

MADZIMBABWE EXPLORER

The complete Zimbabwean story chronicler

EXCLUSIVE

Doug Craig explains inspiration behind Mtarazi Falls' innovations



TEMP: the soul of Chimanimani



Foresters' Bar:
classic and trendy



Carnival:
Christian festival gone rogue?



Musangano Lodge:
an archetypal Zimbabwean village

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from the
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Norma Tsopo

Welcome to the first e-magazine issue of **MADZIMBAHWE**
EXPLORER

This is the beginning of a journey that began more than a year ago with a blog that was upgraded into a website and now we are adding an electronic magazine.

The need to package Zimbabwe's tourism story in this format has been necessitated by the realisation that while internet penetration is now very high and more than 50 percent of mobile phone users have a smartphone many are still only limited to social media platforms. So, to reach them, we are bringing in this e-magazine for their convenience.

This inaugural issue is deliberately leaning to the Eastern Highlands and so will be the second for the obvious reason that its birth was inspired by the under-marketing of this region internationally.

However, *MaDzimbahwe Explorer* is a national publication that seeks to tell the complete Zimbabwean story.

We believe the name Zimbabwe is a derivative of the original term for Great Zimbabwe monuments—*madzimbahwe* hence the name.

Enjoy!



About us

MaDzimbahwe Explorer is a tourism portal with informative, upbeat and inspirational articles about Zimbabwe not only for the benefit foreign nature lovers, thrill seekers and travellers but its citizenry.

We hope to not tell this beautiful, gracious upwardly mobile southern African country's story through known stereotypes of stagnation and regression but through more objective lenses.

We seek to share the country's tourist attraction sites – both popular and less publicized, review its accommodation and meetings, conferencing and event facilities as well as profile its eating houses.

We want to change the narrative about natural endowments being its most prized possessions but its people by sharing its impressive and unique culture – both urbane and traditional. This would naturally include fashion and arts – visual and performance.



Lets get
social



Lets stay in
touch

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Tourism personalities

Giving magic to Mtarazi Falls

There are people who are so intelligent and gifted such that they will transform the ordinary into something extraordinary. Doug and Bernie Craig are such.



Mtarazi Falls was since its discovery decades ago celebrated as one of the finest natural wonders no only in Zimbabwe but in the world.

Tourists would flock to Nyanga not so much to see it but—from a very dangerous cliff, take a peep at it. Without a safe vantage point to watch it from, the view was never complete. Those with fear of heights would only take away memories of its roaring falls.

Tour operators would take their clients to it albeit with a fear that they might slip and fall to their deaths from cliff.

And then Doug and Bernie Craig (pictured) happened.

This is Doug's own story:

I started Far and Wide from very humble beginnings. I lived, for many years, in a wooden shack deep in the forest – a very humble home. Not that I wanted to live there but I had a vision.

Where we are today is pretty much what that vision was.

We came from an education background so we dealt with schools, specifically team leadership training using the outdoor and outdoor adventure activities to teach skills that might be useful for people in their lives. So we are not from a tourist background at all.

Certainly money or profit was not been important and never has been.

So, as we went along over the years – and we have been in this business for

over 30 years now, we noticed an interesting phenomenon that other people copied us and started doing camping with schools.

The pool or market was getting eaten away and our market share was dwindling, so we like in a great sea like a blood bath of trying to compete for smaller and ever decreasing markets, trying to reinvent ourselves, offering discounts and all sorts of innovative ways trying to hold on to the market but it's not a very nice place to be.

So we thought about how could we get into a place where it doesn't have competition that will make competition irrelevant. I call it the blue ocean. So we were looking for a blue ocean that will make us rise above the competition and as I said make them irrelevant.

That is how the Mtarazi Skywalk was born – the idea behind it.

Mtarazi Falls was a disappointing destination for tourists, they arguably the best tourist attraction in the eastern highlands but it was always disappointing because you could never see them.

People used to cleave dangerously over cliff edges and things to get a better view of the fall in all their majesty but you couldn't see them. You could see about 30 percent of the falls.

So we came up with an idea to build a more accessible and safe viewing platform for members of the public and that's where the skywalk and zip line started. We approached national parks and they jumped at the idea and it captured their imagination and various other boards, officials and other departments and the end result was it was approved and fortunately we had the funding to go ahead with it and today it exists.

So we had a dream but like all dreams it stayed just a dream until we took the first step. It was a very small step.

I wear this piece of twine around my wrist to remind me of that small step.

That's what it takes because it was with this twine that we flew the first strand nylon across the gorge with a drone and we were able to pull ever increasing strengths of nylon rope until we had a code strong enough to pull the cable.

So we created this blue ocean for ourselves and it has captured the imagination of Zimbabweans.

Its earned revenue for the park, it's employed people, it's helped the communities and it's just a great success story. And it's there for all of us.



Temp: the soul of Chimanimani's tourism sector

By Norma Tsopo

The history of Chimanimani's tourism sector can never be complete without the honoured mention of Tempe van de Ruit's family. Even now, she espouses the soul of its hospitality industry.

Tempe van de Ruit is a doyen of the rustic in tourism. She is so effortlessly at home in it that she takes it as play.

But her place is paradise for backpackers and towns' folk who would be dying for break. Hers is an expertly restored colonial farm house which she aptly named The Farmhouse.

"I'm just playing in tourism. My husband takes care of the family and I'm just having fun," she says with a wide smile.

That perhaps places her apart from most in the industry. Tempe is in it out of passion and will not mug her guests with exorbitant charges.

And naturally so. She is the second daughter of John Balls.

It was her father, a renowned botanist, who proposed that Chimanimani Mountain be designated a national park. His extensive exploration of the area and his contribution to the

knowledge of plants is commemorated in the specific names of plant subspecies he discovered – *Aloe ballii* Reynolds, *Bulbophyllum ballii*, P. J. Cribb, *Nervilia ballii* G. Will, and *Zeuxine ballii* P. J. Cribb.

He was largely responsible for the building of the famous Mountain Hut up in the mountains in 1956 which until only a few decades back was fittingly termed Balls Hotel.

Their family's imprint in Chimanimani will remain as prominent for as long as there is water cascading beautifully into Tessa's pool which lies at the foot of the immaculate quartzite mountain.

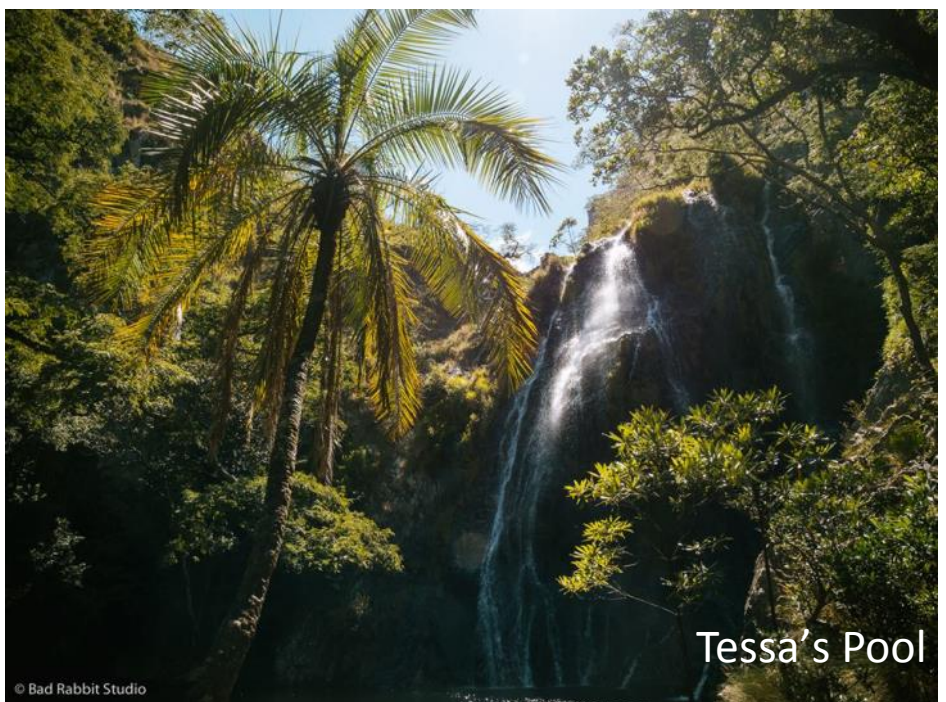
This is so because Tessa is actually Tempe's sister. "The pool got its name

from the fact that my father would leave my mum and Tessa at the pool as he went up the mountain."

It is however rather ironic that Tessa got married and now stay in the United Kingdom while she remains in Chimanimani and – as she likes to put it – plays in the tourism industry where Tessa's pool is a big attraction, without any natural site with her name attached to it.

To cure that she whispers to us that she has secretly renamed three hillocks on the ridge that overlooks the Farmhouse John, Tempe and Tessa with herself taking the slightly bigger hill to herself.

With a pack of dogs including a Border Coolie and some mutts what of which only having three legs, which by the way do not all belong to her but belong to neighbours which love to follow her Tempe loves animals as much as she loves plants.



Tessa's Pool

© Bad Rabbit Studio



She is the perfect host for families too.

"I'm in my element around children," she says. It is no wonder that the farm is set up to give the best experience for young children. Its layout will keep young children entertained.

Tempe keeps a few dairy cows, four ponies, a flock of sheep, geese and poultry. She often has a couple of pigs fattening up too.

"Children delight in all the animals and learn a lot from watching the farming activities going on," Tempe says adding that she would be happy to take them horse riding and give them riding lessons if required. She has three well-schooled horses and two little old kids' ponies.

That would be for a nominal fee of course.

At half past seven every morning she sells milk from the dairy just to add to the intrigue of her Dairy Plot small-holding farm.

Saul, one of his employees, helps take care of the animals and maintain a very productive organic vegetable garden from where guests can buy vegetables in season.



Tempe is currently a member of Chimanimani Tourist Association which continues to lead efforts to preserve the environment and place Chimanimani back on local and international travellers' radar after the region which used to be only second to Victoria Falls took a heavy knock at the back of political squab-

bling and violence at the turn of the millennium.



Accommodation

By Norma Tsopo

Musangano Lodge – an archetypal rural Zimbabwean village, and more

Its architectural designs and layout perfectly mirror rural village setups with fascinating precision

A thick swirl of dust billowed into the air as we pulled into Champion Mine road, off the Harare-Mutare highway.

The two kilometre dirt access road set the tone for our escape into the authentic ethnic Shona village ambience that Musangano Lodge offers.

Modelled around a typical Zimbabwean rural setting, the leisure resort seats on the lower slopes of a scenic Miombo woodland covered mountain range just outside the eastern border city of Mutare.

Magnificent Shona stone sculptures, metal sculpts and many artefacts all over the property – in its gardens, along paths and in the buildings makes it something of an art gallery as well.

Beyond mere escapism, the rustic resort also seeks to heal severed connections with Mother Nature.

Beautified by dry gardens with healthy drought resistant plants, there is no ignoring the efforts to keep the environment as natural as possible.

Their efforts to keep the environment as pristine and as pure as is practically possible around a human settlement is impressive.

The resort is now constructing bio-gas digesters with each new building as it refines its waste management models.

All its bio-degradable restaurant waste is being converted to gas which is used for instant heating in the kitchen. And so is the sewer from its new 250-seater Sungano Conference.

Caned beverages or bottled water are not something guests would expect to see too due to their environmental impact.

For a tree-hugger like myself, it was refreshing being at a facility run by well-meaning environmentalists.



With chalets and self-catering lodges strewn across the woody 140 hectare property, well-spaced to guarantee privacy, walking around the footpaths that connect them brings the same euphoria one gets on a typical Zimbabwean rural village transactional walk.

Guests can choose between self-catering lodges with two or three bedrooms or smaller chalet accommodation – all of which are bricks under thatch with Zimbabwe's iconic cone shaped tops.

All units are purposely furnished with home-made furniture designed for their specific and varied designs and decorated in ethnic style the facility to create a homely and cosy atmosphere.

Both have patios that allows guests to view the spectacular Odzi River Valley and the rising granite bulwarks in the distance –

as just a teaser of the full splendour of the Eastern Highlands with Nyanga and Honde Valley inviting yonder.

Spacious self-catering lodges can accommodate up to six guests and are the perfect option for families or larger groups and are fully equipped with crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, fridge, gas cooker with oven and an outside private braai stand.

The smaller and more intimate chalets are suitable for two guests but retaining all the homely comforts as they are provided with a tea-kitchenette – fridge, electric kettle, crockery and basic cutlery.





ground and wide expanses of lawn where the kids can romp around or play games such as badminton, table tennis and volley-ball.

The distant staccato sound of gold mills remind guests that this is not an artificial setting but a part of a rural setting with normal activities continuing in its environs.

Musangano Lodge offers three refreshing nature and hiking trails on its woody property and Bike and Mountain bike trails into its hinterlands.

It has three colour-marked nature and hiking trails on its 140 hectare property.

Each of them also has a fireplace which we enjoyed against the chills of a cold August night.

These well-equipped lodges and chalets accommodate up to 32 guests. And each has secure parking space for one or two cars.

They are all a few minutes away from the restaurant whose buffet and a' la carte menus have quite a reputation from the full breakfast to the light lunch and a table d'hôtel three-course dinner.

Open to drive through clients, the restaurant has a 25 to 35 minute turnaround time for it's a' la carte menu.



Going through the place, one thing is clear – everything was carefully planned. The whole facility is also impressively engineered to be fully accessible by wheel chairs without the improvisation of rumps.

Eulogizing the country's rural setting, Musangano Lodge delicately balances modernity and otherworldly atmosphere of a natural eco-friendly facility.

Television sets are the only notable absentees from any modern up-market facilities which is more than compensated for by WI-FI allowing guests to stay connected with the world as they unwind and relax in its cosy luxuries.

It also offers a big swimming pool with an adjacent safe paddling section for children. It has acres of sunbathing space with gazebos.

There is also an exciting Robinson adventure play-

The Riverine Trail takes one over fairly level ground behind the Lodge along a seasonal stream. The Secret Valley Trail leads up past the Lodge's water reservoir and from there via a high point with lovely views back down along a pretty hidden valley.

The most challenging being the Aloe Trail which takes one across a stretch of seasonally wet grassland before ascending towards the summit of the ridge to the south of the Lodge.

The several biking routes vary from 10 to 65 kilometres in length. The main bike route takes riders towards the Nyanga Highlands and can be covered in 3 hours. Mountain bike trails vary from 10 to 28

kilometres with the shortest being eminently suitable for children and beginners.

It also offers peaceful and secluded location for camping for hundreds with clean and neat amenities.



Restaurant

Golden Peacock Villa Hotel Restaurant

By Norma Tsopo

The can not be a better place for Chinese food than a Chinese restaurant

For a great Chinese food experience, Golden Peacock Villa Hotel Restaurant is a rare find in a city dominated by fast-foot outlets and only a handful of aristocratic eateries.

Because of its desire to appeal to locals, the restaurant pitches itself as having Chinese infusion.

Besides Chinese cuisine culinary skills, the chefs are well acquainted to serve French, English, American and African dishes common in most Zimbabwean food outlets.

The restaurant's exclusive décor with warm colours to invoke a Chinese feel. Its well-coordinated dining experiences are accompanied by all the elements of fantastic international meal standards.

Some of the delicious delicacies from the Chinese menu included homemade fried noodles, fried rice, sizzling beef/chicken and sweet and sour chicken.

Chinese The restaurant's chefs and service team is the biggest asset Golden Peacock Villa Hotel has and they anchor the hotel brand through consistent and near obsessive delivery of ever fresh and sumptuous dishes, creating the unforgettable experience guests talk about months and even years after dining at



tel. While ac- include Valentine dinner, family fun day and Adam & Eve cocktail and several dinners involving couples.

commodation is the hotels' core business, interestingly it is the food and beverage department that is not only complementing this core product but even shaping the character of the hotel.

Although its target market are leisure – outgoing individuals and families as well



as business travellers the sum effect of offering personalized services to individuals and groups has now seen the hotel becoming a popular hub for celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and historical events.

To top this up, the innovative hotel staff has worked together to present several concepts to excite and wow guests. Themes presented and run successfully

Guests have been so appreciative that the restaurant is frequently involved in outside catering for families, colleges and other cooperate organizations. The hotel has also embraced the most current specialized world trends in service such as, service situ, guests may have to be served in cars, offices and at the comfort of their homes.

This has successfully rejuvenated the ailing restaurants experience.

The biggest dining facility can accommodates hundred and ten people in one sitting to add to three more private dining rooms – the Golden Peacock Hall accommodates 20 people, the Great Hall and the Huangshan Mount Hall which accommodate a maximum of 10 people each for private and personalized services.



Holiday Inn Mutare's Foresters' Bar – classic yet trendy

Staff Writer

Balancing a classic appearance and staying savvy are, like its exquisite cocktails, unique qualities of this hotel bar



The urbane the hotel's diverse guests – cubicle escapees and suited execs with loosened ties are the staple clientele of Holiday Inn's Foresters Bar.

Offering a smoking free environment and with a variety of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails the bar is a perfect relaxing hub for everyone.

It is strategically located near the reception area and the elevators for the convenience of guests.

A tipsy offspring of corporate culture, the bar offers a cosy lounge where guests can recline while watching television and

a more traditional bar setup where patrons have an opportunity to line the bar counter on padded wooden bar stools.

Mahogany panelling project a classic interior décor and a 1980s stateliness that will dazzle and soothe patrons.

It has a renowned wine list and elegant cocktails as well as solid non-alcoholic drink menu.

The bar is managed in a deliberate way to allow for its clientele to engage in productive discussions while enjoying the informalities of a public place. The balance is

delicate but spot-on with the trendy Holiday Inn bar.



Colonial era Bantu pidgin lives on in Mutare's CBD

By Norma Tsopo

Despised and undocumented, Chiraparapa as the colonial era Bantu pidgin language is locally known, it is largely forgotten and dying

In a bid to bridge communication barriers with their Bantu servants, white colonialists cobbled together Zulu, English and Afrikaans to create a hybrid dialect – Fanagalo, a Bantu pidgin that would serve as their language of instruction.

Originating in South Africa, it was composed of 70 percent of Zulu, 24 percent English and six percent Afrikaans and remains the only Zulu-based pidgin language.

It is however a rare example of a pidgin based on an indigenous language rather than on the language of a colonizing or trading power, according to Wikipedia.

The name *Fanagalo* comes from strung-together Nguni forms fana-ga-lo meaning "like + of + that" and has the meaning "do it like this", reflecting the purpose of its creation – ordering.

"Fifteen hours instruction was considered sufficient for an initiate to become reasonably fluent," notes Wikipedia.

Being so simple and without any strict rules for grammar, its use spread in mines and

farms across South Africa and further inland into Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Locally it is referred to as *Chiraparapa*, and has a Shona influence.

Its use in Zimbabwe was however most prominent during the colonial era which ended 37 years ago.

Rising literacy levels and mastery of the queen's language among indigenous Zimbabweans which bridged the communication barriers saw the use of this linguistic colonial relic declining.

Without any deliberate efforts to preserve this pidgin encountering people who still rely on it as a primary communication medium was something *MaDzimbahwe Explorer* crew never expected to encounter – particularly in an urban setting.

Here we were interviewing Angelina Brescasia, a 94-year-old lady who owns an apartment right in Mutare's central business district.

Our conversation was not getting along so well because she is increasingly losing her memory with her advancing age, she then invites her servant, 88-year-old Manuel Vhulande to sit next to her.

Brescasia fondly refers to him as her *Kekeroni*, the first sign that they were in a different linguistic sphere.

The interview was in English and Vhulande's mastery of it is poor so we could only converse directly with Brescasia. But being Shona speakers though, we could also speak directly with Vhulande but that would again keep his boss out of the conversation – and po-

tentially infuriate our host.

So we stuck with English, while the two consulted and conversed between themselves before Brescasia would give her responses – particularly those that required that she goes back in time.

It was, thus, only natural for our inquisitive crew to ask Vhulande what language the two were using during the interview as he walked us out. To our surprise, he revealed they were using a colonial era Bantu pidgin.

This has been their language of choice for the over 70 years that Vhulande has been serving this family.

They never bothered to learn each other's language and remained on the neutral grounds of the bastardized hybrid language to get by and they understand each other fully well.

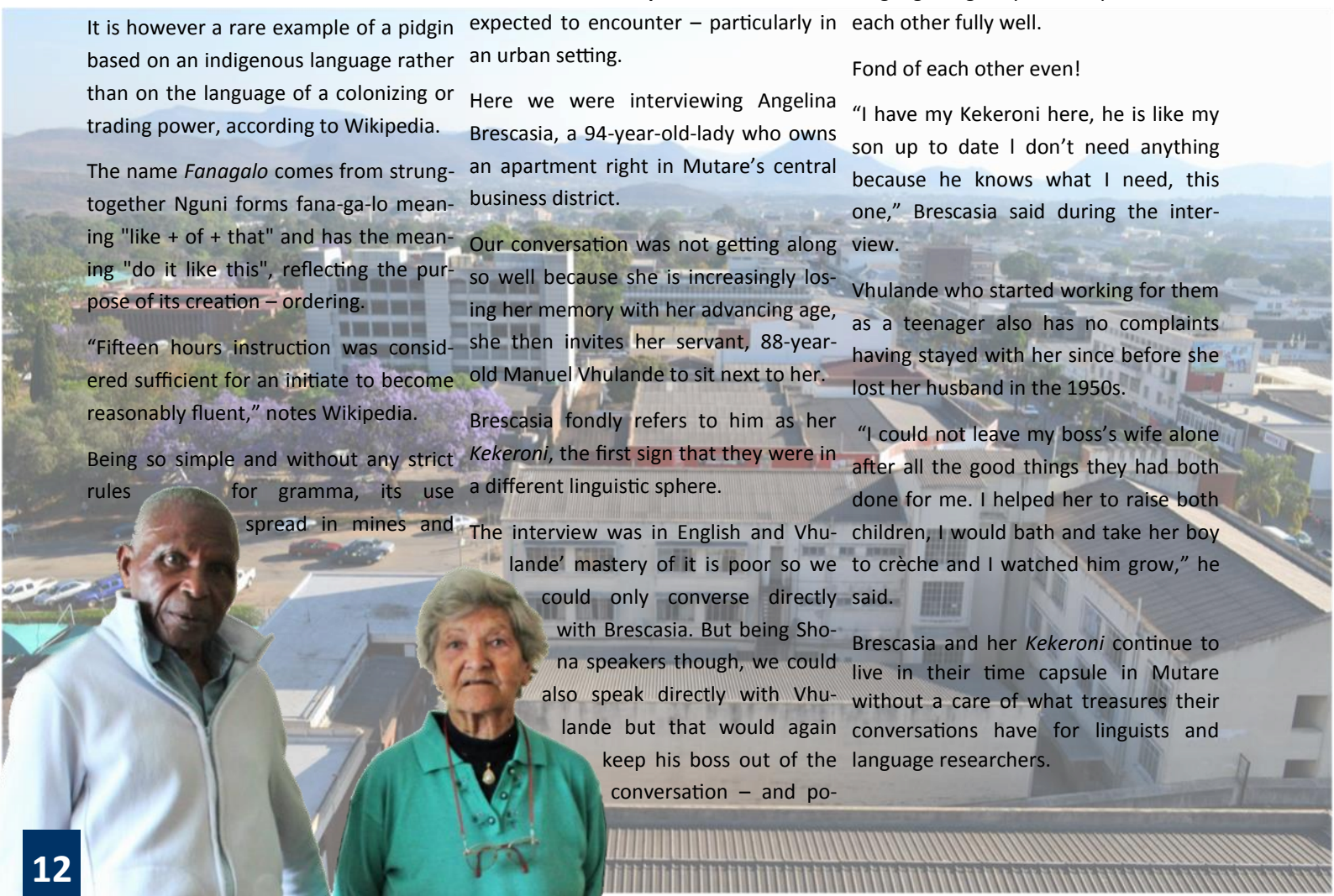
Fond of each other even!

"I have my Kekeroni here, he is like my son up to date I don't need anything because he knows what I need, this one," Brescasia said during the interview.

Vhulande who started working for them as a teenager also has no complaints having stayed with her since before she lost her husband in the 1950s.

"I could not leave my boss's wife alone after all the good things they had both done for me. I helped her to raise both children, I would bath and take her boy to crèche and I watched him grow," he said.

Brescasia and her *Kekeroni* continue to live in their time capsule in Mutare without a care of what treasures their conversations have for linguists and language researchers.



Mutare's blind weaver defies odds

By Norma Tsopo

A never say die attitude. Resolve. Belief in self. And taking practical steps to change his situation sets him apart from both those living with disability and without it.



Johannes Lovemore Landini's confidence as one of Mutare city's finest weavers borders on arrogance.

"I feel that there is only one weaver who is far more superior to me in the whole city and that is Lovemore Dick," Landini says without batting an eye.

His works back him up though – they are immaculate. He, indeed, is a master craftsman.

But something unique sets him apart from the crowd – he is visually impaired. His mastery in this trade is confirmed by his peers in the arts industry, and this is a huge testament to his artistic finesse.

"There are many visually able weavers who come to consult me when they get stuck on certain areas," Landini says as he works on his wares at his home in Sakubva high density suburb.

He has had to battle the devastating effect of the late onset of his disability to be a leading light in this difficult visually appealing art genre.

Landini only lost his sight as he approached his thirties – a very difficult age to adapt at.

"I was devastated. All my dreams blacked out. I had lost my independence in adulthood and was depending on others," he reminisces.

Before he lost his sight he was a construction worker and a keen painter. Slowly his colourful world began to deem and blur as he battled an incessant headache that only grew in intensity as he delved around for a cure.

"When I finally got competent medical attention after local doctors had tried everything and failed. A doctor at Parirenyatwa hospital told me it was too late for him to do anything and instead referred me for an expensive operation in South Africa. It too was not going to guarantee me my eyesight so I got stuck with my painkillers until I was completely blind."

He however did not give up on life. He still had his self-worth intact and instead of mourning his misfortune he was soon exploring ways to be self-sustaining.

"Begging was out of the question. My parents had programmed in me the biblical philosophy that if a man will not work, then he should not eat."

Having completely lost his sight in 2002, his family approached the ministry of social welfare which whom they worked to secure a place for him at Jairos Jiri where he did a two year course in basket weaving.

"The Independent African Church also assisted with my provisions as I was on a social welfare scholarship," Landini said.

Going to Jairos Jiri where he would, for the first time in his life, interact with other visually impaired people helped him to adjust to life without the sense of sight.

"When I then met others in college I got the support and encouragement that gave me the will to fight on and accept my condition," he says.

His only handicap in his art is that he needs the aid of a frame to weave – leaving out only a few items which does nothing to diminish his distinguished status in the trade.

Although he works for his upkeep, he still suffers discrimination because of the all so common stereotype of the blind being beggars in Zimbabwe.

Having to travel over 160 kilometres by bus to Chibwe he is often barred entry into buses by overzealous conductors who often mistake him for a free-riding beggar.

"The moment I get to a bus some would block me from entering even when I tell them clearly that I'm an ordinary passenger who is willing to pay my fare."

A determined fighter, Landini has however been defying the odds and shaming misers, rude conductors and touts by not expecting any favours.

Food and Family

Cream Cheese Spaghetti



Zimbabweans have developed a taste for pasta and cheese and in this recipe have the chance to enjoy both. Cream cheese spaghetti is a simple to prepare but delicious creamy pasta dish!

Ingredients to make Cheese Cream Spaghetti

200g spaghetti

150ml half cream

2 garlic cloves

200g grated cheese

A small piece of chopped parsley

Salt and pepper

Oil

Method

1. Boil plenty of water in a large pot. When it starts to boil, put a handful of salt. Add the spaghetti stirring occasionally. Especially, at the beginning of boiling, so that they do not stick on the bottom of the pot.
2. 10 minutes later, when spaghetti are cooked, drain the spaghetti from water. Keeping a glass of cooking broth.
3. Prepare the cheese sauce. In a big pan over high heat, put a little of oil. Then add garlic, finely chopped. Let cook until brown them.
4. Add half cream and the grated cheese and cook about 2 minutes more, over medium heat. Stir with a wood spoon continually.
5. After that, add spaghetti, some cooking broth and chopped parsley and stir everything again, over low heat about 2 minutes more. Let that the spaghetti soaks the sauce.
6. Finally, sprinkle with freshly ground pepper.

'Broadcasting monopoly chasing away local actors

By Norma Tsopo

With a dwindling viewership the national broadcaster has not had enough revenue to pay for local productions well enough for them to hold on to their best talents

A top actor has blamed Zimbabwe's massive brain drain in its performance arts industry on the shunning of the country's sole television station – Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC-TV) by businesses due to want of viewers.

Nash Mphepo who also directs Patsime Edutainment said the desertion was starving the broadcaster of resources affecting the quality of productions it attracts from independent producers.

"We only have ZBC-TV to support the small screen industry but not many people are watching it that much so many companies are not advertising there anymore affecting financing of programmes that it flights," he said.

The national broadcaster's image has mainly suffered due to its reputation as a propaganda tool in a deeply polarized political environment.

The country's small screen has been playing second fiddle to South Africa over the years in spite of showing promise with internationally acclaimed films like *Neria*, *Yellow Card*, *Everyone's Child*, *More Time*, *Rwendo* and *Shungu: The Resilience of the People* among others.

"We very good. In Zimbabwe there are many talented artists but the only drawback is resources. You can see that many of our top actors are going to South Africa and doing great things and the solution to improving the quality of our television productions is to put in money and attract them back home," Mphepo said.

Zimbabweans have starred in internationally acclaimed movies and series ranging from *The Walking Dead*, *NCIS Los Angeles*, *Blood Diamond*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Young and the Restless* to *Supernatural* and *Seal Team Eight: Behind Enemy Lines* among others.

Multiple award winning actress Danai Gurira starred in *Black Panther*, *The Walking Dead*, Tongayi Chirisa who found fame in the soap *Studio 263* and South African top movie, *Mr. Bones 2* is now landing roles in Hollywood as he has starred in *NCIS Los Angeles*, *Robinson Crusoe* among others while Alois Moyo,



Patsime Director Nash Mphepo

who acted in *The Power of One* alongside big name character portrayal artist Morgan Freeman are some of the country's best talents.

Leeroy Gopal, who landed his first role at age 7, in the TV Drama Series *Paraffin*, and had a big break in *Yellow Card*, is perhaps the most dominate character in South Africa's small screen as he starred in soaps such as *Backstage*, *Home Affairs*, *One Way*, *Jozi H* and *Jacob's Cross* with many other roles in the US.



Leeroy Gopal

Mphepo said while it would be unthinkable to lure back those who have broken into the big money US film industry increasing local television channels can arrest the country's loss of talent to the region.

"While some of the actors that currently grace our television screens are not that polished but with resources we can train and perfect their art. We can also lure back some of the experienced actors to act and direct productions," Mphepo said.



Black Panther star Danai Gurira

Resorts

Miracles abound at Hot Springs

By Norma Tsopo

The pool's reputation for granting wishes and healing ailments has been attracting visitors from across the country



Like the biblical pool of Bethsaida, Nyanyadzi Hot Spring is famed for treating a raft of debilitating infirmities. They grant wishes even, locals say. But it is its famed miracle healing potency that has people flocking to it from across the country.

There is also a mystic aura of what else it offers.

Exiting the ground at well over 90 degrees Celsius, the main spring is believed to grant wishes in exchange for pennies. It has heard thousands of wishes and murmured prayers considering the thick layer of coins in its boiling pool.

But the magic does not end here.

Water from the main pool pours into a second which itself is said to have bad luck cleansing powers with a simple face wash.

Standing in the third much cooler pool is famed for curing various foot ailments. There is however need for tact in standing

in the pool as one will need to be still as fidgeting would result in scalding adding to the mysticism of the hot spring's triad of pools.

A local tour guide brags of hundreds of testimonies of the lives that were transformed with the visit to the pools.

The guide also recounted a reported case of an elderly couple that travelled over 600 km from Gokwe with their two-year-old grandchild who had not started walking due to chapped soles which had failed to yield to modern medicine.

It only took the child six months to be completely healed and the elderly couple made a point of driving back with the completely healthy and bubbly girl whom site staff could not recognise for hyperactivity and exuberant running rings around the place.

"One of our staff at this resort who had seen her broke down and cried," a media report quotes a site guide as saying.

The accommodation facility at the resort has no electricity powered geysers as it has adequate supply of hot tap water from the spring.

The resort also has three recreational pools where visitors can swim in – a hit in winter.

Lying less than 10 metres from the Masvingo – Mutare highway the hot springs are accessible even by public transport making it one of the easiest tourist resorts to access.

Although a high security presence around it as it lies across Odzi river from the world famous Chiadzwa diamond fields had dulled its sparkle as a resort destination although it has remained open to the public the formalisation of diamond extraction is bringing back its glitter.



Free, open sex at traditional cleansing ritual?

By Norma Tsopo

The world is replete with such strange customs that makes one shudder just how gross human behaviour was back in time



Just as the village elders concluded a traditional prayer to the area's guardian spirits to accept the reburial of over 150 remains at to pave way for diamond mining operations in Marange an elderly woman jumped up stomped around, ululating and shouting the crudest obscenities.

Those alien to the culture thought she was stoned out of her wits.

But just as delegates to the cleansing and acceptance ritual were still digesting the event that had some cringing in shame came the shocker.

The elderly man leading the incantations made the big announcement – *'Nhasi is ruva rekunyengana! Nyenganai!* (Today is sexual intercourse day! You are free to engage!)

An uneasy silence ensued.

But as legendary Zimbabwean author Dambudzo Marechera would describe such an event – it was like a loud fart that all silently agree did not happen.

Taken seriously – any two consenting adults would have had it, even openly without any sanctions following the announcement.

The offer however had no takers due mainly to cultural adulteration. But the rituals could not have been completed without such permission for everyone in the village to make it free with everybody else-until the final night being granted.

This Shona culture is highly sexualized.

In the olden days, there certainly could have been a ceremonial orgy and wild sexual romp, noted Matthew Mundondo who is leading the reburial exercise and guiding the rituals.

"Indeed that was an open invitation for people to engage in sex without anyone questioning them – not even husbands would have questioned their wives," Mundondo said.

While this may appear to present Africans as sexual savages who had no rules around coitus the cultures are generally strict around sexual chastity.

"This is a part of a ritual that while we no longer act on it obviously used to be followed through with action and we have no reason to be ashamed about it when we now measure it against today's moral and religious standards.

"There is no culture in the world which did not have its own similar or even worse practices," Mundondo said.

Indeed there is just no country that can claim purity against bizarre sexual practices and rites.

There are still many bizarre traditions alive across the globe although the bulk have gone with the wind. Cultures continue to evolve and to answer to different moral codes and give birth to varied lifestyles.

And sex remains an enigma as it can be a bonding or loving experience, a formality, fun and exciting, or even immoral or illegal. It undoubtedly still makes the world go round.

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Environment the big winner in sustainable agriculture

By Norma Tsopo

Since consumers have only pledged to buy agricultural products that are produced sustainably, Zimbabwe's tea producers have reformed their practices to protect the environment.

Apanicky hare disappeared as quickly as its jumpy run had made its presence known. "Bury the thought, you can't hunt here," Tea Commodity Association chairperson Patrick Chikomba said as the hare disappeared in the distance.

This is Honde Valley where small holder tea growers were awarded with Rainforest Alliance (RA) and Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) certification after passing audits in sustainable production of the cash crop.

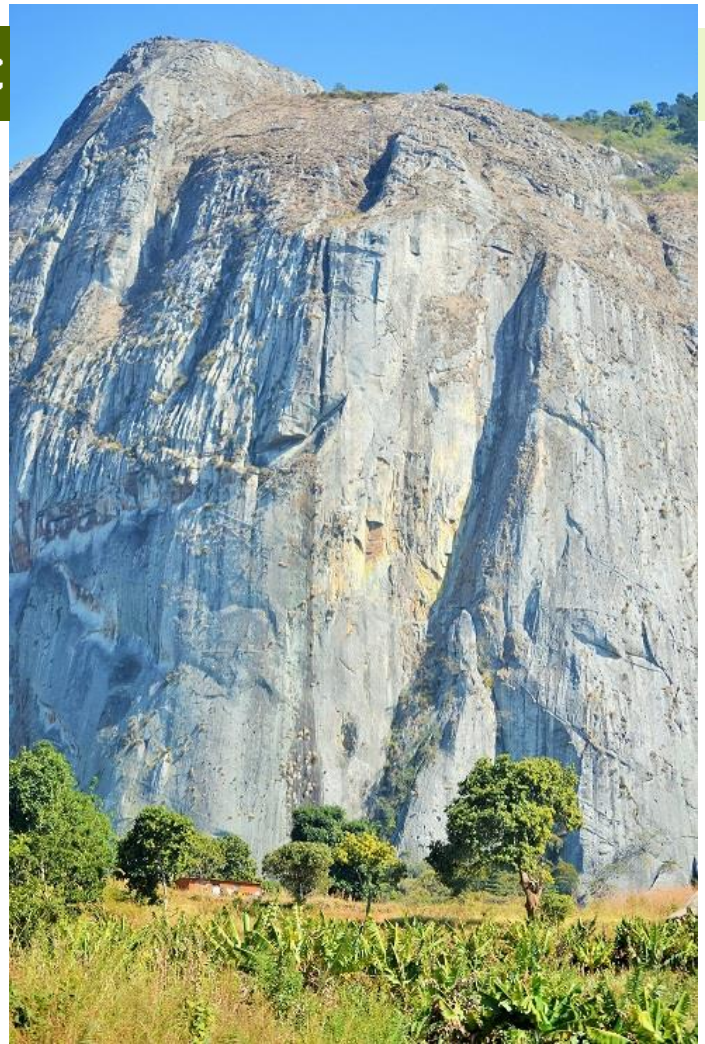
"If you are caught hunting game, no matter how small, you will lose your certification," he said in a serious tone but with a smile of satisfaction.

This has given them pride and status. And they are pleased to remind all that they earned it through their respect for other life forms – both flora and fauna.

Sitting afoot the majestic Inyangani mountain range in Manicaland, Zimbabwe and in the splendour of riparian forests which are only interrupted by the finery of the photogenic tea plantations, it appears Honde Valley will hang on to its rich biodiversity.

This coming, albeit from the least likely of sources – and one that is even responsible for the decimation of Zimbabwe's forests and depleting wildlife – agriculture.

The RA and SAN certification programme is part of a global campaign for sustainable agricultural standards, which compel



farmers to proactively address social and environmental challenges in farming as prerequisites to the global tea markets.

And it is already paying dividends to the country's push to preserve its pristine forests and diverse wildlife.

Although the prestigious certification is set to benefit small-holder farmers by unlocking access of their produce to niche global markets, the environment is the biggest winner.

RA and SAN are coalitions of non-profit conservation organisations in America, Africa, Europe and Asia promoting the environmental and social sustainability of agricultural activities.

Local environmentalists have lauded their efforts noting that they gave consumers power to make agricultural producers accountable about how run their enterprises.

"Consumers are increasingly having a say over how companies operate because at the end of the day they are the ones who determine whether businesses succeed or fail. To this end, consumers now want to know and be guaranteed of producers' compliance with source countries' environmental regulations," said local environmentalist Amos Chiketo.

Sustainable Environmental Conservation Trust Africa (SECTA) Programmes Coordinator Moses Chimedza also said unless consumers hold businesses to account the environment was going to be completely destroyed for profit.

Carnival - Christian festival gone rogue?

By Norma Tsopo

Its mutation from a religious festival to a purely sensual festivity is awe striking

Carnivals are pretty sensual affairs - very earthy by even by conservative Christian standards, and unquestionably evil in the views of religious fundamentalists.

It was with shock that on looking at the origins of the world famous Rio de Janeiro Carnival, after which many are being woven across the world, there are such strong Christian ties.

In fact, it is unimaginable that without Easter and the Catholic religion's season of Lent during which meat consumption is prohibited carnival would not have found light of day.

The week-long festival was originally celebrated as a precursor to the Christian festival that preludes Easter festivities in the catholic country.

This was an event that was decidedly meant to be sensual as a farewell to earthly pleasures in preparation for sensual fasting that the Catholic Church proscribes for its adherents in preparation for Easter celebrations.

Carnival is derived from the Portuguese word "carneval" which comes from Italian and translates to the phrase "to put away the meat."

In Italy, Carnevale was celebrated with a costume contest, and as this tradition grew, it made its way over to many other Catholic countries in Europe, including Portugal.

The costume parade has largely become the face of the Carnival.

And with the costume becoming skimpier over time its religious roots are increasingly coming into question especially in a conservative country like Zimbabwe where Brazilians have of late been

invited to perform in a local carnival.

The metamorphosis of a religious festival into a wild sensual parade just like most festivals the world over took time and was gradual.

Even the costumes moved from extravagance to skimpy although complete nudity is still shunned as an unacceptable excess.

The carnival was taken to Brazil by its Portuguese colonialists in the 17th century. Then, Portuguese socialists would dress up in masks and costumes and then parade through town while the commoners watched.

Costumes from this time until the 1930s were very elaborate and were often a way to demonstrate wealth.

With masks being a part of the costumes people began to push the boundaries as being masquerades brought with it a sense of freedom and mystery.

The costs of being part of a carnival parade was also too exorbitant for the ordinary person which however began to change in the 1930s.

Because of the need to bring down the cost of the costumes to accommodate the ordinary folk and Brazil's sweltering February heat the usually heavy costumes began to be tinkered with for both comfort and affordability.

Costume making businesses began to thrive.

To aid the revolution in carnival costumes were the costume contests that were running parallel to the main parade and costume contest. There were many other side shows and costume contests in hotels, clubs, theatres and other public facilities in Brazil during this transitional

period.

Men started attending the shows in drag outfits.

Over time, the cos-

tumes

took a sexy and more

revealing turn with bikinis becoming the norm. Men also began to go shirtless.

But fashion trends had taken over to influence the costumes with today's highly sexualized perceptions of beauty swaying the scales in what beautiful costumes should be like.

They are now more of feathers and beads than anything else. And it appears completely lost to its Christian foundations.

Zimbabwe is copying the carnival concept albeit as a highly secular and deeply commercialized event. There is as yet no cultural or religious connections.

Beyond its tourism value, the local carnival would die a natural death. It's still only owned by its organisers - Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) and even then only at the mercy of government financing.

If it succeeds in being integrated into the local annual cultural festivities it will need to strengthen its ties with things Zimbabwean.



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