

A light blue silhouette of the map of Zimbabwe is centered on the page. A thin red horizontal line passes through the middle of the map, positioned behind the text.

a **letter** from **Zimbabwe**

[www.zane.uk.com](http://www.zane.uk.com)

Dear Mr Benyon

I have been writing to you for over 3 years, in my mind, in my heart and on paper. I truly thank God for the work and love you have for the elderly here in Zimbabwe. How can I express my true appreciation on paper to you?

I was standing in Kwik's par with my daughter and behind me was an elderly man, he had 4 pork sausages in his hand, and he said to me "This is my meal for the week, I cut these sausages in half, an  $\frac{1}{2}$  for Monday another  $\frac{1}{2}$  for Tuesday and so on." I came away so distressed that day, the man's face was continually before me for months, everytime we go to Kwik's par we look for him, so that I can give him some rusk that I can give him some of the arthritis allows me to knead that I give him some bak him in <sup>months</sup> years, I have not seen has died or I wonder if he came to fetch him.



*Dear Reader*

The ZANE charity was founded in 2002, when Tom Benyon met Cathy Olds whose husband Martin was hacked to death when their farm was occupied. When he visited Zimbabwe Tom discovered there are a large number of old aged pensioners in Zimbabwe: many of these fought in WW11 or are their widows who faced ruin as the then 250% inflation rate had destroyed their savings, their pensions and their future.

Since then the position has grown much worse as inflation has escalated to over 1000%, now the highest in the world in a country not at war. This situation has lead to a chronic shortage of drugs, food and medical equipment. These poor pensioners grow desperate as they watch the country they love effectively destroyed, their pensions grow worthless and their life's savings melt to nothing. They are now prisoners in their own country, many are reliant on our charity. ZANE is currently feeding 2000 of these men and women each day.

Tom was handed a letter on his last trip that sums the situation up succinctly and the ZANE trustees have decided to send it to you so you can see for yourself what difference donor money is making. Your money is not only saving lives but it also preserves the dignity of people who lived upright, proud lives until they were decimated by economic circumstances wholly beyond their control. Helen is a widow of 85 whose husband was a farmer. He was Dutch by origin and joined up to fight for Britain in WW11 a mere two weeks after he was married. He was wounded in action in North Africa, thus he was separated from his wife and the country he loved for five years. They farmed in Selous until the farm they had built up - their life's work - was destroyed by Mugabe's men, so they were forced to leave. He died soon afterwards.

There is nothing the Zimbabwe government, the architect of the problem, or any other agency is doing about her predicament. So as Tom has often said, unless we act, who will?

Zane has a first class team on the ground in Zimbabwe and systems in place to ensure that every pound donated is used to its maximum value. Thus we can be as effective as possible under very difficult circumstances. There are no middlemen and there is no waste. We hope you will help us in our task of continuing to help forgotten people like Helen so please take the few minutes it needs to read this letter from her.

Yours sincerely

**Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick CBE**

PS We are obliged to omit her surname on grounds of security



## biography

**Helen was born in 1921 after her family came up with the Moodie Trek from South Africa and settled in Melsetter, which is now at Chimanimani.** Her mother died from malaria while Helen was very young and she and her sister were cared for in Daisyfield, an orphanage run by the Dutch Reformed Church near Gweru. After school in Gweru she moved to Mutale where she met her husband. They married in 1940 and two weeks later he volunteered to fight in the British Forces in World War II and was wounded in action in North Africa. He returned home five years later.

The land promised to volunteers after the war, never materialised for him, however he saved enough money to buy his own farm which he developed in Selous, where they lived until they were forced from their home and land: he died shortly afterwards.

Dear Mr Benyon

**I have been writing to you for over 3 years in my mind and in my heart and on paper. I truly thank God for the work and love you have for the elderly in Zimbabwe. How can I express my true appreciation on paper to you? I was standing in Kwikspar with my daughter and behind me was an elderly man, he had four pork sausages in his hand, and he said to me: "This is my meal for the week, I cut these sausages in half, one half for Monday morning another half for Wednesday and so on". I came away so distressed that day, the man's face was continually before me for months, every time we go to Kwikspar we look for him, so that I can give him some rusks that I sometimes bake if the arthritis allows me to kneed. I have not seen him for months, I wonder if he has died or I hope a child has come to fetch him. I am sure there are many such cases in Zimbabwe.**

My name is Helen and I am 85 years old. I and my husband enjoyed 63 years of marriage before he died, June 2004. We have four children, 3 boys, 1 girl. My eldest is 63 years my second 62 years, my daughter 59, the youngest 51 years. My husband and I farmed all our years. He bought a farm in Selous, that is 40km after Chegutu (Hartley). We farmed there for 40 years, our children then at junior school and moving onto High School except the young one. We started in a grass house, it has one big bedroom for my husband and I and the young child beside me and my daughter as well. Two boys in another room. In the centre of this was the sitting room and a few chairs and a dining room table and my wood stove. This was a temporary home until my husband could build something better. We heated up bathwater over a big pot and bathed in a tin bath. I was difficult but we managed.

My husband had to take a loan from the bank to buy the farm and he had to make sure the tobacco crop brought in enough money to pay off the loan. Barns had to be built and a borehole had to be sunk. The borehole pumped water to the reservoir near our little hut home. During the hot weather reed beds had to be started and my husband rolled 45 gallon drums from the reed beds up hill to the reservoir, fill them with water then roll them down the hill to water the tobacco seedlings until it rained, the workforce helped him, they were so willing in those days.

The tobacco was planted, and my husband spent nights ploughing the lands in preparing for the tobacco seedlings. The land had to be de-stumped of course.

So the tobacco was ready to be planted and we all just prayed for rain. We were so blessed with a good rainy season that year but a heavy storm broke through our grass house and we ended up with a pool of water in our bed and my young son. My daughter's bed was the only dry bed, the boys were also wet. This did not break our spirits, things could be dried and soon more grass was cut and the workforce thatched and repaired. We were soon comfortable again.

The next year my husband built a small house, money did not allow a large house but that did not matter, I soon planted lawn, put in flowers and bougainvilleas to trees.

Next I started chickens and turkeys, a vegetable garden. Life was getting much better. Fruit trees also went in. Much later I started with pigs, just 2, but had to learn how to farm with these. Soon the bank loan was paid off and some years later my husband bought another farm just 4km away called Meadowlands. This had a farm house, and became the dream house, but it meant moving away from Northwood.

At Meadowlands, I had to plant lawn all over again, it was much bigger yard. Also more fruit trees and vegetables again. The pigs had to be sold. My eldest son had now left Umtali Boys School and became a farmer, he stayed at Northwood. With the extra hand things went better still. I now bought some sheep and often sold mutton to make extra money, also eggs, tomatoes, eggs a dozen for 2 shillings. Eggs are now Z\$400,000 for a dozen.

My eldest son got married, and by now he bought some more land, extension of Northwood where there was a bigger house. They had four children, 3 boys and 1 girl. They needed space and lived all their years there until all their children left school and finally they were chased off the farm. They were brought a letter over the weekend and had to sign it. The struggle to keep the farm went on for another 3 years and finally they were given a weekend to move all their belongings to live in a little town called Norton about 15km away. Their pot plants were smashed, huts by now were being put up all over the land as land was being pegged. No planting of crops was ever done. My son came over to us from Northwood to Meadowlands to see if we needed help, by now my husband and I are much older. Signs of emphysema had started and he needed to be on oxygen once in a while. My son and his wife now stayed at Norton 15km away, and he still came to us on the farm and fills up oxygen cylinders when needed.

From 2000, we had war vets regularly at our gate screaming and shouting often very drunk, about 10-12 people. This was more frightening than living through the ZIPRA and ZANU was (1979-80)

In 2000 at weekends, cars used to come in and out of the farm to chop trees down for firewood. This was sold in Norton and Harare – a roaring trade came from that. We just had to watch. We were not allowed to say anything.

At 5pm I would rush to hang old sheets in front of the windows and doors that had glass panels. Some windows only had sun filter curtains. We needed to put sheets to prevent them from watching us. Regularly we had visits by 7pm, actually trying the veranda door handles to try and get my husband out. Police did very little. We stopped reporting incidents.

These visits at night we think were from people who moved onto the farm or sometimes just plain thieves who tormented us by night. We still had a chance to shout or let off a shot in the air to scare them.

In 2001, as he sat in the veranda chair looking at the removals packing our things, he cast his eyes over the yard and beyond to 40 years of farm life. He was trying to say goodbye. I wept but he kept himself strong and as we drove off he would not look back.

We lived with my daughter in Bulawayo and were a week in our home when my husband had to go to hospital. This led him to have a very big operation but he pulled through and we were still together for 2 years until he died. My daughter virtually lived with us during his illness as we could not afford nurses. She slept beside my husband at night to give him his oxygen and help him to the toilet. During the day I looked after my husband.

Not long after my husband's death I was interviewed by J from your organisation. Most money was spent on oxygen and every 3 days oxygen had to be fetched. There was no special price for pensioners. A district nurse called 3 times each week to visit my husband.

The love from J and J of your organisation is unbelievable. I now receive enough money for essential purposes, soap, toilet paper, margarine. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for this help and thank God each day that a person in the UK has been able to arrange such a wide network of help for people who are so down and out, here in Zimbabwe. Please give my thanks to all who have helped. We would not survive otherwise. I do not ask for more help but to thank you all and I hope that other thank you letters touch your heart. The money I receive eases the terrible burden for my daughter and son-in-law.

Thank you for allowing me to tell you the story of our farm days, I hope it will not bore you. It is good therapy for me to be able to write about these things, I often wonder what happened to our wonderful 2 workers we had on the farm and I often wonder how they are. They were just as old as we were.

Mr Benyon, thank you, I salute you for your help. And your workers great love for the elderly people here in Zimbabwe.

This will be given to you by hand and goodbye as you leave our precious Zimbabwe back to the UK with our many thanks to all.

Reganah

Helena

# ZANE: Zimbabwe A National Emergency

Gift Aid

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often wonder how they are.  
They were just as old as we  
were.

Mr Benjen, Thank you, I  
salute you for your help  
and your workers great  
love for us elderly people  
here in Zimbabwe.

As I send a letter such  
as this will only bring  
problems if opened in the  
mail and I believe this  
will be given to you by hand.

God Bless you and

Good-bye as you leave our

precious Zimbabwe back to the  
UK, with our many thanks to all.  
Regards



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