THE MYSTERY & INTRIGUE OF THE TWO KANYEMBAS

I thought it was time to put pen to paper and write up about the Zambezi Valley and what I see as a controversy over the ‘old’ Kanyemba police camp site and something about those who served and patrolled in the area. Most of the information included in this account has been collated from various Outposts and medical journals which have appeared over the years.

I have always felt there was something very special and mystical about the great Zambezi Valley in the early 1960’s, whether this was because of its early history of the great Monomatapa Kingdom or of the early Portuguese and Arab expeditions into its interior, seeking both gold and slaves in the 1500’s. Or maybe it was just the fact that this part of the country to the north was still wild, undeveloped and unspoiled, where its tribal people were looked upon as primitive by other tribesman above the escarpment, especially when the stories of the “two-toed” tribe were rife. There was something magical about the valley, its vastness and emptiness of some 20 000 square miles settled by a spattering of human habitation along its network of major perennial rivers and the encroachment of wild game back into the Dande TTL from the upper reaches of the Chewore after its slaughter during that intensive tsetse campaign of the 1950’s to shoot out anything that moved. It was also a land that was harsh and unforgiving, extremely hot, regarded as inhospitable to the unwary, and was after all miles from nowhere and the back of beyond. At that time there were the
two rough roads (tracks) from the base of the escarpment to the two missions on the border – Chikafa (Hunyani) and Msengedzi, as well as a number of old Tsetse tracks. To get to the Zambezi River one used the track north of Chikafa, along the banks of the Hunyani River to the big river. In all, the valley was a pretty isolated place then. There were no trading stores, the nearest being above the escarpment or across the Zambezi at Feira in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) or Villa Zumbo in P.E.A. (Mozambique).

Around December 1964 there had been a great deal of interest centred round this area in the Outpost with articles of personal experience and Letters to the Editor about Kanyemba and early activities of the that part of Zambezi Valley. By way of introduction to myself there appeared a letter in the Outpost December 1964, I quote; “Inspector R J Paget has written from Odzi in connection with the letter from Mr S Duncan in last month’s Outpost. Apparently the ruins of Kanyemba Camp were located by Constable Harvey (myself) while on patrol from Sipolilo in 1961. He also found some broken cups and plates. In his patrol diary Constable Harvey drew a reconstruction of the camp as it must have appeared in its heyday, and this was remarkably similar to the description given by Mr Duncan. Chief Chitsungu (Once an A/C at Kanyemba) gave his ready assistance in this.” Incidentally, Bob Paget was my boss at Sipolilo at the time and the patrol took place in 1962.

I remember taking a dugout canoe and a small party consisting of A/Sgt Musengi, A/C Hove, Chief Chapoto, Headman Arizhabowa and an elderly African who knew the “old” camp’s whereabouts and was to direct me to the ruin site. We paddled downstream some 8km, hugging the southern shore heading towards the Luangwa River confluence and the Portuguese East Africa border. A rock outcrop on the southern bank commands this part of the Zambezi, rising steeply above the river to a ridge of high ground, was identified as the site of the old Kanyemba police camp. Thick vegetation greeted us as we paddled into the bank and on leaving the canoe the party commenced its arduous ascent, stumbling and sliding, up broken shale and fighting through thick Jesse bush. With much effort and torn to bits by thorns the party made it to the top, a commanding ridge overlooking this great spectacular expanse of river below and beyond. Below us and to the east lay PEA and its border marked by survey beacons running due south along a small valley. Villa Zumbo snuggled under a mountain range across the river, where this same range and the Luangwa River run northwards. Opposite and across the river was Feira (Luangwa) in Zambia. I recall thinking to myself, what a fine site for a police camp! And lo and behold, sitting further back and hidden by a tangle of thick vegetation and trees, one could slowly pick out the crumbling remains of what was once a stone building, the “old” Kanyemba camp.

This was a thriving police post some fifty years prior to my visit, and ironically I write about the same camp nearly fifty years on after that memorable patrol and my first visit to the camp.

This patrol, which incidentally was the last foot patrol carried out of the valley with carriers, and covered some 400 miles of valley, covering the major rivers with its pockets of population and stretching between the escarpment and the border to the north. A vast area when covered on foot!

In the Outpost, November 1964, the following article appeared under the heading Kanyemba-a Memory by (Trooper No. 1783) Mr S Duncan (Sidney attested 19/12/1913), where he identifies a photograph showing himself departing Banket on transfer to Kanyemba on 5th September, 1916, to take over. He explained to the Editor that he had been meaning to write for some time (some 13
years) regarding this photograph which appeared in Outpost in March 1951, which carried the caption – “On transfer. Who, where and when?” The photograph again appeared in a later edition in February 1965 to clarify this fact.

He goes on – “Corporal Merry (No. 1767 – Hugh Edward attested 15/10/1913) was in charge at Banket and one of the finest men I have known. I was sorry to leave his station but at the same time delighted at the thought of being posted to Kanyemba, the most remote and romantic out-station of the British South Africa Police, situated on the Zambezi River just where it flows into Portuguese East African territory and where it is joined by the Luangwa River flowing down from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).”

“This posting was in those days the dream of every Trooper in ‘B’ Troop. Life in the B. S. A. Police in those days was one of adventure and my expectations of it on my journey to and during my stay at Kanyemba were more than fully realised. This period remains a memory which will only die with me.” (This was to be, precisely, my own sentiments of my early policing experiences.)

“Trooper Duncan leaving Banket with his entourage of carriers on his adventure

“To get to my new station entailed a foot safari of some 200 miles, by way of Sipolilo police camp, for no horse or mule could survive the tsetse fly in the Zambezi Valley from the Mvuradona Range one hundred miles north to the Zambezi itself. Nor, in this part of the country were there any of the so-called roads of those days (no more than dirt tracks anyway) beyond Sipolilo, but only native footpaths to follow.”

The Police Camp at Sipolilo as it was in 1916.
“This remote country was rarely trodden by white men other than the occasional police patrols from Sipolilo, and once one reached Kanyemba one was safely locked away from the world - for it was much too far from civilisation for any inspecting officer to reach.”

“A hunter’s paradise! One could stand and look north, south, east or west, and take one’s pick. No wire fences, roads or buildings - it was all one’s own. Complete freedom.”

“Kanyemba Camp itself was on a ridge right on the bank of the river and was very picturesque. The kia and office were built of mud and rock under one roof. The walls were more than two feet thick, with a very wide verandah along three sides to protect one from the extreme heat. The verandah was supported by huge round stone and mud pillars, some 2½ feet in diameter, giving the place an almost Arabic appearance.”

“From the verandah I could look out over the vividly blue river, roughly half a mile wide I should say, to Northern Rhodesia. Almost opposite, the Luangwa (River) flowed in, and to its east was Portuguese East Africa. The beauty of the country and the tropical growth in these parts round the rivers, peopled by generous and unspoiled tribesmen, was right out of this world.”

“All this is something I can never forget. I so often realise how lucky I was to know that country 45 years before the Kariba Dam came into being, with its devastating changes far away upriver.”
Unfortunately, Mr S Duncan never lived to read about the building of the new Cabora Bassa Lake which started to fill in 1974 and now backs up the waters of the Zambezi River, to the current Kanyemba police station. Mike

“Some will say when they read these lines- “Oh, he is living in the past. Let’s get on with things as they are.” It may be so, but I would lay a bet that most members of the Force, if they have the same spirit of adventure as we had (and I am sure they have, or they would not have joined the British South Africa Police) would jump at the chance of putting the clock back.”

“By the way, reading the Outpost month by month I never see Kanyemba mentioned by those who write from time to time of their experiences up and down the Zambezi. I closed the station down when I was called to Salisbury to join Colonel Murray’s Column to go to the East African campaign, so it may now have fallen into decay. From the description I have given of its position it should not be difficult to find. If any member of the Force goes down the river again I hope he will climb up to where the old camp stood and try to recapture the atmosphere I know and loved so much.”

“Trooper Ffolliott (No. 1982 – William Leigh attested 17/8/1914) was stationed with me at Kanyemba, and if he reads these lines I send him (and all those who may remember me all those years ago) my kindest regards, and especially my old pal Jack Merry. Friendship made in the B. S. A. Police never dies. There is a bond and an understanding that is hard to define, but which is always there, even when we have not met for many years. May it continue.” (Sadly all have passed on now. Mike)

In a letter which appeared in the March 1971 Outpost Mr Duncan said and I quote “The urge to get out into the wide and almost unknown open spaces never left me and after only a short time at Kanyemba, I just had to get away to the then mystic Mana Pools with its herd of elephant, game of every kind, and pride upon pride of lion. So I set off up-river in dugout canoes to visit the chiefs and headmen – but my main object to visit the Pools. The expedition meant a lot of mouths to feed so I would shoot for meat to feed my own men and also provide gifts to various kraals on the river.” (As we know now this area is National Park where the African population was removed and resettled elsewhere and saying this, the name CHIMOMBE comes to mind – that famous and unusual god in Chief Chirundu’s area. The god being an iron-work figure of ancient origin, it is believed that if CHIMOMBE is taken away from his people, disaster will strike those who remove him. I wonder if anyone can fill in with more details. Mike)

“Just before we entered Mpata Gorge, a vast blanket of birds slowly lifted off the water as we approached and slid over us to settle again behind us. I had a wonderful feeling of serenity, and as I
gazed away into that land of wonderful peaceful beauty, a thought came to me which I never forgot – in fact, I found it written in my diary: ‘If the crude inroads of our so-called Western civilisation ever reach and despoil this wonderful peace, then it will be sheer sacrilege’ …… and now it has taken place.”

On a poignant note the writer above did not actually serve with Murray’s Column. On reaching Salisbury he was found to be riddled with malaria and was not out of hospital in time to go north with the draft. He later helped to form the Rhodesia Native Regiment and subsequently served with this unit in German East Africa.

In the December, 1964 issue of the Outpost the following article appeared under the pseudonym Mutswi. I would be interested to know who and if Mutswi, the back view of an Inspector with binoculars in the picture below, is still around?

“Kanyemba today by Mutswi”

“In the November Outpost the Editor published a letter from Mr S Duncan, in which he recalled his posting to Kanyemba from Banket on 5th September, 1916. He wondered what had become of his old station as he had not seen it mentioned in Outpost for some years.”

“Quite by coincidence I had been on patrol down in the Zambezi Valley below Sipolilo only the previous month and had made a particular effort to have a look at the old camp. I had heard a lot about Kanyemba and in fact had flown over the place a few months before in a helicopter.”

“We camped by the Zambezi at an old Native Labour Camp, conspicuous by its gum trees and two old iron boats half buried in the sandy banks, and were away at “sparrow” to find the old Kanyemba Police Camp, which we knew to be on a ridge just back from the river and almost opposite Feira in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). We followed a track leading down-stream but some distance back from the river to avoid the dense vegetation nearer the banks, and passed the spot where we had watched from a short range a magnificent sable bull the previous evening.”

“At the foot of Beacon No. 2 we had a quick brew and breakfast. This beacon is in perfect condition and has a cement dome on which is inscribed the date “1905”. We pondered on the men responsible for mapping out the border between Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa and building these cairns of stones which have stood for nearly sixty years without a stone falling out of place.”

“From a point near the beacon we took a ridge running obliquely down towards the river and, sure enough, came upon a knoll where there were signs of previous habitation – old rusty tins (probably “bully”), old bottles of thick blackish glass (whisky?) and the foundations of huts which had disappeared long ago – but no ruins.”
“We climbed two further knolls through thick vegetation, which included far too much thorn, and were beginning to become battle-scarred, hot and a little frustrated. Having already observed the ruins from the air I knew they were to be found and was accused of being a very poor “bushman” if I could not find them again. This from a junior officer was too much and I was stirred to fresh endeavour.”

“At last, on top of another knoll and close to a magnificent baobab (surely I must have seen this before and should have been able to use it to pinpoint the spot) we found what we were looking for.”

“Parts of the walls of the old building are in very good shape, as may be seen in the photograph, but we could not quite make out what the design had been. It appeared that there had been two rooms with very thick walls, built on top of a wide base which stood up about five feet above the surrounding ground level. Mr Duncan’s letter provides the similar explanation – that the wide base was the verandah. However the thick pillars he describes have fallen down, and trees have grown up through the floors of the two rooms.”

“The view, of course, has not changed, though it may have been somewhat obscured by the growth of trees. The Zambezi still “keeps rollin along” and the Luangwa River is still visible coming in from the north. The heat and tsetse fly are still there to taunt and try one – but there are compensations. Civilisation has not yet caught up here and it still remains much as Trooper Duncan must have known it.”

“The difference is that the area is far more accessible now than it was in his day. By truck from Sipolilo the journey takes about six hours. In the wet season, however, Kanyemba is still quite inaccessible by land – though the helicopter makes nonsense of distance and bad roads and can make the trip from Salisbury in two hours flying time.”
“While taking a few photographs and enjoying a well-earned breather our thoughts were very much with the old timers who had been stationed at Kanyemba up to 1916. One cannot but admire their courage and fortitude in coming to live in such an outpost. Mr Duncan glosses over this by calling it a spirit of adventure.”

“He will be pleased to know that his old Corporal H E J Merry, of whom he spoke in such affectionate terms, is still alive and well in Salisbury. We learned also that Chief Chitsungu, who lives in the valley between the Hunyani and Dande Rivers, used to be a member of the B. S. A. Police stationed at Kanyemba but we were unable to meet him on this trip.”

“Kanyemba as it was in 1916 has perhaps decayed, but it still stands and is surely a fine monument to those who laid such good foundations for our police force. They displayed great courage and stamina in those far off days, and nobody will argue with me when I say that these qualities are being displayed in those far-off days, and nobody will argue with me when I say that these qualities are being displayed in the B. S. A. Police today under considerably different circumstances.”

“Thank you Mr Duncan for your interesting letter, and every best wish for the future.”

In February 1965 *Outpost* a disputed response is aired and this forms part of the mystery of this intended article.

The Editor under the section “Old Comrades comments - while we are on the subject of the Zambezi I have to report that the most recent article on Kanyemba (“Kanyemba today”: Outpost, December, 1964) brought forth a protest from Mr J G Roberts, who was stationed at Kanyemba as a Trooper in 1907. Who says:

“The ruins shown in the photograph were those of the Native Department. The police camp was six miles up the river.”
No. 527 Trooper Roberts (John Granville attested 29/9/1903), who first attested in the British South Africa Police in 1903. Later transferred to the Native Affairs Department and finally retired in 1938. He was the Editor of Nada for the years 1946 and 1947 and is something of a student of that portion of the Zambezi conjured up for Rhodesians by the name Kanyemba, for Zambians by the name Feira, and the Portuguese by the name Zumbo. All three administrative stations were manned in 1907, but the oldest by far was the Portuguese post at Zumbo, whose documented history dates back to about 1750 and whose position marks the limit of authenticated early Portuguese penetration into the African interior. Writing in the Northern Rhodesian Journal Mr Roberts recalls his posting to Kanyemba in 1907:

“Being a member of the B. S. A. Police stationed at Sinoa, in 1907 I think it was, my turn came to be posted to the one-man-station at Kanyemba on the Zambezi. Lieutenant Thornton escorted me and we travelled together, walking from Sinoa via the Ayrshire Mine and Sipolilo. From this latter place the path went, by way of the Dande River, down the escarpment....on we went through a petrified or fossilised forest. The trunks apparently of trees, in short lengths were lying about and appeared to be of stone. We did about 20 to 25 miles a day.”

“While the Native Department Camp was built on a hill on the southern bank opposite Feira, the police trooper was housed in a camp about six miles up the river....This upstream camp was built on a hill above where the Nyanzendo flowed into the Zambezi. In the wet season, the river often inundated the low ground under the hill and after subsiding left a swamp which was the resort of many teal, geese and duck.”

“I relieved Shepherd, who on discharge from the Police became the manager of the Fort Victoria Hotel, and later ran the Zimbabwe Hotel. When my term was up, a relief was sent, whose name was McGarry. He just managed to get to the camp before going down with an attack of black-water. I nursed him. It was a strenuous life for the first week as he needed constant attention. I returned to Sinoa and promptly went down with black-water myself.” The Editor goes on – there is much more in Mr Robert’s account, particularly concerning personalities at Feira on the north bank. Of particular
interest in his story of the Native Department safe ordered for use of the official at Kanyemba. From the railhead at Ayreshire Mine this had to be manhandled by a team of Africans all the way to Kanyemba. In fact it travelled the whole of this distance by being edged forward inch by inch on rollers manipulated by crowbars. This transportation job, a mighty task by modern standards, took many many months. So Rhodesia was built!

From my own knowledge of the area around Kanyemba the two sites mentioned by both Trooper Duncan and Trooper Roberts are poles apart. Certainly the ruins mentioned by Mutswi in his article, closely resemble the same site that I was shown as to be that of the old Kanyemba camp. The guide who showed me the ruins of the alleged camp had claimed he had been arrested by the ‘majoni’ in the early nineteen hundreds and had spent several days in the camp. He identified the ruin that may not stand there today, see below the latest Google Earth photograph as viewed today from above, as being the living accommodation of the white policeman. The ruin at the time of my visit in 1962 was totally overgrown with bush and trees, the time being around April. The verandah of the ruin did cover three sides of the building. From the two photographs above (1906 & 1964) which look out to the confluence of the Luangwa and Zambezi Rivers are similar, except that the later photograph (1964) depicts the scene from a higher ridge well back from the camp’s location.

The river that Trooper Roberts refers to would appear to be the Mwanzamtanda River, which is situated some four to five miles (8 km) up-stream of the Luangwa confluence. It was in this area that the kraal of Chief Chapoto was situated in the 1960’s, and the low-lying area was where the Tilcor rice growing experiment was undertaken in the early 1970’s. It was from this area that I set out in a dugout canoe to visit the old Kanyemba camp, Feira and Villa Zumbo from Headman Arizhabowa’s kraal.

Is it not possible, I am beginning to wonder, that there were, in fact, two old sites? Unfortunately Trooper Roberts never commented about Trooper Duncan’s photograph of building with pillars and view of the Luangwa valley and rivers below.

It’s here that I regret my youthful lack of enthusiasm to browse the content of the Outpost at that time in the sixties, as I must confess, I took little interest in the writings of this fine magazine and content, and it was only of late, now an avid enthusiast of the past, while researching old magazines that I came across these articles and now realise what I had missed during my youthful exuberance which is a great pity and loss to myself.

There are some interesting aspects in the Kanyemba saga as one peruses the facts objectively:

The important aspect is the stone building itself. I think it can be safely said that in those early days when these bush camps sprung up round the country they were generally constructed of “pole and daga” – a simple construction with little costs – sounds familiar doesn’t it. I believe the use of stone in construction would only have taken place if the stone was readily available, that is in the form of some existing building. Therefore there is a strong possibility that the stone came from an “old” Portuguese fort. It is common knowledge that there are a number of these “old” Portuguese stone forts dotted round the valley - all dating back to the 1500’s when the Portuguese were exploring the interior at the time, one of which stood at the foot of the escarpment below Sipolilo.
Feira in Zambia (now Luangwa) was an “old” Portuguese outpost during those earlier times and I believe, because of the Arab presence in Central Africa the Arab was seen by the Portuguese as a potential threat to their intended expansionism plans of the territory.

I wager, therefore, that the Portuguese would have built such a fort of stone just where the “old” camp is alleged to be situated, built to protect and defend their interests against the Arabs. The site position, being high above the surrounding countryside, holds a commanding view over both the rivers, valleys and the two outposts of Feira and Villa Zumbo below. It was, therefore, an ideal position to monitor movement within the area below in those early times. If my assumption is correct, this would mean there was sufficient stone around at the time, whenever this was, to build the camp in stone, and some early enterprising policeman would have said “Let’s use the stone instead of a pole and daga to build a police post!” And so a stone building arose from the ruin only to return to a ruin some time later. I haven’t found any record when the station was actually built? Some-one out there may know? It may be a controversial thought, but is, after all, a real possibility as I couldn’t see those early policemen spending months on end collecting stone from the neighbouring countryside, when large quantities of stone were readily available. Rightly or wrongly, I’m sure the majority of the early settler pioneers weren’t interested or had any sentiments concerning the remains of a ruin on the banks of the Zambezi?

Trooper Duncan’s photograph and that of Mutswi bear similar resemblance, and from my own observation I would agree that the photographed ruin is the same as described by Trooper Duncan.

Trooper Roberts comments: “The ruins shown in the photograph were those of the Native Department. The police camp was six miles up the river.” This may well have been the case back in 1907. Masawi had commented “We camped by the Zambezi at an old Native Labour Camp, conspicuous by its gum trees” so he, Mutswi, was aware of this fact. I think this Native Labour Camp may have been where the current Kanyemba Police Station now stands (Built in 1964). However, I must confess, I don’t recall those gum trees?

Unfortunately Trooper Roberts doesn’t describe the camp that he occupied nor made mention of Trooper Duncan’s photograph of the Kanyemba camp k/a verandah overlooking the Zambezi and Luangwa Rivers. When I was making enquiries at kraals about the “old camp”, way back in 1962, the older generation of African conversed with were certainly aware of the “old camp ” being opposite Feira where I was directed to by dugout on the river.

Trooper Roberts goes onto say “While the Native Department Camp was built on a hill on the southern bank opposite Feira, the police trooper was housed in a camp about six miles up the river….This upstream camp was built on a hill above where the Nyanzendo flowed into the Zambezi. In the wet season, the river often inundated the low ground under the hill and after subsiding left a swamp which was the resort of many teal, geese and duck.” I can find no trace of a Nyanzendo river six miles upstream on the 1973 Surveyor General’ map I possess. The only river in this part of the country is of course the Mwanzamtanda River, where Chief Chapoto and his people live. So it does make sense that an even earlier police camp may have been built near where the population was.

The swamp land referred to is the low-lying delta-like land at the mouth of the Mwanzamtanda River where Headman Arizhabowta had his kraal at the foot of a ridge of hills which jutted out into the
Zambezi. It was in this adjacent low-lying area of the Mwanzamtanda mouth that Tilcor, certainly in the early 1970's, or slightly earlier, were later to experiment growing rice successfully. It was ideal swamp land that could be flood irrigated during the dry months. However, I never climbed the ridge of high ground above it, so can’t say whether there were any remnants of a camp there. I wonder if an ex-member of Kanyemba after 1964 who read these accounts at the time decided to check them out. Unfortunately, unless there is some record in the Archives, I doubt whether this question will ever be confirmed. If it was built much earlier by someone like Shepherd, those African who knew of its presence may well have been deceased by the time my patrol took place.

It was from Arizhabowa’s kraal that I set out on the river with my party to locate the “old camp”. This isolated part of the river then was a fantastic sight for me, as it was the first time I had seen the Zambezi River and to boot, I had walked there after a long slog through the bush for a number of weeks. The sun was setting and a golden glow covered this wide expanse of flowing water before me.

I have this dilemma therefore, on whether there were two previous Kanyemba camp sites and whether this anomaly will just be another addition to the mystic and intrigue of the Kanyemba story. A bit like the Sipolilo first camp site on the Shinje River with its graves!

To assist the reader and to those who know the area, I attach my own annotated Google map below of Kanyemba with my own perception of what has been reflected above. Right at the apex, where the border (Zimbabwe/Mozambique) meets the Zambezi River can be seen, what appears to be, a new lodge and road, identified as Kanyemba (all new to me). Where I have indicated Arizhabowa’s kraal is this low swamp area which Tilcor used for their rice project. As one can see Duncan’s site and Roberts’ site are pole apart.

The next Google map and annotations show a close up of where Duncan’s “old” camp site may have been situated. It is of interest to note that use is now being made of the area of the old ruin site.
The next interesting issue is that of the Wadoma tribe who have been mentioned in various publications of a “two-toed” tribe living around Kanyemba. Newspaper and magazine articles have been written on the subject and photographs published of people with the typical “lobster-claw” deformity.

During my patrol in 1962 I was able to locate a Wadoma family but not inflicted with this deformity. It was only in the early 1970’s that I met Mr Maburani Nyakutepa who possessed this deformity; he was working for the DDF at Kanyemba at that time when I had accompanied Jim Herd, the District Commissioner, Sipolilo to the valley at the time.

The myth of many two-toed people running about was dispelled when I decided to check the Web and found a medical paper produced by H B McD Farrell “The two-toed Wadoma – familial ectrodactyly in Zimbabwe” from the SA Medical Journal Volume 66 31 March 1984. In the historical background the following facts are given. “The Wadoma live in the Kanyemba region of the Zambezi valley approximately 15km east of the Mpata Gorge. They formally lived in the surrounding hills… There are now in fact two groups, an estimated 300-400 in the Kanyemba area and 80-100 in the Angwa area, 75km to the north. These groups of people were known as the Taluanda, where some of their descendants still speak Kalanga, and where their ancestors had served in the Ndebele army and as a reward were allowed to settle in the area.”

“Mr D P Abraham, formally of the Native Affairs Department ....who had been stationed in this area in the 1950’s, was reported in saying that the tribe was known as early as 1573 to the Portuguese and he added that in that area they numbered between 375 and 400, 20-25% of whom were said to have the “lobster-claw” deformity of the feet. (Possibly a misconception at the time as we now know differently - Mike)
The interesting aspect of this paper is: “In 1971 Gelfand et al investigated one of the Wadoma people in Harare Hospital who was found to have a typical “lobster-claw” deformity of both feet.” Farrell continues “It had been learned that a member of the Wadoma tribe whose feet were deformed had worked for the Ministry of Home Affairs at Kanyemba for many years and arrangements were made to meet him there. He is Mr Maburani Nyakutepa who was the subject of an investigation by Professor Gelfand in 1971..... Each foot had two digits, the first having a metatarsal, middle and distal phalanx and the second only a metatarsal and distal phalanx.”

“The family history given by Mr Maburani is that his parents, now dead, were not deformed. Three sons including Mr Maburani and two daughters are still alive. Only two of the sons that is Maburani and his brother Dickson were born with the deformity. His mother subsequently remarried, probably to a brother or cousin of his father, and one son, Chiambu, was born to them with a similar deformity. None of these deformed people’s children, 12 in all, are deformed. These people are treated as something as a celebrity on account of their skill of hunting, tree climbing and can run exceedingly fast.” It therefore appears that around 1962 there were only three members of the Kanyemba tribe who were deformed and not dozens as one was led to believe.

The purpose behind this paper is to hopefully generate some response from ex-members, public servants, farmers who may have served at Sipolilo or Kanyemba, or others who may have special memories of their own experiences about the Zambezi Valley.