

## BACK HOME TO WALES

By Alison McLennan

So it was that my father, Fred Tomkins, came to the end of his tour of Police duties in Nyasaland that the time came for home leave to the UK and the decision to do so by sea was agreed. On the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1964, we arrived in beautiful Cape Town and there to greet us at the dock was the beautiful liner 'Transvaal Castle' that was to take us back to our homeland after two and half years. Although we were sad to be leaving Africa we were also excited at the thought of being reunited again with our family in Wales. Mam, Dad, my brother Greg and I were all up on deck to wave a final goodbye to Africa as the giant mooring ropes were pulled away from the dock. We turned to look at my Mother, maybe expecting her to be in tears, but instead of that she had turned two shades of green and ran below deck. So it turned out that my dear Mother was to suffer severely from seasickness and so much so that the ship's doctor had to give her an injection to stop the vomiting and, sadly, she spent the entire voyage back to UK in the cabin.



My Brother Greg and I, however, had an absolute ball. There was a teenager's room on board and it had a juke box and teenage games to play. We spent a lot of time there and I remember the discs on the juke box were all about this new band called the Beatles!! I'd never heard of them before but by the time we left the ship I knew all their songs by heart - "*I wanna hold your hand*" was my favourite.

There was so much to do on board with never a dull moment and something different every night. Fancy dress contests, bingo, talent contests, movies and my favourite was crossing the Equator where Greg got covered in green slime much to a sister's delight!! The food was magnificent and in abundance, indeed we were spoilt for choice.

For the first week of the journey the weather was warm and sunny but as we got closer to the UK the icy winds blew up and from that point on we spent more time below deck as being on deck got harder and harder to keep your footing in the wind.

And so after a wonderful 2½ weeks on this magnificent Liner we arrived in a cold, bleak Southampton. We were up on deck at dawn to watch our arrival and although it looked very dismal with fog and rain and a little sleet, we weren't put off because we were getting so excited now as we would soon be seeing our beloved Nan and all the family once again.

