

NEWSLETTER FROM CATHY BUCKLE IN ZIMBABWE



At the going down of the sun

10 November 2022



Dear Family and Friends

In the still, quiet heat of a Matabeleland morning a few kilometres into the Matopos National Park outside Bulawayo a friend and I came to the consecrated ground of a shrine. An Emerald Spotted Wood Dove was calling, its haunting, mournful song in this sacred place bringing goose bumps to my arm. Backed by a steep black granite hill the shrine stands amongst the tumbled boulders in an enduring memorial to those who have fallen in war.

Beautifully fenced with each metal post topped with a tin hat, two crossed rifles are clear testimony to armed service. Stone lined flower beds are filled with Christ Thorn euphorbia flowers, grey stems thick with black thorns, pale flowers held on crimson bracts.

Erected in 1947 by the Founder of the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (Charles Evenden) the memorial at this Silent Shrine is to show allegiance to the fallen. "Those who fell, irrespective of class or creed are the Nobility of the Nation and we know from long experience that if we work for them and do the things they would have us do, that bond which joins us shall never be broken." (Evenden)

As we walk quietly around the shrine the feeling of not being alone is powerful. A plaque embedded in the stone reads: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them."

Another plaque indicates the site of relics left beneath the stone “as a token of sound memory to fallen comrades.”

In a protected rondavel higher in the rocks is a garden of rest and a repository of ashes. On the outside screen around the rondavel are names of fallen soldiers: Barr, Francis, Kagwira, Mahmoud, Norman, Takavera and so many more. Line after line I read the names and tears cloud my eyes as I imagine all these soldiers gone seventy five years ago.

A stone bird bath at the base of the shrine is dry and I get the bottle of water I always carry for emergencies and use it to fill the bird bath, because water is life and with this small gesture I feel I can show my respect to the fallen soldiers.

The Memorable Order of Tin Hats, MOTH, founded a brotherhood of South African former front-line soldiers to help and “remember all servicemen who have answered the Sunset Call, both in war and peacetime.” As I rest my hands on the engraved words of poet Laurence Binyon written in 1914 I can almost hear the Sunset bugle call in these hot African hills and see the soldiers looking out from the rocks.

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.”
(Poem For the Fallen, Laurence Binyon, 1914)

A fortnight after visiting the MOTH shrine I visited a 92 year old pilot, a veteran of a war fought many decades ago. Struggling to afford his medicines in a time when international economists calculate our inflation at 400%, I went to see how I could help. I found him singing, wearing an apron, working on a small wooden aeroplane he had carved himself and was going to use at a talk he was giving about being a pilot. When I asked if I could hold the plane he was delighted and when I commented that there were no wheels for the plane to land on he laughed and said “oh that’s no problem, these old folks will never notice.” We both laughed.

The 92 year old was singing again when I left!

Love Cathy

My new book, “Zimbabwe’s Timeless Beauty: The 2022 Collection” is available in paperback or kindle from Amazon <https://www.amazon.com/author/catherinebuckle> the hardback version and my “Beautiful Zimbabwe” Calendar 2023 are available from: <https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/cathybuckle2018>.

There is no charge for this Letter From Zimbabwe but if you would to donate please visit my website. Until next time, thanks for reading my letter, now in its 22nd year, and my books about life in Zimbabwe, a country in waiting.

Ndini shamwari yenyu (I am your friend)

10 November 2022 Copyright ©Catherine Buckle <https://cathybuckle.co.zw/>