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THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE
ON THE MODE OF LIVING IN
NORTHERN RHODESIA.

1937

Northern Rhodesia is situated in the torrid zone on the Central African Plateau. It is high - entirely above 1,200 feet above sea-level, and averaging between 3,000 and 4,000 feet above sea-level - and is a great distance from the sea.

The maximum temperature of the lowlands is 103°F ., and the minimum is 56°F .. The higher parts have a maximum of 85°F ., and a minimum of 40° . Thus tropical heat is modified by altitude, and the climate is continental owing to lack of maritime influence.

The average rainfall varies from fifty inches in some higher parts to twenty-five inches in the lower regions. Rain during the winter months is exceptional, and 90% of the total rainfall falls between November and March.

October is the hottest month, and during the winter months the wind and dust are very unpleasant. The summer is warm and wet, and the winter cool and dry.

Sir Ronald Storrs, a former governor of Northern Rhodesia, said that it was

a white man's country and that it should be as white as he could make it. The white population has, since 1921, more than trebled itself, while the number of Natives has hardly increased. There are, however, only 11,400 white people to 1,400,000 natives, which is natural since the territory has not yet been colonized for fifty years.

Most of the natives are as uncivilized as ever, and they have not learned many useful habits from white people. The missions and schools are doing great things to educate the native, but he soon reverts to his primitive life on returning to his village.

Europeans live in houses that, generally speaking, are devoid of architectural beauty, and are designed solely for coolness in summer. Most of the houses have verandas to protect the walls and windows from the direct rays of the sun.

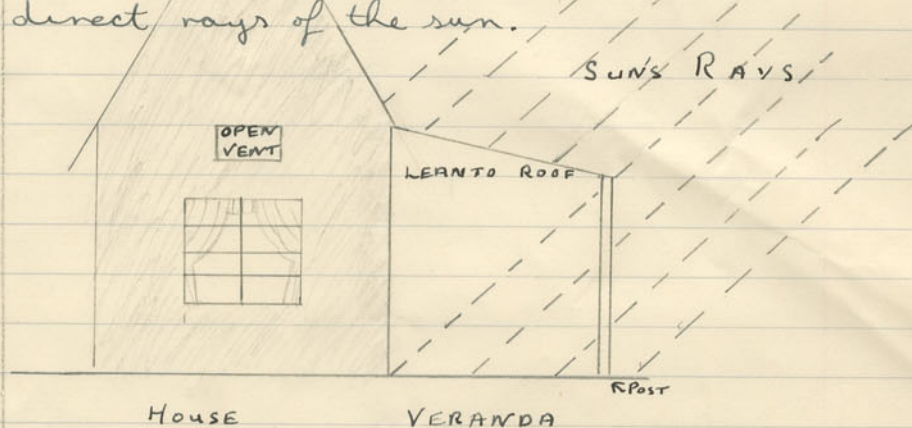


DIAGRAM OF VERANDA

Until recently, all the houses were bungalows, for the walls of a bungalow are easier to shelter by means of verandas; they are more easily built, and since land is cheap, houses may be large and

rambling. Tiles for roofing are not easily procurable, and the houses are roofed with sheets of corrugated material, asbestos or galvanized iron.

The new capital at Lusaka is an exception to these rules, and it is a very pleasant change. Many of the houses are double-storied, without verandas, and with tiled roofs. Lusaka is developing into an English town, and, though most people seem to resent the change because the Government made it at great expense, the rest of the territory will soon see that houses can be beautiful as well as practical, and that warmth in winter is as important as coolness in summer.

During the winter months, and those preceding the first rain, the wind and dust are very uncomfortable; and since the majority of houses have, in addition to windows, large gaps high in the walls for ventilation; the dust cannot be kept out. The virtues of so much ventilation are few, for during most of the summer days, the outside air is too hot to be wanted in the house, and a ventilator which can be closed to exclude wind and dust is more practical than a gap in the wall. Privacy is impossible, particularly in a bungalow surrounded by a veranda, for guests or servants walking along the veranda have access to any room through French doors, and a fine view through the windows, which, in Northern Rhodesia, have flimsy curtains in place of blinds.

Northern Rhodesia is not a "death-trap

of Darkest Africa." It is not even in "Darkest Africa", if such a place exists nowadays. Tropical diseases are unpleasant, but they are neither as prevalent nor as incurable as some writers suggest.

Perhaps the most common disease is Malaria, which is due to the concentration of the rainfall into a few months. The ground soon reaches saturation point, and pools of water collect. Mosquitoes, the insects that carry the malaria germ, breed in stagnant water. Although the species of mosquito which carries the germ is rare, certain conventional precautions are generally taken, singly, or together. Many of the houses have their windows, doors, and verandas covered with fine meshed wire netting to exclude the mosquito; spiders — poisonous or otherwise; and snakes. In unhealthy districts people sleep beneath a canopy of net, and take daily doses of quinine, but these precautions could neither be called infallible nor absolutely necessary.

By order of the town authorities and in one's own interests, stagnant water is not allowed in any garden or yard, and residents are responsible for seeing that no tins or hollow trees are lying about to catch water and breed mosquitoes. Stagnant pools in the roads are sprayed with oil, and European residences are kept away from native compounds because it has been proved that native women and children are carriers of the germ.

During October and November, the

hottest months, the schools commence at 7.30 a.m. and end at 12.30 p.m., while most businesses have a two hour break at midday, for it ^{would} be unpleasant and perhaps impossible, particularly in the case of children, to work during the excessive heat of noon and early afternoon.

As a precaution against sunstroke, hats are always worn between sunrise and sunset.

There are particularly well equipped European and Native hospitals at all the larger centres such as the mines, where the strenuous life underground takes its toll.

Northern Rhodesia's staple industry is mining, and a great majority of the white population is employed on the mines. Copper is mined at N'kana, N'changa, Luanshya, and Mufulira, lead, zinc, and vanadium at Broken Hill, and gold at some smaller mines in the Lusaka district.

Agriculture has suffered many setbacks, but the number of acres under cultivation has increased tenfold in the last quarter of a century, and the industry is now beginning to prosper. Mazabuka, Chisamba, Fort Jameson, and Lusaka are the chief farming centres, where maize, tobacco, ground-nuts, millet, are the principal crops. Wheat has been grown in Lusaka, and Citrus Fruits have been successful under irrigation. There are ranching centres at Choma, Kafue, and Kalomo. Owing to transport difficulties, most of the farms are near the railway strip from the Victoria Falls to

Elizabethville in the Belgian Congo, but several centres exist in North-Eastern Rhodesia such as Fort Jameson, Fort Rosebery, Abercorn, Kasama, and Mpika.

The prospects of farming in Northern Rhodesia are not attractive, however, owing to the length of the dry season, the wetness of the wet season, and the number of insect pests.

In Northern Rhodesia there are sixty different tribes speaking thirty different languages. There is no united national life except in Barotseland, a native reserve in the west of the territory. It is ruled by a native King aided by a British Resident Commissioner. The Barotse are a peaceful nation, and their lives have been peaceful for many years. In Barotseland are found more fine and distinctive arts and crafts than in any other part of the territory.

Many natives are employed by white people as domestic servants, mine and farm labourers, but in their villages they live a primitive pastoral life. Their huts are made of stakes of uniform height firmly planted close together to form a circle, the spaces between the stakes being filled with mud. The huts are thatched, generally in a crude way, and have mud floors. These huts, though very picturesque, are always dark, and often extremely dirty.

In England the most popular domestic animal is the horse. In Northern Rhodesia, horses are uncommon owing to the ravages of the tse-tse fly, the bite of which is fatal to them. Their place for transport is taken by oxen,

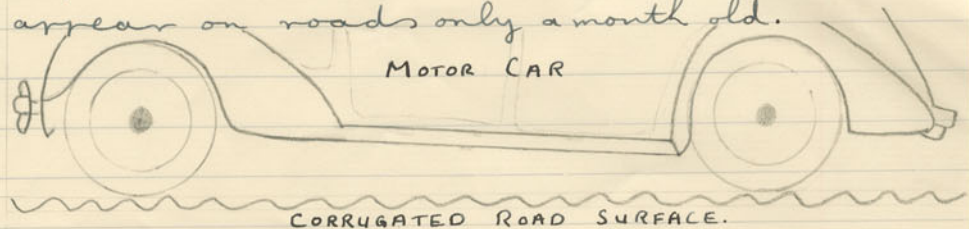
a team of which can draw a heavy wagon great distances. The wagons are similar to those which have been used throughout Southern Africa since the coming of the Dutch settlers.

Owing to the poor pasture during the winter months, cows do not compare with their English sisters. All meat sold is tough and gristly for the same reason.

The lion, leopard, wild-cat, hyaena, elephant, rhinoceros, zebra, hippopotamus, buffalo, giraffe, and crocodile, are found in abundance in Northern Rhodesia, as well as many varieties of wild pig, antelope, gazelle, monkey, and snake. Hunting is a very popular pastime.

Tennis, Cricket, Rugby, Football, Hockey, Bowls, Golf, and many other outdoor sports are played; the winter games for a few months only; the summer games nearly all the year round. Membership of clubs is cheap, and since business stops at 4.30 p.m., everyone is able to play games.

Motor touring would be more popular if the roads were improved. They are surfaced only with gravel, and the main problem is to find a remedy for the corrugations which appear on roads only a month old.



If nothing can be done to improve the roads, the problem may be overcome by low pressure tyres and more resilient springs and shock absorbers than are at present obtained on

on stock models.

The scenery of Northern Rhodesia is very varied and beautiful. There is the bleak grandeur of the Luangwa Escarpment; lakeland scenery near Lakes Mweru, Bangweulu, and Tanganyika, magnificent forests near Ndola, and the indescribable beauty of the Victoria Falls. Camping is popular, particularly in the winter, when rain is unlikely to fall.

European women in Northern Rhodesia wear English summer clothes for a great part of the year. In the evenings and in winter, men wear conventional English clothes, but washing suits of silk or drill are worn by day, as are shorts and tunics, safari suits, in outlying districts. Sun helmets are a common sight.

There are many fine aerodromes and emergency landing grounds, and aeroplanes are often seen. Because of the great distances, air transport is becoming very useful, and several airlines traverse the territory.

Motor cars are very popular, American and Canadian makes especially. Rivalry between Chevrolets and Fords of similar style and price continues without either make completely ousting the other.

Transport to districts away from the railway is generally carried on by fleets of powerful lorries maintaining a weekly service. Barotseland can only be reached by air or by barge on the Zambezi, the latter method taking three weeks.

Children seldom know how to swim. Bathing in rivers and pools which are free

from crocodiles is dangerous because of a fresh water snail which carries the germ of a disease called Bilharzia. Certain streams are, however, known to be safe.

Instead of business men taking an annual holiday, as they do in England, holidays of five or six months are taken every three or four years. Medical opinion is that a long holiday in a temperate climate is necessary in order that the effects of living in the Tropics may be counteracted. Moreover the journey to the coast is long, tedious, and costly, and would not be worth while unless a fairly lengthy stay was made.

While life here is totally different from life in England, it is equally comfortable and happy once one has become acclimatized. In fact it is unusual for anyone who has lived here for any length of time, to settle down again to a mundane life amid the perpetual uncertainty of the English weather.

In Northern Rhodesia, picnics and shooting expeditions can be arranged with the certain knowledge that weather will not spoil them; and outdoor games for the greater part of the year are never interrupted by sudden showers.

Our houses, although of unusual pattern, can nevertheless be made into comfortable homes in which to spend our long dark evenings. There is no necessity for us to exert ourselves unduly during the heat since the natives can be trained to attend fairly satisfactorily to our wants.

Thus it will be seen that, in spite of the

climate, life in Northern Rhodesia is not only liveable, but even attractive. We are not inhabiting a white man's hell, in many respects our country is paradise.