

OUR HISTORY – ROBERTS FAMILY

Pet cheetahs on aeroplanes, high-school runaways, wild and woolly adventures and pioneering strides in Kenyan conservation make for a history that is anything but dull.

To understand how the Roberts family came to be masters of safari, break-the-mould conservationists, and the boldly adventuresome characters they are, it helps to have a glimpse into their remarkable history. The events that conspired to intertwine their story with Kenya's people and its wildernesses make for an awe-inspiring tale - best enjoyed around a campfire, preferably with a gin and tonic in hand.



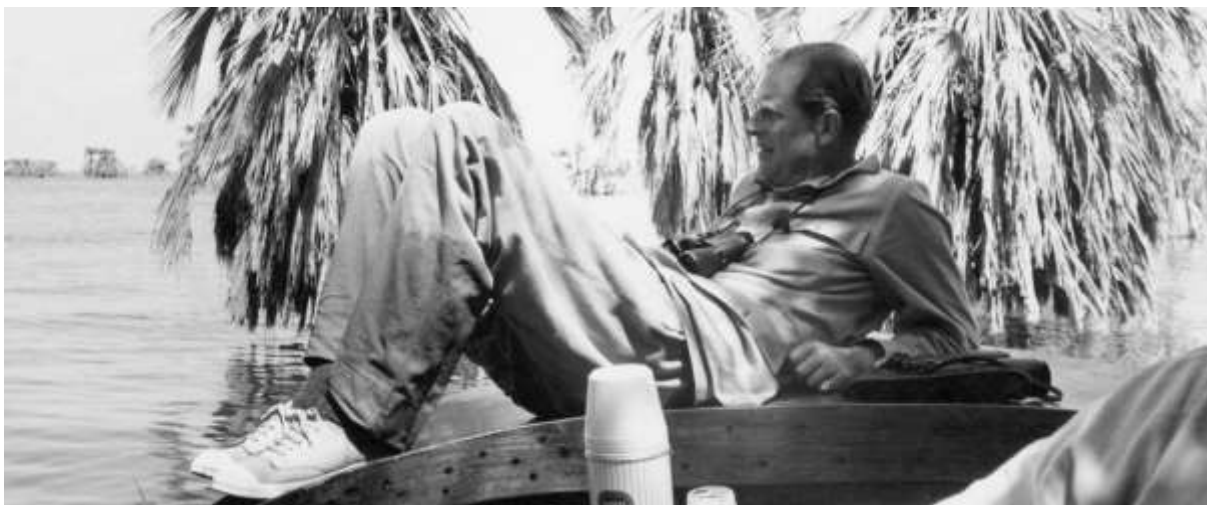
David and Betty Roberts moved to Kenya in the late 1940's, settling on the wild shores of Lake Baringo where they raised their six children among a menagerie of wild animals.

The kids had a pair of pet buffalo they would ride, and David memorably took Ella, the family cheetah, as his mascot on the inaugural Pan Am flight to America.





He germinated the Roberts safari gene, pioneering flying safaris around Kenya and frequently organising and leading trips for dignitaries at the behest of Government House - notably escorting Prince Philip to Lake Turkana in 1963.



Tragically, David died at 42, and Betty was faced with the prospect of leaving Kenya. Willie, aged 13 at the time, refused to accept this eventuality, signalling his protest by repeatedly running away from boarding school. Eventually Betty agreed that they would stay, and allowed Willie to help with the family business.

He began guiding and operating mobile safaris, and at 19, he built his first lodge on an island in Lake Baringo. Sue, hailing from the Kenyan coast, came to work there, and three years later, they were married.

In the 1980's, Willie and Sue set up an arable farm in Northern Maasai Mara, but Willie soon realised it would be better suited to wildlife. He converted his own 8,000 acres, and set up an association for

neighbouring Masai landowners that enabled them to collect wildlife-based revenue on their land - an initiative that formed what is now the 17,000-acre Ol Chorro conservancy.

He went on to establish the Mara Conservancy in an area that was a no-go zone due to rampant poaching and hunting. His efforts met with stellar success, and the conservancy, as well as his community-run anti-poaching patrols, have become a blueprint for conservation models. Willie and Sue currently reside at Sirikoi, their stunning lodge in Lewa Conservancy.



Richard was brought up in Ol Chorro and enjoyed a childhood not unlike his father's in many respects. With nature and conservation deep in his bones, he began working closely with local communities to help them understand the crucial importance of conserving their wildlife.

In 2000, together with his partner Liz, Richard converted the Ol Chorro family home into an intimate tented camp now known as Richard's Forest Camp, and began welcoming and guiding guests from around the world.



They went on to build Richard's River Camp, set in the Mara North Conservancy and furnished with fabric and finds from Liz's travels. Initially intended to be their home once their son Willoughby was born, today its warm, relaxed atmosphere welcomes guests as well as the family.

The pair went on to have a daughter named Ivy, and now divide their time between Nairobi where the children are at school, and the two camps. Richard continues to draw on his knowledge and love of the wilderness, guiding adventures to the further-flung and wildest parts of Africa.

