

*Libyan Desert* This was the first desert I ever saw and I loved it, the solitude, the stillness and the infinity of vision to the horizon. I was lucky that I could drive right into it with my own car and stop to flavour it and I have described my feelings [see Title 99]. Geographically it is in Cyrenaica, and as the precise location of the BP oil camp is a trade secret of the company, I never asked for its longitude and latitude, perhaps it was 600-800 km south of Benghazi, about 1200 km west of Cairo.

*Namib Desert* During my visit in February 1969 to the Republic of South Africa, I had heard of the Namib Desert research station and I asked to see it [see Title 175]. I flew 1200 km north from Cape Town to Windhoek, 300 km west to Swakopmund on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and onto Walvis Bay, and from there about 100 km south to Gobabeb, the station. The name means "The Place where there is nothing". I had an official 'minder' to drive the Landrover, but soon found he had no experience and I took over. It was sandy ground, a track along a dried river bed and no danger of losing the way. Further south from the station, enormous sand dunes extend from the coast far inland, the largest dunes in the world. The only maps of these were satellite photographs from NASA. I was never alone there and found the research most interesting, made ample notes and wrote about it. This was published under the headline "Across Africa's Texas by Satellite Map".

*Negev Desert* I had a chance of driving a few times across this desert area in the south of Israel on either the 200 km old road, or the new military highway between Beersheba in the north, and Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba in the south. Both roads were in excellent condition, tarred and signposted both in Hebrew and in English. As only few people use the old road nowadays, a breakdown may mean waiting for a few hours before another car comes along. Basic desert precautions apply of course, ample spare drinking water and never to leave the car in case of a breakdown, as walking for any length of time in the desert heat soon leads to exhaustion and collapse. In Israel I always hired a large reliable Volvo, took some water and never had any trouble.

The old road, built by military engineers soon after Israel's independence in 1948 is only one track wide, and halfway between Beersheba and Eilat comes to Mitzpe Ramon, an enormous escarpment from which there are breath-taking views. The road winds down in steep zig-zag fashion on the other side and one comes into flat rock strewn desert. Rumour has it that Israel's secret atomic reactor is hidden inside the escarpment at Dimona. [See Title 26] As I often drove alone, I could stop where I wanted, and I made numerous watercolour sketches of the desert, some beautiful memories for me.