

The White Man's Burden:

How It Has Been
Borne in Southern
Rhodesia

... By ...

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*Chiefs and headmen at the opening of the Tsonzo Clinic for the Umtasa South Reserve.
Photo by E. A. M. Bazeley.*

UP to 1923 when Southern Rhodesia obtained Responsible Government little could be done to improve the Native Reserves. Before that date all expenditure had to be met out of revenue, except certain funds supplied by the British South Africa Company out its own scanty resources. But this does not mean that nothing was done for the Natives. In addition to the all-important gifts of peace and security, large sums were spent on the control of epidemics such as small-pox and of cattle diseases such as African coast fever. In famine years, such as 1912, 1916 and 1922, the starving wives and children of the Natives were supplied with food. Locust hoppers were destroyed, baboons were hunted, and rewards were given for killing large carnivora.

As a result the Native population and Native cattle and small stock greatly increased. The construction of railways not only made it easier to deal with famines, but enabled the Natives to sell their surplus crops, and thus encouraged them to grow more. But the very benefits of the Company's rule created new and alarming difficulties. Most of the habitable areas in the Reserves were becoming over-populated and over-stocked. The Natives were ploughing up large areas but producing very little to the acre. Trees and grass were disappearing, while streams and springs were drying up. Every rain storm carried away vast quantities of soil into the rivers. On the other hand huge tracts of land were uninhabited owing to lack of water.

Outside the Native Reserves hundreds of thousands of Natives resided on land which had been sold to Europeans, or on Crown land which was awaiting sale. Having no security of tenure they had no encouragement to make any improvement or even to preserve whatever natural resources the land possessed.

It was clear that every effort must be made to render the Native Reserves capable of holding a much larger population and to do everything possible to preserve their timber and pastures, their soil and their water.

Three important measures were taken. In the first place, Government schools were opened at Domboshawa and Tjolotjo for the industrial and agricultural training of Natives. From these schools Native agricultural demonstrators were sent out to the Reserves to combat the wasteful methods of the Natives and to teach them to grow more food on less land. Secondly, a Native Reserves Trust was formed, into which were paid all revenues derived from rents from trading sites and payments for timber cutting. This revenue is devoted to the agricultural training of Natives and to the general improvement and development of the Reserves. The third measure was the provision of water supplies in the Reserves out of loan funds. During recent years this has included soil conservation.

The Umtali district may be taken as an illustration of the working of these measures. It contains five Native Reserves, named respectively Zimunya, Umtasa South, Jenya, Umtasa North and Maranke. The three first are small and very thickly populated. They are overstocked with cattle and goats. The soil has suffered severely from erosion. In 1924, when the Native Reserves Trust was formed, the Zimunya Reserve was served by two rough road tracks which were usually rendered impassable by any heavy rain. The Umtasa South and Jenya Reserves were cut off every wet season by the Odzani river. The Umtasa North Reserve, which consists of the southern side of the Honde Valley, was completely inaccessible by motor car or wagon. The Maranke Reserve comprises an area of 732 square miles as compared with a total of 116 for the other four. Though it is well timbered and much of its soil is fertile, large parts of it are uninhabited owing to lack of water. Up till 1930 the Maranke Natives had depended for the most part on small waterholes, polluted by wild and domestic animals, infected with disease, and always liable to disappear. This reserve was served by one rough track leading from Odzi railway station, and was inaccessible in the wet season. In 1924 more than half the Native population of the Umtali district resided on land alienated to Europeans, and most of these Natives paid rent to absentee landlords.

The following is a short account of the progress made in the past 16 years:—

ROADS AND BRIDGES.

Before any real improvement could be effected in the Native Reserves it was essential to make them accessible for wagons and motor cars throughout the year. Native school teachers, Native agricultural demonstrators, community demonstrators, soil conservation demonstrators, orderlies in charge of clinics, and dip attendants all require to be visited regularly by their superintendents or by Government officials if they are to be efficient. Dams, wells, canals and boreholes can only be provided in areas that can be reached by road. Native produce, such as grain or hides, can only be marketed if it can be carried by wagon or lorry to the nearest railway or centre.

Accordingly with the help of grants from the Native Reserves Fund, about 300 miles of roads have been cut in the Native Reserves or the neighbouring Native areas. In the comparatively level country of the Maranke Reserve it was usually only necessary to cut out the timber and make drifts across streams and dongas. But in the mountainous or broken country of the other Reserves the roads often required heavy cuttings and careful protection by drains and culverts as well.

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Bazeley
Bridge
over the
Odzi River
leading to
the Maranke
Reserve.



Photos by
D. G. Hood.

BELOW:
Hide-drying
Shed in the
Maranke
Reserve.

One of the most ambitious roads was one which was cut into the Honde Valley to serve the Umtasa North Reserve. Passing through the magnificent scenery of the Honde Gorge, it descends over 2,500 feet in five miles and crosses a score of spruets and ravines.

In 1937 and 1938 a bridge was built over the Odzi river to give access to the Maranke Reserve from Umtali. The cost which was £3,000, was contributed in equal shares by the Native Reserves Fund, the Beit Trustees and the Government. The bridge is 500 feet in length.

In 1940 funds were provided by the Native Reserves Fund for a bridge over the beautiful but dangerous Odzani river, in order to open up the Umtasa South Reserve and the Native areas which adjoin it. When this bridge is opened all the Native Reserves will have been made accessible by road in the wet season as well as in the dry.

AGRICULTURE.

In 1930 the first Native agricultural demonstrator was stationed in the district. He was followed by two others in 1931 and 1933. The method has been to persuade some of the more intelligent and progressive Natives to grow crops on part of their lands under the personal supervision of the demonstrator. They are thus able to see the results with their own eyes. Many have grown 15 bags to the acre on demonstration plots, while adjoining land cultivated in the old way has produced less than one. At first the Natives were suspicious and were hostile, but gradually their eyes are being opened and more and more of them are adopting the new methods.

The Zimunya Reserve is the most thickly-populated Reserve in Southern Rhodesia, in spite of nearly one-third of it being useless, and much of the remainder containing poor soil. It has therefore been necessary to take special steps to increase food production. At the request of the Natives an irrigation canal was cut in 1933 from the Nyachowa river to serve about 300 acres of fertile land in the Eastern part of the Reserve. This enables the Natives to grow two crops a year, and secures them against drought. In 1935 another canal was cut through the central portion of this Reserve to irrigate another fertile area from the river Matikiti, supplemented by two storage dams.

In all the Reserves the crops have suffered severely from baboons and wild pig. Several hunts were organised, with fairly satisfactory results. Government shotguns are now issued to a few reliable Natives for short periods for the control of these pests.

In 1936 a start was made with soil conservation in the Zimunya Reserve. In the four years from July, 1936, to June,

1940, about 370 miles of contour ridge and storm drains were completed. About two-thirds of the arable land in this Reserve have now been protected.

In June, 1940, a start was made with soil conservation in the Umtasa South Reserve.

IMPROVEMENT OF STOCK.

The first need was to reduce the distances which cattle had to travel for dipping purposes. In 1924 there were only three dip tanks in the Maranke Reserve, one in the Zimunya Reserve, and one in the Umtasa South Reserve. There were none at all in the Umtasa North and Jenya Reserves. There are now nine in the Maranke, three serving the Zimunya, two serving the Umtasa South, and one apiece in the Jenya and Umtasa North Reserves, making 16 in all.

The quality of the Native cattle suffered severely from the very large number of scrub bulls. The Native agricultural demonstrators have done valuable work in selecting the best bulls for breeding purposes and emasculating the rest. The Natives have thus acquired large numbers of oxen which they have trained for ploughing and transport purposes. For some years grade bulls were supplied out of Native Reserves Trust funds with good results. One of the objects was to increase the milk supply and thus improve the health of the children.

In 1932 an experiment was made in re-distributing the agricultural and pastoral areas in the Zimunya Reserves in order that the cattle might have wide grazing areas and the grass might be given a chance of improving. Cultivation in these pastoral areas is forbidden. This measure has had good results.

One of the greatest evils has been that of overstocking. As one means of encouraging the Natives to get rid of their surplus stock, hide sheds have been erected at most of the dip tanks, and the dip attendants have been trained to dry the hides properly. About 1,000 hides are sent to Salisbury each year from the Native Reserves in the Umtali district.

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Women drawing water from a well in the Maranke Reserve.



Photo by E. A. M. Bazeley.

FORESTRY.

In the Umtasa South Reserve almost all the growing timber has disappeared, and in the Zimunya Reserve it is becoming scarce. Accordingly, plantations of gum trees were started in 1931 in these two Reserves. The seedlings suffered severely year after year from insect pests, white ants, locusts, drought and depredations of cattle and small stock. In 1940 about 7,500 trees were growing in the plantations, and some 350 at the kraals.

WATER SUPPLIES.

The four smaller reserves are fairly well supplied with water. Efforts to improve the water supplies were therefore confined to the Maranke Reserve. A start was made with two wells in 1930. At first the Natives showed no enthusiasm, and wells were only dug where the Natives had definitely asked for them. Little by little the Maranke headmen came to realise the immense advantage of a regular supply of good water. By 1938, 18 wells had been successfully dug in the Maranke Reserve and were giving good supplies of water. Most of these wells have been equipped with pumps and drinking troughs for cattle. In almost every case there has been a striking improvement in the health of the Natives and in the condition of the cattle. In some areas wells would have been too expensive, and accordingly, in 1940, it was decided to substitute boreholes. At two sites good supplies of water were obtained. If this work can be continued it is hoped that large areas will be opened for settlement.

In the Maranke Reserve in recent years almost all the streams have only run for a few months during and immediately after the rains. It was all-important to secure a permanent flow of water. With this object in view five large dams have been built, of which one contains over 20,000,000 gallons, and forms a beautiful lake. By feeding the pools in the river below it provides water for a thousand head of cattle. The others render similar service in proportion to their size.

The rainfall in the southern half of the Maranke Reserve is very low and uncertain. Wells are liable to dry up and dams may fail to fill. On the eastern side of the Reserve is the Odzi river, which carries a big volume of water even in the driest year. A large canal is therefore in course of construction, by which it is hoped that some 50 cusecs of water will be led from the Odzi into the waterless but otherwise fertile areas in

the south. Work has been proceeding for the past two years, and the first six miles of the canal are approaching completion.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL FACILITIES.

For many years serious epidemics have been successfully controlled, but until recently little had been done to improve the general health of the Natives in the Reserves. It has been discovered that a large majority suffer from a variety of serious complaints. Among these are venereal diseases, malaria, parasitic worms, ophthalmia and influenza. Ill-health is responsible for much of their inertia and inefficiency. It has also been proved that infant mortality is very high, and that deaths in childbirth are frequent.

In 1937 a large clinic was opened at Tsonzo, adjoining the Umtasa South Reserve. Within the first month 800 separate cases were treated, and thousands have benefited since.

Four Native girls who had been specially trained as Home Demonstrators have been posted in various Reserves. Their work is to teach the elements of hygiene and mothercraft to Native women and to distribute simple medicines. Arrangements have been made by which expectant mothers who are in difficulties can be brought in from the Reserves to the nearest hospital.

EDUCATION.

The greatest obstacle to progress in the Reserves has always arisen from the ignorance, superstition and conservatism of the Natives. Believing as they did that all disease and almost all evils were caused by witchcraft or malignant spirits, even the most elementary sanitation or hygienic measures met with their passive opposition. Good crops, they believed, were due, not to good methods of cultivation or even to good soil or favourable weather so much as to the possession of some powerful medicine. But without their intelligent co-operation little can be done, and sound education is therefore essential. In 1928 the Government appointed Inspectors of Native education to visit the Mission Schools in the Reserves and elsewhere. The standard of Native education is steadily improving, and Native children are not only learning to read and write, but are also being given agricultural and industrial training suitable to their life in the kraals. It is they who will carry out the conservation and improvement of the land, and it is they who will actively co-operate in the extermination of disease.