGONDOLO + CHIRADZULU

Sketch map of Plateau areas.

Sketch map of Chagwa - Mulunguzi.

Symbols on maps:

f

Fire-tower or fireguard's hut (lookout)

F

Waterfall

C.S.

Camp-site

- - - -

Footpath

- . - . - . - .

Contours at 100 ft interval

· —————

Contours at 500 ft interval

? 15

Road intersection numbers

- oOo -

All proceeds from the sale of this Guide will go to the Scripture Union
(Malawi)

1. PLATEAU AREAS

The plateau is a big place - a fact best appreciated by those who walk in it. Further it is both intricate and intimate, a basin rimmed with mountains perched high on a 1500-foot plinth, containing unsuspected beauties and secret delights awaiting discovery by the resolute walker. We had known it for five years before we discovered the Chivunde fall, and for three before seeing the Sphinx buttress from above. (This conspicuous feature is well seen from the Zomba airport road).

The western face of the plateau is clearly marked by the great scarp along the fault-line of the Rift Valley. There is no mistaking this abrupt break with its spectacular views over the Shire trough. There are one or two places where it looks possible to descend, but anyone contemplating the broken nature of the ridges and the primeval forest which clothes them may well wonder where he would end up if he tried to do so. The eastern face too is steep, though less so and less lofty, but it is defended by the great slabs above Naisi, one of which, leading to the Sphinx buttress, has been climbed three times. On the south, towards Zomba, the slopes are very steep but not precipitous for the most part; on the north the scarps are much milder and the terrain slopes more gently to the Domasi river whose valley separates Zomba plateau from Malosa mountain. If we take this river as the northern boundary and the scarp crest on the other three sides, the plateau is roughly 30 km in perimeter, enclosing an area of over 50 km². For those who know the Welsh hills, it may be helpful to say that the whole region is about the same size and shape as the Snowdon massif bounded by a triangle Pen-y-Gwryd - Llanberis - Nant Gwynant; the range of elevation is 1000 feet greater. The whole plateau is a great basin with its highest part on the rim, which includes, travelling clockwise from Ku Chawe, the peaks of Nawimbe (Fire-Tower) 5928
Malumba (Radio station) 6846
Chiradzulu 6660

From here a long ridge without conspicuous peaks runs eastward forming the watershed with the Domasi Valley and carrying the outer circular road; we meet the eastern rim at

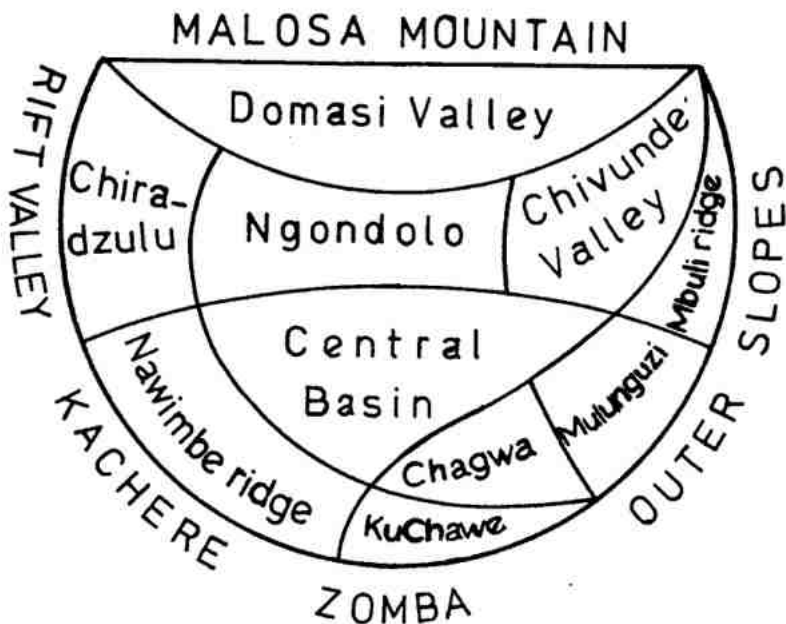
Chivunde	5939	and so round to
Mulunguzi	5810	.
Chagwa	5937	

due south of which, across the river gap, lies the craggy ridge above the Ku Chawe Hotel, the "Bally Clyde" ridge.

A dramatic ridge runs north from Chivunde, containing several peaks including Mbuli 5817, and Mtagaluka c. 5720, ending abruptly at the Fire Hut on 5119, overlooking the large cruciform church at Domasi Mission.

Between the lowest point of this rim, 4700 ft at Mulunguzi dam, and the highest (Malumba 6846) there is over 2000 feet difference in height.

The whole area is conveniently divided up into regions as shown on the accompanying diagram.



THE ROCKS

There are three main intrusions in the plateau complex: the inner core of syenite which is responsible for the basin-shape; the plateau rim which is composed of harder quartz-microsyenite; and, low down in the talus of boulders on the outer slopes, a ring-dyke of pale alkaline granite, well seen on the potato-path below the down road. These were probably intruded in this order. In addition a block of basement rock (gneiss) is floating up aloft on the inner core in the lower Mulunguzi Valley. There is a series of parallel faults trending E.S.E. on the Zomba side, the N-S rift faults on the western edge, and a maze of fractures in the Ngondolo area.

2. THE ROAD SYSTEM

The road system is clearly shown on the tourist map of the plateau, so that a lengthy description is unnecessary. Recently the main road junctions have all been numbered and new direction signs painted, so that the tortuosities of the inner roads have lost some of their mystifying character. In addition the clearing of the central basin area has meant that wide views are to be obtained from the inner roads which makes routes that have always been interesting even more worth while. When the newly-planted trees grow, of course, the view will be more circumscribed once more.

Most casual visitors make for, and most official visitors are taken to one of the "viewpoints" overlooking Zomba - either the Queen's View (Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 1957) or the Emperor's View (Haile Selassie, 1964) and in consequence use the Outer Circular Road, which in this part at least is one of the less interesting on the plateau. Its main points of interest to the carborne, before the coup d'oeil of Emperor's View is reached, are the Williams Falls, and the exquisite little fall about 200 yards above this at the sharp corner in the road which is often missed. Like Williams Falls itself, its full height is unsuspected from the road. The tall old trees through which the road winds up above the trout-ponds are Mulanje cedars and have been planted about 70 years. It is intended to preserve them as an amenity.

All roads can be slippery in the rains, particularly when superficially wet after being beaten hard. The inner roads are not usually much worse than the main road in this respect, but they can be very muddy if recently used for logging. The roads indicated on the "official" maps and signs as "not suitable for private cars" may or may not be passable; one can but try, and those who venture are not likely to run into any serious problems. Beware however of using old abandoned planting roads and firebreaks which are often bouldery - the clearance on a forestry lorry is greater than on your little car!

Both roads from the Chiradzulu area to Ku Chawe - the Outer Circular Road and the "New Road" - are apt to be rutted and bumpy. They run through steep terrain and the storms affect them quickly. The total length of navigable road on the plateau and outer slopes must be well over 50 miles, so it is hardly surprising if all of them are not always in first-class condition.

Of the less publicised roads on the lower slopes, the Kachere loop from Khola is usually navigable all round and there is a notice up when it is closed to Nankhunda. The Naisi - Mafufuni road is also usually all right, though rough in places. Beyond Mafufuni the road down to Mkwawa is very overgrown; that up to Chivunde is not (at the time of writing) completed and is blocked near the falls area by rocks and fallen trees. The Domasi valley road can be bad on the first (flat) part from Songani. Under good conditions it can be navigated as far as 3140; beyond it gets steadily rougher.

3. THE MAIN (POTATO) PATH

From the centre of Zomba (the market, the Kandodo, or the Club, according to taste) there is a direct route which runs, almost due North in a straight line, to the upper reaches of the Domasi valley. It is the route by which the inhabitants of this fertile and well-watered area bring their produce to market in Zomba; their shortest link with its urban delights. The part of it which climbs the plateau from Zomba to Ku Chawe has long been known as the "potato path"; doubtless for this reason. There is always traffic on this path; it is well-worn throughout.

Proceed by either Glyn Jones Road or Kaduya Road past the State House and so up the car road up the mountain to the sharp bend to the left just past the last house. Here the telephone wire to Ku Chawe goes up in a straight line ahead; the path does not follow this, but goes up steeply through the forest a little to the right. After a little it gradually eases off and crosses the "contour" road from the sawmill. Then again it rises steeply, threading the pale rocks of the ring-dyke, until it crosses the down road near the first big gully one meets on the way down. It goes straight across this - the road is much newer than the path - and climbs on the right of a big hollow, finally skirting its head closely while climbing steeply, and in wet weather very slipperily, through an open wood. There are fine views from here. Then it edges narrowly along under the Ku Chawe Hotel and emerges at the top clock shelter. Fitter men than I can reach here in 40 minutes. From here the path follows the road to Williams Falls; the map shows that the same line is being continued. Cross the flat rocks at the top of the fall, stride the stream and go straight up the opposite bank, now cleared and newly-planted. Good views across the central basin to Nawimbe ridge may soon be observed. The path bends slightly to the right through a fine belt of trees on the skyline and comes out near the road junction. It neatly bypasses this by a short-cut (thereby declaring its greater antiquity and importance) and the well-beaten path is clearly visible on the surface of the road going north. But not for long, because at a left-hand bend in the road it keeps straight on, taking advantage of the shallowness of valley at this point to nip across to the parallel road that has come up from junction 20. And so to the Outer Circular and the highest point of the path (5956) - intersection 10.

Here there is a choice of routes. Straight on down there is a very clear path, to the right of the village of thatched huts. It crosses the streams at point 5348 and then drops down the ridge to the main "South Domasi" River which it crosses to the village right at the head of the valley (Malonga).

Turning half-right from intersection 10 is the path to Ngondolo compound with its neat hedges; straight on down through the village the path goes on to Chilasanja. These routes are described more fully in Section 9.



4. WAYS UP

1. The Road. The main road up is well known and does not appeal to the walker. Nevertheless he will see a great deal more than the car-driver, whose attention is necessarily concentrated on the road itself. The road has given trouble where it crosses the open scarp under Nawimbe ridge. There are springs in the rock on the left and the water has eaten out a channel on the inside; there are several culverts and a new and bumpy one was put in in June 1972. This was necessary as a result of heavy rain (5 inches) on the night of 28/29 May, 1972, when the road was reduced to a thin skin of tar. Shoring up on the outer face has also been necessary and the heavy and late rains of 1974 have done much damage to the tar hereabouts.

Note the two clock-shelters, one at Khola and one at the top. Before the down road was completed in March 1968 passage over this narrow stretch was controlled by clock: up between the hour and quarter-past, down between the half-hour and quarter-to. Many people arriving at the clock around 20 past must have risked meeting an impatient down-goer on the narrows; the passage from clock to clock normally takes about 7 minutes for an ordinary car. The clocks have now gone and the shelters are often used by strawberry sellers. (Unless you drive a hard bargain at the end of the day, you can usually get them cheaper in Zomba market. But compassion usually wins, and even more so with the children who walk

up from the Domasi Valley to sell their potatoes at Chingwe's Hole). The words AND WINDING on the warning sign at the bottom are split African fashion with the consonants at the beginning of the syllable: A NDWINDING.

There are several short-cuts across the Khola hairpin. The first after the down-road goes off just before the first stream crossing and emerges high up above all the gullies. The second goes through the forest at the col where Wichinga Musi joins the main plateau, by the "double-corner" sign for downward traffic; it emerges just before the first big gully. The last one just cuts across the corner for about 200 yards where the Nankhunda road goes off.

2. Paths Up. Most people know the "potato path" but there are many more ways than appear at first sight. Determined walkers can probably find others. We describe them in order eastwards from the down-road junction.
- (a) About 100 yards before the junction a path goes up through the sparse forest and soon crosses the down-road (which of course it antedates). It climbs steeply up to the right through high open forest; when it emerges it becomes steeper and is shaded by fine evergreen trees; finally a steep pull leads to the road near the top, to the left of the big hollow under the Ku Chawe Hotel. To find the path for descent, you leave the road at the first big "promontory" on the way down; it is usually very clear.
 - (b) The Potato-path leaves the road at the first bridge after the last house in Mountain Road, and has already been described under (3).
 - (c) A path goes up from the elbow in Mountain Road by what used to be the Attorney-general's house (where the drives go off with a No Through Road sign to the houses above the road). It goes up to the saw-mill road; at this point it is best to turn left for a short distance until the potato path is reached.
 - (d) The Water-Leat. Take the road up past Malemia Hospital and park the car at the No Entry sign which bars further progress to the Waterworks. A path goes straight up through the wood to the perimeter fence; turn right and follow the fence to its top right-hand corner. There is a gate here from the Waterworks enclosure; the old open leat and two pipes come in here. Turn right and follow the leat; it leads round a gully into the main Mulunguzi gorge; the pipes go on where it stops. They can be followed - the first bend looks narrower than it is - and lead up to a dam under the broken series of waterfalls. When the river is high it is an impressive place. Climbers have been up the gorge from here to the main Mulunguzi Dam but there is no route for walkers. There is however a very steep route up the water-pipe to Hyrex Corner on the down road; there are paths leading back to it from the leat before the gully is reached. But it is very overgrown and not comfortable!
 - (e) Mulunguzi Ridge. This is one of the pleasantest ways up the plateau. Take the Old Naisi Road from above the Parliament Building as far as

the bridge over the Mulunguzi River. About 30 yards beyond the bridge, immediately before you cross a second small bridge, there is a path going up on the left. It eases off, then climbs again into the wide fire-break below the planted forest. There is a fine view of Parliament and the various Government buildings from this corner. Turn right here along the fire-break until you reach (in about $\frac{1}{4}$ - mile) the elbow of the forest road which has come up from Naisi. Go up the upper part of this for about 200 yards or so until you see a path going at right angles to the road into the forest. This is the route; it leads straight to the left-hand top corner of the forest and then out into the open. There is a path straight up, right on the ridge. It climbs steeply among rocks, then the slope eases and you find yourself at the foot of a plantation of gums which is very conspicuous from all sides. There is a path to the left of the trees; it leads to a crossing of a small stream but beyond this the forest is young and difficult to get through. It is better to go on climbing to the right of the gums, up the main Mulunguzi fire-break until a track cuts through the plantation to the end of the road from Mandala falls. You can either follow this all the way to the falls or drop down the lowest section of the Chagwa Dam path to the Mulunguzi dam.

- (f) Mulunguzi telephone wire. There is a very conspicuous cut in the forest immediately below the beacon on Mulunguzi summit, to the right of the big slab, looking from below. It is very steep at the top; the lower end is not easy to find. (This takes the telephone wire up to the Mulunguzi watchman's hut.) It starts from the firebreak above the forest road which runs above Naisi Spur and loops back as described under (e); this road crosses a gully and ends up against a high rocky cliff. It is possible to scramble up, and the firebreak continues on; or the same firebreak can be reached by taking the most likely-looking path from the road above the spur. (They are a bit indeterminate, not being through routes, and vary from season to season.) Frankly I have not tried this route and the top end looks punishing.
- (g) Rock climbers have three times forced a route up Sphinx buttress. The first ascent is described in the Mulanje Mountain Club journal No 2, May 1971. Since then in January 1974 Crispin Agnew, Andrew and Janet Metcalfe made the ascent. Regrettably Crispin suffered damage to face and jaw from a dislodged flake of rock, and the party spent an uncomfortable night on the slabs belayed to vellozia. They completed the climb the following day. Later on, Andrew Metcalfe and Frank Eastwood repeated the climb in about 8 hours by a more direct but more severe route. Walkers will be sufficiently impressed by viewing the Sphinx from above.

5. THE RIVER

The heart of the plateau is the river; its geographical heart, and its aesthetic heart. Human nature responds to the movements of running water; everyone enjoys the river. After heavy rain the Mandala falls may run red with eroded soil; after a long dry season the water in the dams may be low and the river pools sadly stagnant; in places amid the boulders only a trickle of water may be seen. But the river is a permanent stream and practically all the year round its clear, bubbling, bilharzia-free water is dancing for all to enjoy. The river, of course, or the water which goes to form it, has made the plateau what it is. The plateau is like a great bubble whose hardest and highest rock is on its rim, and inward drainage, aided by a geological fault or line of weakness along which the river finally runs and spills down into Zomba, has been responsible for the saucer-shaped form of the plateau that we know.

The straight fault line, from just west of Chiradzulu peak to the Mulunguzi dam, is occupied by a stream - the "fault-stream" let us call it - which becomes the main river in the later part of its course. This feature is repeated all over the plateau; the main river continually spills sideways into a deeper, parallel valley, which is occupied by a much smaller, shorter stream.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of fishermen, and the way in which the forestry caters for their needs, you can walk the whole river from its source in Mulunguzi Marsh to the final dam where it spills over into the gorge which leads down to Zomba. Except in the upper reaches the path is well-cut and regularly maintained. Everywhere it is a delight to walk; whether it is better to walk upstream or downstream is a matter of personal preference. Ideally I suppose one should walk the whole way down from the Marsh to the road-bridge in Zomba; though I have walked every section of this, I must confess never to have walked the whole at a stretch. But let us describe it this way, at least as far as the final dam. The walk is divided into seven convenient sections by the road bridges, and the road link at Williams Falls.

Section 1 Outer Circular Road to Orangeberry Bridge.

There are paths of sorts on both sides of the marsh, but that on the right bank (north) is the better through route. Leave the Outer Circular down an old firebreak about 400 yards along from the Chivunde cross-roads. It is overgrown but wide, and turns right along the marsh edge. There is a side-stream which has to be crossed on stones and bits of planks through very swampy ground; after this the going is better and the path begins to make up to the right into a forest road. Follow this to the left until it emerges into the rain-gauge road at a bridge. The forest has been cleared recently here and the rock and bracken mixture revealed by this is very attractive. Near the bridge there was a saw set up; the resulting

pile of sawdust supports a splendid growth of orange berries which are plentiful along the stream here; they ripen in late November and can be as big as a thumb-joint. Their flavour is as good as their colour suggests.

Section 2 Orangeberry Bridge to Tree-fern Bridge.

From the bridge the path follows the left bank; in a few hundred yards it becomes clear that the river is perched high on the side of a deep parallel valley to the left; the path turns down left first, the river doing the same about 50 yards farther on. It is worth diverging right from the falling path to see the waterfalls. This is first time the river spills sideways into a deeper parallel valley. The path drops steeply - it is often very overgrown here - and crosses the side stream on a plank. From here it turns right and skirts the high forest close to the river; just before the road is reached it threads through some fine tree-ferns which suggests a suitable name for this bridge.

Section 3 Tree-fern Bridge to Williams Falls.

The path is at first cut in the left bank very near the water and starts with a steep drop down a road-drain about 40 yards from the bridge. The river runs deep and slow here and the ferns are very fine. An alternative route is to go up the road to the left for about 200 yards when an old land-rover track goes off on the right. It makes straight through high forest to join the other one above the falls where the river again drops sideways into a very deep trough. The stream in this comes down from a marsh below the col on the main road by Chagwa dam. The fall itself is quite charming with its pools half-way down and the tree set on its island to satisfy the romantic artist. Though it can just be seen from the road, it is impossible without walking a few yards to guess the depth of the gorge down the side wall of which the river drops. The water in the gorge is dammed back by the little dam above the Williams Falls; this supplies the Ku Chewa area with water. At the Williams Falls the road has to be used for a few yards; below the notice a firebreak drops to the water, and here the next section of the path begins with a leap across the river from a boulder to the further bank. If you walk this section upwards it is necessary to leave the main road where the fall appears opposite, drop down to the right a few yards and cross the side-stream. The path climbs steeply alongside the fall. About $\frac{2}{3}$ way up the path to the right is the forest route; after some way it forks and a path goes down left, crosses the river path and the river, and goes straight up to the short-cut road.

Section 4 Williams Falls to Araucaria Bridge

The river runs here for the most part in a deep gorge and the path follows it pretty closely. The forest on the right bank is one of the oldest on the plateau and no doubt is due for thinning before long. Having once tried to bring a party through this way from the old Outer Circular Road to the stream, by the path marked plainly on the "official" maps, I have no hesitation in saying that it is at the moment impenetrable. But the cut river path is delightful and soon comes out on the Inner Circular

Road at the bridge.

Section 5 Araucaria Bridge to the Main Road.

Considering the attractions of this stretch and its nearness to roads, it is surprising how few people one ever meets on it. Proceed along the Inner Circular Road to the right for a few yards from the bridge until the road veers away from the river; the path drops down among the araucarias which grow so splendidly here and in a short distance it crosses the stream on a plank bridge and climbs a little on the left bank. Near the highest point a path goes up to the left to the main road. The river path leads to the waterslide by which the river gains access to the main fault-valley. This is a wonderfully open place with the summit of Malumbe in full view straight in front. The river dashes joyfully down big slabs of rock; from time to time it models in the small its own progress on a larger scale, cutting channels across the main slope and spilling out in a small fall at the end of them. At the bottom the path turns sharp left - the loop to the right leads to a bridge over the river but this only leads to a fishing stance. There is no path up the fault-stream from here. Having joined the fault-stream the river flows peacefully down to the bridge past the trout-ponds. The path becomes broad and flat and runs some way from the river. (Just a few yards after the sharp turn in the path there is a way across the river - it begins with a leap onto a boulder, awkward in the reverse direction. This path goes up onto the old road from the Forestry Offices' Village). The purist can turn right again to the river path after meeting the main road; but he will be forced back in a few yards by the river turning to flow under the road bridge.

Section 6 Main Road Bridge to Mandala Falls.

This is the most popular section of the path because it is the most accessible. There is one steep drop in the path; in the reverse direction you can keep on along the water's edge instead of climbing it, but you are forced up to the higher path in the end. There are usually blue wagtails in this stretch (motacilla clara); they like fast-moving streams. The falls are at their best, of course, after heavy rain. If it is too heavy, the river can run red with eroded soil.

Section 7 Mandala Falls to Mulunguzi Dam.

This is a quiet stretch of the stream and the influence of the dam is soon felt as the water slows and deepens. One could be in some quiet dale with no thought of the 2500' drop ahead. The dam is a beautiful place; it reminds one strongly of certain scenes in the English Lakes. When I first saw it a sort of Alice-through-the-Looking-Glass attempt was being made to raise its level by planks covered with black polythene sheeting. The stanchions used to support the planks are still there but I have never heard or seen any evidence of the idea being revived; it seemed a most dangerous expedient.

6. AROUND KU CHAWE

Ku Chawe Hotel itself lies on the continuation of Nawimbe ridge which runs due east and ends at the Radio-telephone station, or even more definitely at the outer corner on the down-road where everybody stops to take in the panorama. This ridge has no name, but can be conveniently called the "Bally Clyme" ridge after the house near its crest. Much of this little ridge is in the grounds of private cottages, but its crest can be attained at a number of places by those who are on good terms with the owners or who venture in the middle of the week when some of the cottages are unoccupied. There are two good public tracks from the road serving these down to the down road. To get to the first one, go down the road to the American cottage but turn right just before reaching the house; the second turns down about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile further on, and comes out just opposite the dam - actually two very obvious paths converge on this one.

The down road can also be reached along the road by taking two left turns; the first is labelled "Coneybear", and the second turns left just as Miss Coneybear's drive is reached. This is a private road not available to cars; it comes out at Hyrax Corner, as we may name it, since the boulders here have become a favourite sunning place for a family of hyraxes. Below the corner there is a water-tank at the head of the pipe-line; below this again is Hyrax Pinnacle, a sharp detached spike of rock which is a conspicuous feature of this corner when seen from many places in Zomba.

A short distance below the watchman's hut on the down road there is a long drilling-rod sticking out of the rock on the right. Nicknamed "Excalibur" by the forestry people, it has attracted to itself the legend that whoever succeeds in pulling it out will become the next Forestry Director.

There is also a little path which diverges to the right from Miss Coneybear's drive; it drops to the down-road just by the watchman's hut.

There are a number of short-cuts by which the locals from Ku Chawe get to various points on the plateau - this includes the children coming to the Chawe school. The route to the Forestry Quarters along the telephone line is much used and is shorter and more interesting than any of the three roads. Take the outer circular road to the bend just after the one-way road comes in on the right. When the telephone wire goes off on the right there is a path which follows in a dead straight line to the Quarters; it drops to a stream, just grazes the old and winding road (now largely disused) and comes up parallel to the "new cut" road by 5233.

There is another pleasant cut-off of the windings of the inner circular road; it goes gently down to the left about 600 yards from "Araucaria Bridge"; drops steeply into the river-trough where four streams meet and regains the road at the left edge of the forest. There is a cut across left to the old road just before the end. There is also a cut from this same old road at its nearest point to the main river; it goes down in a straight line

to the river which can be crossed on boulders (if not running too high).

There is also a path from the school (and camp-site) which goes straight on at the road bend and drops to the road from the bridge, crosses it, and emerges on the river-path at the first big bend below the bridge.

The new hut across from Ku Chawe by the "potato market" is scheduled to house a map and a model of the plateau and will help to familiarize people with its roads and paths; such assistance has long been needed, and is very welcome. This hut is built entirely of Mulanje cedar (*Widdringtonia Whytsi*); a tree indigenous to Mulanje but now planted extensively on the plateau.

Geologically, this lower part of the Mulunguzi basin is an "inlier" which is made of the same basement rock as lies under the plain 2000 feet below; it is faulted off from the main pluton of the plateau on the north side. Opinions differ as to whether it is a "roof pendant" or "raft" which has been pushed up from below, or a "screen" which is rooted in the basement rock.

7. NAWIMBE RIDGE

This is simple enough to describe - take the road west from Ku Chawe to the skyline top (i.e. the top of the old cableway to the sawmill. The enterprising Swiss would have had a funi of some kind up here years ago, even in the absence of snow!). The way goes straight ahead up the ridge on the edge of the wood (now felled); it is very steep as far as the fire-tower, and the summit of Nawimbe (5928) with its beacon is immediately beyond.

From here, just follow the ridge to Malumbe, straight ahead and 1000 feet higher up. Now if only there were some grazing animals like sheep to keep the grass down, or if this were a popular walk and fifty people undertook it every weekend, the rest would be simple. But unfortunately neither of these is the case and your ease of progress is likely to depend on how recently the firebreaks have been cut; you will do better in June than in February. Don't be tempted to drop down right where the going is easier along the forest edge; the ridge climbs steadily and the way back is hard and discouraging. As you get higher the grass thins; the path winds among rock outcrops and in the end you reach Malumbe. Things are better up here now the buildings and fence have gone and there is more space to move around and admire the view. You can descend by the zigzag road and use Chiradzulu path (c) to gain lower levels. There is no very easy path off the ridge to the "New Road".

8. CHIRADZULU

Chiradzulu is the wooded dome of height 6660 ft that dominates the view over the main basin from anywhere in the neighbourhood of Ku Chawe. Despite its appearance from this side, its summit is in fact bare rock with very thin grass cover, topped with a large cairn. There is a wide nearly level area on the summit, and about 200 yards east of the cairn there is usually a watchman's hut, traditionally built of matope with a grass roof. I say usually, because late in the rains it can become very decayed, and in fact once the roof poles finally collapsed and the roof descended to the ground while I was looking on, with a number of friends.

This summit commands views of the plateau basin itself and of considerable distances on all sides in clear weather; Mulanje, Malose Mountain, the upper Shire valley; only the higher peak of Malumbe nearly cuts off the view in the Blantyre direction. It is not a great effort to reach it from the road to Chingwe's Hole, and the result on a clear day can be extremely rewarding. Yet, apart from the watchman, I have never met anyone on the mountain that I have not taken there myself.

- (a) From the east, the way up is by the telephone wire from the road. It is steep, straight and unmistakable, and leads to the hut; the cairn is easily reached across the flat.
- (b) From the west. This is more tricky to find. Behind the seat at the Chingwe's hole car park on the main road there is a firebreak about 10 yards back from the road. Get into it and follow it South for about 40 yards, when a very indistinct path leads off to the left behind a pine-tree - a bushy *pinus patula* and the only one hereabouts. It dodges left and right when it comes to the telephone wire, and leads out of the scrub onto a steep slope with much bare rock. The easiest way up is to zigzag to the right and work back to the left; at the top in the centre the path goes straight through the heather bushes to the summit cairn.

Coming down by this path, make a bee-line for the seat which is in full view after the first few yards; you soon hit a bare stony patch of ground: the path goes out of the right-hand bottom corner of this. When the steep rock-slope opens out in front of you, you can ease the slope by first dropping on ledges to the left.

There are two routes which do not actually lead to the summit of Chiradzulu but which so very much belong to it that it is convenient to describe them here. In fact it makes a good round trip to go up from the Outer Circular by one of them, traverse the summit and return by the other.

- (c) To the fault-stream head from the Forestry Quarters. Take the outer circular road for about a mile to the first big stream crossing - before crossing the main fault-stream at 5434 where the little dam is; soon after this the telephone wire goes up steeply on the left (453025).

Follow it; it is a bit overgrown and can be boggy at first but it improves. At the last pine-tree on the right the path leaves the telephone-wire cut and goes off to the right through thick undergrowth; it climbs steeply and at a very steep rock pull-up it comes suddenly into the open. The way ahead is barred by an overhanging rock; the path passes it on the right and zigzags back above it. The way is now clear; after a bit it levels out and passes under some artificial terraces which have just (1974) been laid out for a new camp-site; it reaches the road at the river crossing (448031). The river here runs in a deep crack, a bit like the Duddon at Birks Bridge; it taps a basin which has eaten back almost to the rift-scarp edge; the path from Chingwe's hole through the plantations to Malumbe runs across the col. Considering how small this basin is there is always a surprising volume of water in this stream. On reaching the road, turn left for Malumbe, right for Chiradzulu.

- (d) From the Forestry Quarters to Chiradzulu summit. This is a varied and interesting route, easy to follow. Take the Inner Circular Road from the lower end of the Forestry Village to the point where it crosses the fault-stream and turns east. Just before it crosses the stream a path goes off left at a small angle with the road; it runs through the wood for a short distance, comes to the stream, crosses it, turns half left and climbs through the forest. Just under half-a-mile's stiff pull brings you to the Outer Circular Road at 459030. To locate this point on the Outer Circular is not easy - the path is easily missed. Go on from the 5434 bridge to the second inward loop for a gully crossing; there is only a shallow gully here and little water. About 30 yards on, as soon as the road turns back to its main direction, one of the road drains on the right ends in a path dropping steeply - this is the path. It crosses straight over the road, but follows the road for a few yards at the top of the bank until turning left again and climbing; the path is thin, but it goes on! After about 10 minutes climbing you come out into the firebreak alongside an older section of forest - this is an alternative way up from the Outer Circular Road if you have missed the other path. The firebreak peters out but the path goes on in the same line, on the crest of the ridge; it becomes stony and climbs through undergrowth, then veers right and down into a big gully and crosses a sizeable stream - many blackberries hereabouts. Veering to the right again it climbs out of the gully, then turns sharp left, back on course. From here it runs pretty straight through tall rain forest into an open patch just before reaching the Chingwe's hole road at the col at 456040. Turn left and in a few yards you reach the telephone wire going up to Chiradzulu summit as described under (a).

This walk is highly recommended as an introduction in the compass of just over two miles to the wide variety of terrain and scenery on

the plateau.

- (e) There is a conspicuous path which starts from the seat at the Chingwe's hole car-park and makes straight for Malumbe. It passes through two old experimental plantations and rises again to join the road above the barrier which leads to the zigzags. If you want to climb Malumbe you can short-cut these, but it is better to do this when descending. The new path going out to the right leads to Nemitambo lookout, over the Shire valley; in many ways the scarp is more impressive here than at Chingwe's hole. You can cross direct to the Malumbe road by climbing through the grass at the obvious place; there is a path of sarts and you come out on the road by the narrow "neck".



9. NGONDULO

The area between the ridge running down to the Domasi Valley from Chingwe's hole and the path from Chivunde down to the bridge at Chilasanje is one of the wildest on the plateau and is for the most part very rough country, deeply cut by streams feeding the Domasi river whose gorges are full of ancient trees and thick undergrowth. The western half of this area, west of the main path from the village at 5956 (intersection 10) which runs close to Zomba fire-tower, is an extraordinary jumble of great whale-back bosses of rock, cut by gorges with vertical sides which makes a great part of it totally impassable. Even small streams run in deep cracks whose sides are smooth water-worn rock and bar all progress. Tantalizing grassy uplands seem cut off on all sides by these precipitous slopes. The surveyors obviously had a difficult task in this area, and the map is hopelessly inadequate; contours may be drawn with the eye of faith in gently rounded curves, but all the gorges are far deeper than they suggest. To add to the difficulties, the forest on

the upper ground is old and its floor is liberally carpeted with brashing, so that it is not easy even to get to view points from which the chasms may be seen. But it is worth the effort, and there are a few easy and very rewarding routes. To the obvious question whether there is enough water in these streams to cut these enormous gorges, the answer is no; these are fracture lines in the rock, deepened and worn into this cusped cross-section by coursing water.

We begin from the western end.

- (a) Chiradzulu car-park to Malonga. Where the road to Chingwe's Hole comes out into the open grassland under Chiradzulu, there is a widening in the road which acts as a "car-park" with a view to the north. A few yards beyond this to the West a well-trodden path goes off N.W. at an angle to the road; it passes through the conspicuous group of pale boulders which stands in the middle of the sea of grass, skirts the left edge of the wood and crosses the stream on the left where its course is sharply angled. Mounting the ridge in front it soon crosses a second stream and rises to the final ridge on the edge of the scarp. From here the whole valley-head with its populous villages and prosperous cultivation is suddenly disclosed, with the pyramidal peak of Ntondeya as a backcloth. The path falls steeply down rock to meet the most westerly version of path (b); a sharp left turn and a zigzag down leads to the more level fields of Malonga. Here there is a variety of paths, but they can all be contemplated before you begin the descent. It is possible to work up left back to the road after crossing either stream; there is no path, but the grass is usually fairly good going. The ridge after the second stream leads back to the edge of the plateau, but there is a deep rift between you and Chingwe's Hole.
- (b) Chiradzulu car-park to Malonga East. This second path is rather more difficult to find at first. Either go east for a few yards along the road until you strike the firebreak on the edge of the forest; a little way down this a path cuts through the grass to the left: or else, go straight from the raspberry bushes at the car-park (they ripen in May) along a thin path to the north which connects a series of bare rock-patches and eventually strikes the cut path along which you turn left. This goes straight on down and becomes clearer; it crosses the stream just below the point where three streams unite. Here there is a choice of ways. The plain path straight ahead swings left and drops over steep rock to meet path (a) coming down even more steeply on the left. Alternatively, turn right just across the stream along a faint path in the bottom; it climbs to the left to a col and goes straight down among the proteas in the shallow valley ahead until it meets the conspicuous cut at the limits of cultivation which goes down left to Malonga. At the col it is only a short step to the sharp knob to the right (Boulder Top); this commands a splendid view over the South Domasi gorges. It is probably possible to continue ahead down the ridge and meet path (d) near the stream-crossing, but I have not tried.

- (c) Routes from road-junction 11. A rocky knob confronts you at the junction; it can be climbed, but the immediate view is limited by trees, and other routes are more rewarding. The telephone wire runs along the far side of it; it can be reached either by crossing the knob, or by traversing the right flank of the knob along the forest edge, or by leaving the road a few hundred yards northwards, at the bend. In any event, the wire leads up to the Chingwe's Hole road above the zigzags, and cuts off quite a corner; there is a good path close to the wire.

The Green Saddle. This is an interesting place, and well worth a visit. Leave the outer circular road at the same corner, at the place where the telephone wire has its first post inside the forest. From here there is an old land-rover track, indistinct at first but becoming a good path which leads west of north and ultimately emerges from the forest. Here you cross a great pavement of bare rock; then a curious strip of grass in a depression, straight as a road between rock verges. Climb the rock slope opposite and turn left up the crest to the summit; aloes and vellozia abound. There is a cairn on the summit, but it is seldom visited. The view is superb, and the immediate rock scenery impressive. You will enjoy this summit. To the north of you is the sharp hill which plunges 600 feet on the far side into the Ngondolo river gorge; it is wild and bush-covered. The problem of how one gets to it is as yet unsolved - the hills all around look very trackless and the gorges very cuspidal! As a first attempt one should obviously follow the firebreak (the first rock pavement) down to the valley to the left (which is the head of the main South Damasi River).

- (d) Routes from road-junction 10 (5956). This is the summit of the potato path and the site of the old Ngondolo Forestry Compound, now a collection of thatched traditional houses; the new Ngondolo with its attractive hedges and brick houses roofed with malata is half-a-mile or so down the track which goes North-east from this point.

The path due north leads to the thatched village in a few yards; if you bear left keeping the houses on your right, the path bends round to a water-point on the firebreak. The firebreak can be followed and gives a fine view down the gorge; the problems are very obvious from here. In January all this slope is carpeted with *Watsonia*; a little later with the small *montbretia*-like *gladiolus*; later still with the beautiful scarlet disc *ornithantha*. The firebreak ends at a side-gorge in a cuspidal groove; the green saddle is tantalizingly near, but the walls are very sheer and smooth.

You can also cut across right, below the village, to the obvious neck where the forest ends; from here you can go left up the big base and there is a wonderful view from the summit. There is sheer rock between you and the Damasi Valley and progress is barred this way. But if you follow the forest edge to the right you run into the main

path which has come straight down from point 5956.

This path goes due north and drops straight down steep rocks worn smooth by the feet of countless girls carrying baskets of potatoes up from the valley; they can be slippery when very wet. It crosses a stream and rises gently through indigenous trees; this is most attractive country. The main stream crossing becomes obvious ahead; there is a stream on the left which falls over smooth rocks; the path crosses the main stream just before this other and a third stream join it; after rains all is loud with the sound of many waters. The path then contours along the steep right bank of the falling stream; before long the other path (e) drops steeply into it from the ridge above.

- (e) Starting again from point 5956, you take the north-east track which leads to new Ngondolo, but after a few hundred yards a firebreak goes diagonally down to the left. Descend this and continue across a band of steep rock down to a small stream, then across a larger one - the main Ngondolo stream - and up to the col to the right of Zomba fire-tower. Here the main path from new Ngondolo to Kasonga comes in on the right. You can diverge up to the fire-tower - it gives good views. Continuing straight on you cross a grassy col and very soon the path divides. Straight on is a path (f) which falls rapidly and soon drops down a ridge into the Domasi Valley, heading for the small village just above Kumbawa School. But if you bear to the left on the high ground you continue for some way through almost level park-like country until the path begins to fall steeply and soon joins the path (d) which has come up from crossing the Ngondolo stream. Boulder Top stands out well across the gorge. The circular route combining paths (d) and (e) to this point makes a very attractive walk and takes about 2 hours, but you will want to allow longer to enjoy it fully. It is possible to turn left from route (e) a little earlier and drop down to meet path (d) at the river crossing, but this is easier in the dry-season. Shortly after path (d) joins it, the path divides again. The left branch goes very steeply down to the river and crosses it on a series of boulders; after a little it divides to lead to the various settlements that make up Malonga. The right branch continues on the right bank to cross the river a little lower down; it then makes straight for the bridge by which the main valley path crosses the (North) Domasi River. Once across the bridge you can go uphill for Kasonga and Malosa mountain, or turn right down the main track for Kumbawa and Chilasanje.
- (f) This is the school path from Ngondolo; it also divides as it begins to fall. The right branch goes straight to the school; the other continues down the ridge to the left of the highest rocks. Note the big overhanging rock-shelter across the valley on your left. There is a protruding nose of rock on the right as the rocks come to an end; it has a good view down the valley. After a bit the path turns abruptly to the

right, and leads to a river crossing about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile above the school.

- (g) Routes from Ngondolo. Just after the main path comes in on the left of the road to the village, a wide track goes through the forest on the left. This goes to the fire-tower, or, bearing right at the col, to path (e) to Kasonga.

The forestry village is attractive with its beautifully-kept hedges. At its end, on the right, a path goes down to the stream and continues to the road elbow at 489050. Straight on, the road comes to a turn-around for lorries and becomes a path going down the firebreak, through the forest at first, and then steeply down the crags. When the firebreak levels out on the crest of a little ridge it is crossed by a path at right-angles which has come down from the elbow of the road at 489050; this path goes down left to the upper bridge over the Domasi river at Chilasanje. To get into this path from the road elbow you go through the rocks on the left, cross an open patch of ground and another belt of trees, to emerge on a flat rock with a steep scarp in front. The path makes a way down on the right of the rock, falls steeply left to the stream and climbs the opposite ridge to the "cross-paths".

The main path continues down the firebreak but soon leaves it, unexpectedly bearing right. It crosses the stream, contours along on the level for a little, meeting yet another path falling from the end of the 489050 road, and then bears down to the left and makes straight for the lower bridge at Chilasanje. All these paths are well-marked, since there is constant traffic between Ngondolo and Chilasanje. By contrast, the mid-level cut-line, marked boldly in red on the 1:50 000 map as crossing to the Kanjedza path, is here almost non-existent.

10. CHIVUNDE VALLEY

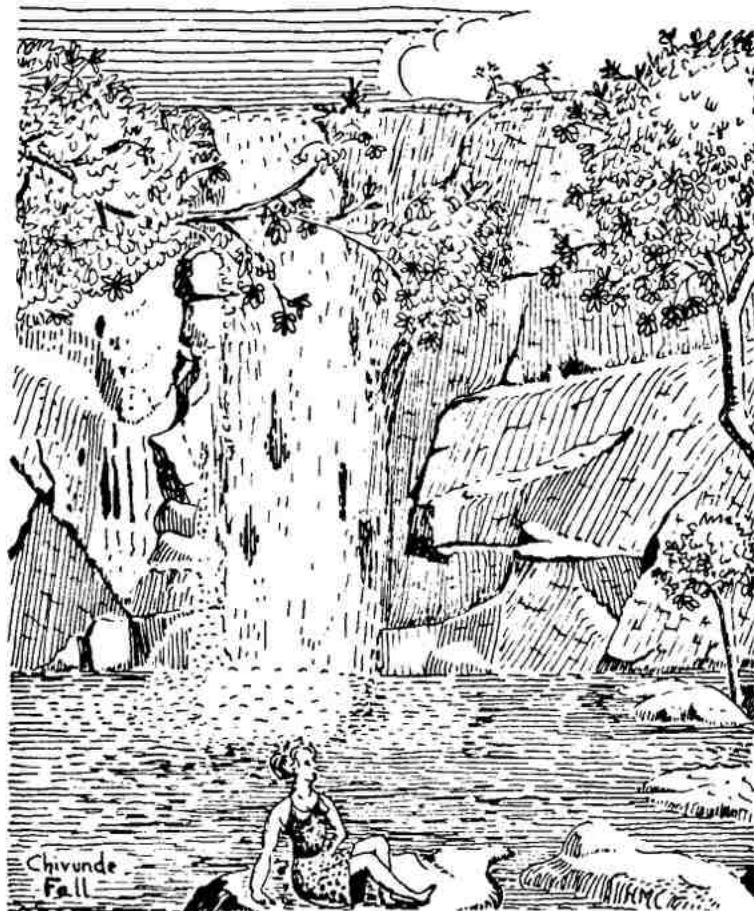
To those who know it, the Chivunde valley is likely to hold first place of all the plateau in their affections. For one thing it is remote and quiet; the road down it is marked (on the map) "not open to the public" and (on the ground, less menacingly)" not suitable for private cars". In point of fact the road is usually quite safely navigable, even by small cars, as far as the watersplash, though admittedly it can be tricky after heavy rain on its hair-pins. The three crossings of bare rock in quick succession immediately after the village daunt the uninitiated and they venture no farther. Yet this selfsame road almost unbelievably goes all the way to Naisi cross-roads and civilization - except that there are fallen trees across it, great boulders obstructing it, and at one place I met a large box, padlocked fortunately, labelled MABOMBA right in the middle of it. For it is being opened up, and I suppose one day it will be a standard car route to the plateau. Selfishly I hope that day will be distant.

Three roads diverge off this "main-road" out of the valley to the left; the first starts at a hairpin and proceeds on a level contour at first with wide views over the Domasi valley; it then rises and returns through the planted forest to the Outer Circular; it is usually more navigable than it looks at first sight. A second road turns back off it to the right with a hairpin bend soon after the start; it comes to an end very soon, but a path goes on down to Chilasanje Bridge in the Domasi valley. Road number 3 starts as a carpet of pine-needles and diverges gently up to the left about 200 yards after the first fork; it runs level through the new trees, then turns sharp right. From the corner it should be possible to find a path left to the watchman's hut on Kanjedza. Continuing along the road, you descend by a series of zigzags to a fine grove of acacia trees; the road comes to a stop, but there is a path on the left which leads into the firebreak and down to Chivunde Falls. So much for the roads. The paths are really interesting because they lead through open, rocky, unforested country. Most of the hairpins on the main road are short-cutted, usually along the telephone wire; the cuts are obvious. If you have to walk the road, take them. They save time, but are not more interesting than the road is - indeed one can usually see even less from them. By walkers the road is best avoided - there are plenty of better routes.

- (a) Outer Circular to the Watersplash. Leave the Outer Circular in the big firebreak at signpost 9 and go straight across, at right angles to the firebreak, not down the Chivunde road. The path leads past big pale rocks and down into the village - note how they even grow potatoes and cassava here in little ridges of soil on the flat bare rocks. Go out onto the road, over the three patches of bare rock, and as it turns leftwards into the forest there is a big bare rock on the right with a brown path across its centre. This is the way; the path drops down, approaching the stream, and emerges to the left of a waterslide on bare slabs. The firebreak track from the Naisi ridge comes in here; but the watersplash track goes on, keeping left of a small copse; it drops down to cross a side stream and coasts along on a fairly level contour across a rocky slope; finally it drops down through a narrow belt of trees right on top of the watersplash. Here there is (sometimes) a bridge but the water is a joy to splash through and is irresistible to children, especially when it contains tadpoles.
- (b) Chivunde Peak to the Valley road. These are firebreak paths and they link the watchman's hut at 5939 (Songani lookout) with those at 5119 above Domasi Mission and the hut at 512058 (Kanjedza) whose height (about 5420) is not marked.

Follow the firebreak from the Chivunde peak area - if you climb to the beacon you must first head straight inland because there is a chasm in front of you. Follow the firebreak to the crest of the next big rise; cross to the inner firebreak and at the highest point of this there is a path going off between boulders to the left. It soon falls

steeply, following a suggestion of a runnel of water. If you keep in to the left among scattered trees and bushes you cross some boggy places but the path leads to the village on a level contour. But if you keep down on a direct line making for where the firebreak runs up the opposite hillside, you will come into path (a) at the river crossing. The firebreak may not be very clear, but as you descend there is a conspicuous small round copse of pines on the rock slabs across the river. Path (a) goes from left to right just behind this; if you make for its left edge you can turn right into path (a), cross the stream (which may be dry) and in a few yards there is a wall of rock on the left. Turn left under this and keep straight on; you will soon come into the firebreak. At the crest of the hill you turn left round the edge of the wood and the path leads across a damp flat into the road. (The firebreak goes on as boldly marked on the map, but it does not look promising). If you turn right down the wire, just before the road, you can follow the wire all the way to Kanjedza, crossing the road three times. Alternatively you can diverge at the river crossing onto path (a) and make for the watersplash. The direct descent from the far side of the col before Mbuli to the watersplash is possible but not recommended.



- (c) Watersplash to Chivunde Fall. Chivunde Fall is in Aroady but you will have to provide you own Hamadryads. It requires a little effort to reach it, which ensures that you are not likely to find a crowd there. Go down the road from the watersplash for about 500 yards, until it crosses a large bare rock-slab by a low built-up causeway. A fire-break which may be overgrown - or which may have disappeared, since at the time of writing (Dec.1974) extensive felling is going on here - goes down left here; the path is on its right verge; it drops down, enters the wood and soon reaches the river. It is often very damp with leaf-mould and very indistinct; few come this way, but the path goes on and suddenly emerges from deep shade and ramping vegetation onto bare open rock - great whalebacks of it. It threads its way over these until the last one and the widest of all reveals itself as the lip of the fall. The view, dramatically punctuated by peak 5119 with its hut on top, is superb; all human ways are cut off by thick cypress forest; the river shares your joy.

To get to the bottom of the fall, work round to the right; there is a path and it cuts sharply back to the pool into which the fall drops. From here, the river seems to come out of the sky. So far as I know there is no law against bathing in this stream (as there is in Mulunguzi) and the pool invites it. There is a second fall below.

The main path goes on - it can be very overgrown - and in 50 yards or so most unexpectedly emerges at a hairpin in a road; the same road as you started on. At the moment no cars can get here; alas - it may be another Williams Falls at weekends if they do. Back up the road to the watersplash will take a good 45 minutes - it is circuitous and it winds uphill all the way!

- (d) Chivunde fall to Kanjedza. This is simple to describe, since there is a firebreak nearly all the way. But there is about 700 feet of climbing. Cross the stream at the obvious place near the road; the path and fire-break go straight up, as does the telephone wire. The wire goes straight to the hut; it can be followed, how easily depends on when the bush was last cut. If the bush under the telephone wire has not been cut, you can proceed up the firebreak a little longer until the older forest on the left gives way to much more newly planted trees. At the time of writing, this area is clear, and a conspicuous tree in the firebreak marks the point where you should diverge left; if you strike the right place, a few yards through the older forest lands you at the end of zigzag road number 3; you climb up this through the acacia trees to rejoin the main road. The firebreak diverges to the right after a bit, and it is more interesting to follow this; there are splendid views over the Domasi valley. At the top around the 5200 contour a path goes down right into the valley. The firebreak turns left, where it begins to turn right again you bear left and a few yards brings you to the hut. From here a sharp left turn takes you

down to the road - number three above. There may not be much of a path straight ahead but the telephone wire goes straight to the main road (and across it).

- (e) To Makwawa. From the loop of road below 5119 a path goes straight on down; it soon meets the road again where it has come from the loop by the fall; after crossing two more hairpins, follow the road to the right out onto the bluff overlooking the big cruciform church at the Mission. From here a path goes down to the Scout centre at Makwawa. The road turns south and meanders along the outer slopes: a long eight miles to Naisi.

11. MBULI RIDGE

The Mbuli ridge (for want of a better name) runs northward from Chivunde peak (5939) to point 5119 above Domasi Mission; it forms the north-eastern rim of the plateau and is very conspicuous from the main road to Liwonde. The full traverse of the ridge is strenuous; progress depends on the state of the firebreaks and the nature of the undergrowth, but the going is always rough because the ground is bouldery throughout. But it is full of interest and the rock scenery is exhilarating.

- (a) Songani lookout to Sphinx Buttress. This part of the ridge is well frequented and usually quite easy walking. Little direction is needed; the firebreak follows the plateau rim. View outward are very fine throughout. There is a double firebreak over the first big rise after leaving Chivunde peak; the path into the valley leads off the inner firebreak at the crest. The outer one cuts across the neck of the Sphinx buttress; the Sphinx head is best seen from lower down on the far side. There is a fine view from the crest but of course the profile below you cannot be seen from here.
- (b) Sphinx Buttress to Mbuli (5817). The firebreak turns sharp left as you descend from the buttress, but it is best to keep right; the outer firebreak goes above the line of gums in the col in front of you, skirting them closely; this is the best way. Do not be tempted to turn left at the top corner of the gum plantation in order to make a quick descent to the road; the rocks fall steeply into this valley and it is very awkward trying to cross them from side to side; the undergrowth too is very thick. Better far to go straight up to the summit, turn left and come down over clean rock. There is a path to the summit of Mbuli near the edge on the right; it is in fact the outer firebreak which has come all the way down from the Sphinx corner, but after the rains it may not be easy to get into. There are plenty of alternatives; a long green crack is a useful way up. There is a spectacular view of Mulanje behind the Sphinx as you climb: our cover sketch suggests it.

Two surprises meet you on the summit rocks. First, a deep crack splitting the mountain athwart the path - it can be passed on the left. Then, even more surprising, a wide crack going downwards and outwards at 45°, right under the summit rocks; there is a bridging boulder in the centre by which the summit is reached. Having seen this one wonders how the summit remains on the mountain at all, and what is supporting the mass above this 3ft. wide chasm. A forestry marker lies on the summit, but no cairn or beacon - it deserves one.

Returning across the chasm you turn right into the firebreak which bears to the left - or you can keep straight on down to the subsidiary western summit and then down steep rock to the left-hand corner of the pine forest. A track of sorts follows this forest edge down to the watersplash.

- (c) Mbuli to Makwawa Spur hut (5119). The firebreak from Mbuli leads on across the col and up again to the domed top of Mtagaluka, second only in height and interest to Mbuli. The face immediately ahead is sheer - all these peaks are cut most sharply on their North-east faces - and the way down is to the left. If you keep on veering to the left, below the thicker bush, you should strike what has been quite a good path down to the road. This leaves the road over the smooth rocks opposite the path down to the falls; after crossing these you can pick up the path going straight up to the right; it leads into the firebreak on the north of the main summit. Continuing northward along this firebreak you cross a small col to the northern summit, which we may call "Little Mtagaluka"; this has a big drop again on the north-east side, but the firebreak (and you) can find a way down just inwards from the outer precipices; the rock scenery all around here is very fine. There is yet another "summit" out to the right, but the way down touches the top corner of the pine forest, through which a steep and quick descent can easily be made to the road. Onwards again the way is clear, though the grass is long; keep just above the forest until you meet the telephone wire coming across from Kanjedza, and then follow it to the hut on 5119, which commands a striking view of the Domasi Valley in front and the Chivunde Valley behind; the size of the church immediately below you is quite a surprise. This mission was the centre of the Church of Scotland Yao work, but was closed down as being too near to Zomba, which took over its functions. The church however is the centre of the Domasi Presbytery and well used; services are also held at Kumbawa, high up the valley.

To get back to the road, retrace your steps down the telephone wire; things are pretty steep anywhere else! This point (which deserves a name) puts a beautiful full stop to an exhilarating ridge.

12. CHAGWA

Chagwa (5937) is a dome-shaped hill entirely covered with forest. The upper part of this forest consists of twenty-year old grass pines and is very open; movement through it is comparatively easy and there are outward views through the trees. There is a spiral road which winds up to within a few yards of the summit; it is usually possible, though not too desirable, to take a car to this point, given sufficient faith to drive on through the grass. The summit itself is crowned with a rain-gauge; from it nothing whatever can be seen beyond the high forest about 50 yards away which surrounds it. Nevertheless Chagwa repays a visit; it is quiet, spacious and cool on a hot day. There is very little exposed rock on the mountain but it is steep and broken on the south slope overlooking Mandala Falls.

Apart from the spiral road mentioned, which comes up from Chagwa dam, there are three firebreaks across the southern slopes on level contours; the highest at about 5600 feet is bouldery and overgrown, unless it has recently been cleaned out; it does not make a full circuit eastwards. The lower two, at about 5050 feet and 4800 feet are occupied by roads which get rougher as they go eastwards and end short of the shelter belt of tall gums which runs up to Mulunguzi.

There is a zigzag road which climbs from the main road about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile above the Williams Falls; its full course is not marked on the 1:50,000 map, but in fact it has a final zigzag and connects with the spiral road.

There are three useful paths on the mountain.

- (a) Mulunguzi Bridge to Chagwa Summit. Go up the main road to junction 4. Then either turn back to the right along the road until the Mulanje cedars on your left give way to pines; at the compartment boundary a narrow path goes up the boundary line. It now veers left very soon into the Widdringtonia and in about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile meets a path running steeply down to the road which has been used for clearing logs. This path can alternatively be taken from the road by continuing beyond junction 4 to the next bend; it climbs from the angle. This path is now the way up. High in the pinewood you must keep to the right and eventually must come back to the compartment boundary; the old path used to go straight up this but is now a jungle and progress is easier through the trees. From the top corner of the tall pines the path is clear and follows the boundary closely; after sometime you meet the 5600 firebreak at a place where a big rock has been blasted flat and is riddled with cracks and shot-holes.

If you turn right here you will probably be stopped in a few yards by the jungle in the firebreak. If you turn left you are on path (b). The way is straight on; in about 20 yards you strike another firebreak; the path turns right into it and climbs to the zigzag road. You can go straight on and reach the spiral road very soon or you can turn right and

take the zigzag. From the point where the roads meet there is a bit of a path straight up to the rain-gauge. It is easier to use the spiral road until it stops; from here it is only a few yards to the summit.

- (b) Williams Falls to the Spiral Road. Go up the main road for about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile until there is a large passing-place on the left of the road.

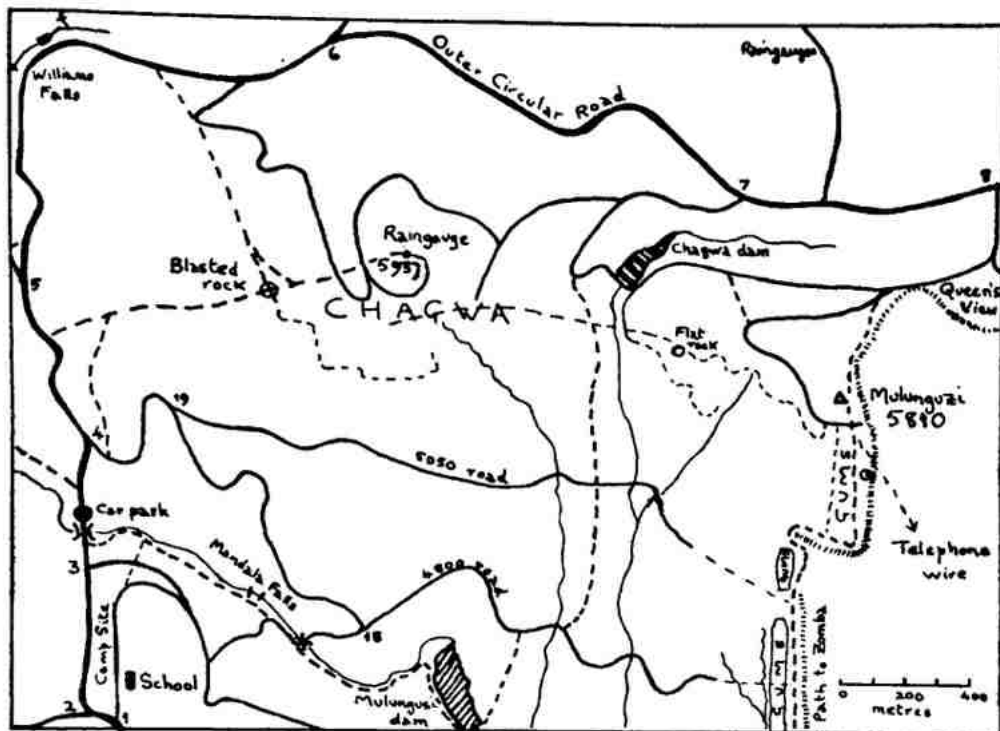
Climb the little bank on the right and you will find a path going diagonally up to the right to the first angle in the zigzag road, thus cutting the corner. The 5600' firebreak starts from this corner; go up it to the blasted rock and then continue as on path (a).

- (c) Mulunguzi Dam to Chagwa Dam. This is a well-used and very useful path.

Cross the dam and follow the path up through the wood. You soon meet the bottom (4800') road. Turn right along this across the first gully; 100 yards from the hairpin where the wood is more open on the left, you will find the path going on up; take the right-hand path at doubtful forks; soon it crosses the 5050' road between two gullies and continues straight up. Ultimately it crosses a firebreak which runs down from just south of Chagwa summit, crosses the end of the straight arm which leads off the 'spiral' road and goes over the stream which emerges from the Chagwa dam and so over the south face of Mulunguzi. Its traversability is variable, but there is usually a clear path to the right which crosses the stream on logs.

Very soon after this junction the path turns right and comes in at the hairpin on the Chagwa dam road; it is very easily picked up from here on the descent.

If you are descending; after you meet the bottom road, turn right; round the hairpin across the stream, and after about 300 yards the path goes on to the left, just opposite a small area on the right which is clear of trees (but not of undergrowth). To reassure you, about 20 yards from the road the path passes a lone grass pine amid the Mulanje cedars. It soon leads down to the dam.



13. MULUNGUZI

Mulunguzi (5810) is in many ways the twin of Chagwa but differs from it in two fundamental respects, (1) the outer edge is not a gentle slope down to the Mulunguzi stream, but the outer scarp of the plateau, going over great slabs into the bouldery basin above Naisi Spur; (2) on the inner side we do not have the main river either, but a small swamp ending in the Chagwa dam and a stream which cuts through the col between Chagwa and Mulunguzi and flows down the southern slope.

Mulunguzi summit is marked by a concrete triangulation point and is completely open, commanding a tremendous view. It is easy to reach by a firebreak path along the plateau rim from the road by Queen's View; bear left just after the landslide which has dangerously narrowed the road. (This happened in the great storm of 1946).

A ridge descends due south from the summit; down it runs the telephone line to Naisi compound which soon diverges left; a very steep path has been cleared under it. You can go on down past the fireguard's hut, following the gums, but soon you are forced right by the great slabs in front of you. At the lowest corner there is a fine view down to the Parliament buildings

some 2000 feet below. The firebreak swings back to the right over sloping wet rocks. The path continues across these until the slabs are broken, when it descends and works back under the slabs and across a shallow gully to the top of the conspicuous belt of gums which marks the edge of the plateau. From here the path continues in a straight line down to the forest road.

The "spiral road" round to the summit, which corresponds to that on Chagwa, is nowadays very overgrown at first, but it is open under the big trees and ends just below the summit right on the outer edge. There is a short-cutting path from its elbow to the road about 100 yards above the top end of Chagwa dam.

If you follow this road from the summit end, you cross two firebreaks, one on each side of the "windbreak" gums; then another firebreak goes steeply down left. This is the upper firebreak; it follows the outer edge of the older trees and winds somewhat inconsequently up and down; finally it rises to a fine flat rock with a commanding view across to the "Bally Clyde" ridge. This is an excellent spot for a picnic; from here it is a short descent to the level firebreak from Chagwa dam.

Starting from Chagwa dam, the level firebreak runs for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the right from the far side of the dam. Here the upper firebreak goes up left; down to the right its continuation crosses the stream and rises again to Chagwa peak as described in the last section. Straight on the cut goes over several large boulders and after a very rough passage leads up again to the upper firebreak, but the end part is nowadays hopelessly overgrown.

There is an attractive patch of open grass and rock in the centre of the south slope of the mountain; in theory (and on old maps) there is a path up through this from the 5050 road to the upper firebreak, but until the pine trees (planted in 1970) grow taller and the undergrowth is cleared somewhat, it is very difficult to make much progress through it. It is also not easy to get from either of the two level roads across the small stream to the outer firebreak, at any rate after the rains, but given determination and a panga it can be done.

To climb Mulunguzi from this outer firebreak - i.e. to continue route 4(e) to the summit - you go straight up to the wall of rock which marks a geological fault and prevents further rectilinear progress. The path goes left under the wall; soon the slabs become more broken and the angle eases off, so that it is possible to climb up and back right to the top of the wall; at the outer corner (which commands a splendid view) the gums and the firebreak begin again and lead up to the summit.

14. OUTER SLOPES

Much of the outer slopes on the Zomba side of the plateau have already been described and traversed under "ways up", but there are a number of horizontal roads and paths which do not actually lead up aloft, but which are interesting in themselves and suitable for pleasant walking when the weather is doubtful. It is convenient to begin at the western end.

1. Kachere. A loop road leaves the main plateau road at the Khola forestry compound. The lower part of the loop is a fair road on a level contour that leaves the main road just before Khola, rounds a bluff by the village football pitch, skirts several well-cultivated hollows and eventually divides; the left branch winds on down and up again to Nankhunda seminary in its plantation of gums. The upper road climbs steeply towards Malumbe peak in a series of zigzags and having attained a height of nearly 5000 feet turns right and drops slowly back through old and high forest to Khola once more. This upper road starts out in the reverse direction from Khola after the hairpin on the main-road; it diverges to the left and just by the old clock-shelter it swings back and climbs steeply to some more forestry houses and then on up into the forest. This part is wild and impressive in the big gullies; there are big trees and many dreacaena palms and the planted trees blend in so that their limits are not obvious. There is an impressive fall in the first big gully on the right, and fine views out towards Chiradzulu down the gullies to the left. This road is comparatively unfrequented, though some logging activity has now started. I once met a tree hyrax by the roadside who made no attempt to move away, even when I walked right up to it.

Few paths lead off this road; one goes down through a newish cypress plantation to the left where the road rises steeply; it joins the lower road near the football pitch. At the highest point you reach a firebreak crossing the road; how high you can go to the right before you get into difficulties I do not know, but the way down is clear enough and again it emerges into the open and connects with the bottom road.

The most interesting diversion is up the old track which leads off to the right on a level contour at the highest point; it goes to a saw-pit and a copse of gums; from here there is a magnificent view over the Rift with the scar of Changelume conspicuous below. The land-rover track turns left round the copse and rejoins the road. Straight ahead across a gully there is another copse of gums and a rock outcrop. This is above Kachere House; progress this way is possible - there is a fair amount of sporadic cultivation, but again I have not ventured.

2. Between the up and down roads. Several paths mentioned under "Ways Up" traverse this area.
3. The Sawmill area. Just above the sawmill two roads leave the main road

on the right; the upper now goes only to the offices. The lower skirts the back of the sawmill and turns up past several mountains of sawdust. It then levels out and passes above yet another vast tip: after a bit it crosses the potato path and begins to turn in to a large gully; at this bend a path drops down to the right to the point on the Mountain Road where there is a "No Through Road" sign at the entrance to two drives (before the erection of which we always used to go wrong and ended up by having to reverse in Dr. Bullough's drive). If the level road is pursued it gradually deteriorates but a path leaves it on a level stretch amid tall grass and drops to the right down to the tanks above the old High Commissioner's residence; turn left here along the line of the pipe, and then to the right to emerge at Salisbury bridge. You can continue along the road, but there are fallen boulders and much undergrowth; you will eventually arrive above the waterworks and can make your way down.

4. The Water - Leat, though not strictly a Way Up, has been described there.
5. Naisi Spur. The road (18th Avenue) which goes straight up at Naisi cross-roads (ant-hill cross) leads to the forestry road which serves the Naisi slopes. There is a corner-cutting path to the left above the water-tank; the road divides very soon, the left branch dropping down the little valley ("Plotters' Gulch" because the rebel ministers used to occupy these houses) back to the old Naisi Road (17th Avenue). The right fork zigzags up (again a steep path cuts the corner) and climbs above the top of Naisi Spur. A cut goes down to the water tanks on the Spur (above the highest house, of course) and there is a route down the pipe to the road near the main Mulunguzi River bridge. The road itself leads to the firebreak on the Mulunguzi ridge route, zigzags back once again and after crossing a gully or two ends against a vertical cliff. The firebreak which it represents however continues and can be attained from the lower loops of the road by several paths through the forest which tend tantalizingly to peter out.
6. Naisi Forest Road. This road leads to the right from the top of 18th Avenue and wanders on until eventually it rounds the corner high up above Makwawa and zigzags up into the Chivunde valley. There are two forestry compounds served by it; one soon after leaving Naisi and the other (Mafufuni) by a road on the right about 5 miles along. After another mile or so the road divides; the right fork is a mere land-rover track, easily missed. It winds across the valley and ridges and eventually zigzags down to the scout centre at Makwawa and the Songani road. The left hand fork now climbs in earnest and very soon reaches a point where you look down on Domasi Mission and have views up the Valley.

A car can usually be taken along the road as far as this corner. The whole road is full of interest and commands wide views over Lake Chilwa.

Paths connected with it are many.

- (a) Below the Naisi Forestry Compound is a village, and three paths lead to this; one goes direct to it from just above the water-tank on 18th Avenue. Continuing along this line the path crosses a stream and rises to meet the forestry road just short of the nursery. The third path goes out from the village at the bottom, slightly to the right, crosses the stream and leads down into the Naisi location.
- (b) Wilson's Bar. The road to this goes out from the lower bottom corner of the Naisi Road loop, nearest to Namwali hill. It goes to Wilson's Bar - a delightful little house with a flower-garden and trees; like a West-country village pub. From here it becomes a track which soon crosses two streams running in surprisingly deep gullies, and then goes down into a big cultivated hollow. From here it goes on into several villages and ultimately reaches the main road at Naisi store. But in the hollow just before crossing the stream a path goes steeply up left. It runs through the cultivation and comes into the firebreak below the forestry road. If you turn off left into this and continue you will get to the village (not easily) but if you turn sharp left before the gums are reached which surround the village there is a path which leads down to the Wilson's Bar road near the corner. Don't try to cut straight across to the location - the ground is swampy and there is a high fence at the back of the house gardens.
- (c) Paths into the forest. There are plenty of these - some go further than others but none reach the plateau (look at the cliffs above!). It is interesting to explore them; you may have to come back the way you went, but if you press on long enough in a horizontal direction you will usually hit a woodcutter's track. But beware all gullies. One such path leaves the forest road at the elbow 100 yards to the south of the T-junction at the top of 18th Avenue; it goes across a patch of grass, into the forest, across the clearing for the power-line, and straight on up. After about 15-20 mins you reach the telephone-wire coming across from Naisi compound; turning left and right the path goes on again. Pursued with sufficient ardour it will lead you to the top of the planted forest under the big slabs below Emperor's View. Here there is an attractive patch of open savannah.

15. DOMASI VALLEY

This attractive and in some ways very un-African valley has three sections; (a) the gorge below the Mission; (b) the central section from the Mission to Chilasanje bridge; (c) the upper basin above Chilasanje to the col overlooking the rift. If the source of the main Domasi River is considered to be under Chiradzulu then presumably a fourth section should be added: (d) the "South Domasi" gorge.

The road up the valley is usually passable by an ordinary car to the point where it falls to river level about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile above the Mission. Those who venture beyond this point will feel increasingly that they ought to have turned back much earlier! At the point where most people stop there is a path to the right which leads to a precarious bridge, high above the river, taking an island in its stride; as it abuts on the far side on a vertical cliff, its main use seems to be that it leads to some banana trees; presumably these must have been planted, though it is difficult to see why they are where they are.

From here the road winds among gardens and villages until it rises steeply to a conspicuous fork; the left path leads to the Kanjedza path, the right to the high bridge over the river where Chilasanje village begins. A path goes up from here to Ngondolo. The valley opens out here and there is cultivation high on either side. The main track passes the upper bridge at Chilasanje (path over this to Ngondolo 9(g)) and then mounts to Kumbawa church and school. Here path 9(f) goes down left and over the river, or you can continue to the foot of the hill beyond the school and pick up the second branch of 9(f) which turns off by a small stream. If following this path, keep right at first; the path is clearly cut, and takes a sharp turn left when clear of the cultivation and makes straight up the ridge.

Here the valley narrows again; there are invisible villages above the high banks on the right (there is an upper track), while across the river the rock walls give some clue as to the nature of the terrain above them. After a long mile the track crosses the river once more on a bridge; path 9(e) goes up left at once, the head of the valley opens out ahead of you, and the track leads on to Malonga and the high wind-gap right ahead, which overlooks the rift valley. It is a superb dale-head, and the starting-place for many routes over the grassland of Malosa mountain. It can be reached in just over an hour from the plateau roads by the routes described under section 9; descent is easy ...

sed revocare gradum, superasque ascendere ad auras,
hoc opus, hic labor est ...

But it is labour well-spent, and may it bring you joy.

NOTE ON THE BERRIES

Everybody who knows the plateau will be familiar with at least some of the edible "raspberries", "blackberries" etc which grow there. I am indebted to Dr. B. B. Chimphamba, Dean of Science in the University of Malawi, for the following information which may be of interest:

There are at least four species of rubus which are reasonably common on the plateau:

- (1) Rubus ellipticus. This is the far too abundant plant with very tough thorny stems growing up to 15 or 20 feet in height, which produces impenetrable thickets in the firebreaks if left uncleared for too long. Its fruit is a golden raspberry, very sweet, which emerges fully ripe from a green calyx in October and early November. It is an introduced Himalayan species, which has as yet few biological enemies. The children sell its fruit; anyone with sufficient energy can pick bowlsful in season.
- (2) Rubus pinnatus. This is the "orangeberry" mentioned in Section 5 as growing profusely by the top bridge over the Mulunguzi - "orangeberry bridge". It is not so stout a plant as ellipticus, and does not usually grow more than about 10ft high; its berries are a bright orange-red and ripen in November-December. They have a sharper flavour than ellipticus, and make excellent eating, fresh or cooked. They are found at Queen's View, Williams Falls, and many other places.
- (3) Rubus rigidus. This is a blackberry and it grows in damp places near streams, such as the gullies of Chiradzulu. It ripens about the same time as pinnatus; it may well be just as common but the places where it grows tend to be inaccessible.
- (4) Rubus inedulis. This is a low-growing plant like a European wild raspberry which ripens in May; it grows on the margins of the grassland and in other places. In spite of its name it is quite edible, but it is very often rendered inedible by an infection which causes its fruit to become white and hard and enormously enlarged.