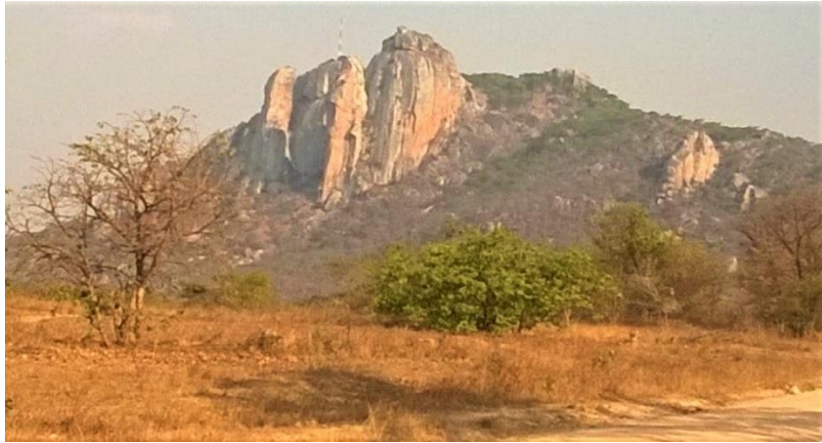


ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

EXHAUSTING BUT WORTH IT was the unanimous opinion of the group of artists who made the journey to Nyanga in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe to procure raw stone. A



party of their eight 'fittest' men, already weak through a lack of food, worked tirelessly for four days in boiling temperatures rooting out

Leopard Rock and Cobalt, two high-density quality hard stones from an open cast mine in the mountains. The cost of the journey including raw stone, food, transport



and accommodation, was covered from the balance of a generous donation by Marlow URC. **Nyanga** which I am fortunate to have visited, is a beautiful area similar in parts to the Scottish Highlands. The local village headman told the artists that the mountain (top photo) is sacred and a spiritual healer lived close by along with his 12 wives and 41 children! Despite a lack of electricity to charge old mobiles, ArtPeace



took these photos to give UK friends an idea of their experience. **Top right:** Mike, Coster and Peter select the best seams of leopard rock – a beautiful greenish yellow stone. **Above left:** Fortune and Peter enjoying a simple meal of sadza and vegetables after a hard day's work in their modest hostel which is unlikely to feature in TripAdvisor! **Above right:** 12 tonnes of large rocks had to be manually carried to this somewhat dilapidated truck 500 metres away.

TIME WARP: Below, local village scenes which could have been taken over 100 years ago!



Below left: Miners lend a helping hand. **Right:** Artists sleeping in truck on long journey home.



Below left: ArtPeace relaxing back at Silveira House. **Right:** Lovemore starting on a hippo using



new stone! Some of this raw stone will be shared with their talented young sculptor friends. The weary artists took several days to recover due to a constant lack of food and protein which drains their energy. The CCZ, (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe) has recently revealed that prices of basic

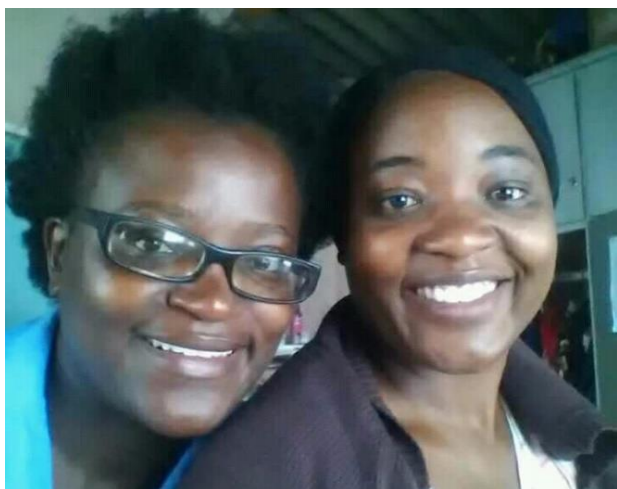
commodities have increased by over 100% in some instances. Once the breadbasket of Africa, most of Zimbabwe's food is now imported from South Africa with middlemen taking a generous cut! **The next project** will be to source a few power tools like an Angle Grinder (right) and a die grinder as Lizeni and Godfrey lack the strength in their arms and wrists to work this extremely hard stone. Power tools like everything else, are very expensive in Harare.



MEANWHILE back at the ranch, Lizeni, Coster and Fortune's families (below L to R) are busy preparing their fields for sowing maize, African potatoes, pumpkins, groundnuts and beans.



TOLLER URC Kettering, recently held a successful sale of jewellery designed and made by artists Christine and sister Salome. **Examples right:** hand painted earrings and wooden bangle.



The event coincided with a visit from Toller's Moderator ensuring a good turnout. These young ladies were delighted to receive sale proceeds two days later and replied as follows:

'Christine and Salome wish to sincerely thank the kind Kettering congregation for their patronage. In addition



to earning our keep, this project of making accessories binds us together as sisters and encourages us to keep moving forward and explore new ways of working. We appreciate your much-valued support. Sincerely, Christine and Salome'.

DESPITE the trials and tribulations of 2017, the year is ending on a positive note and our little army of artists continues to grow. Also Isabel, one of several children we support, is excitedly



awaiting her 'A' level results. The rains have arrived enabling seed to be sown and stone supplies have been replenished. The ecumenical logistical effort involving CAFOD London and Harare has proved indispensable as has tremendous support from some URC churches and couriers - unsung heroes who have gone the extra mile moving countless parcels of stone. Grateful thanks also to Jon Dollin and his team at the Southwark Cathedral shop not forgetting Dean Andrew Nunn for his support. Lovemore James summed it up

recently, quote: **'I often feel hopeless and under pressure with the situation, but our UK friends have done so much for my family even though we don't know their faces. God bless you all'.**

CHRISTMAS is looking bleak for our friends as the kitty is empty, but we have been in this situation so many times and God usually answers our prayers in the most unexpected of ways. 2018 promises to be another challenging year not least due to the forthcoming general election likely to be held between 23 July and 21 August. 93-year-old long-term incumbent President Robert Mugabe announced that he would run for another term.

Johnston Simpson