



# EBENEZER MATOBO

October has been a month of celebration, new starts and fresh experiences at Ebenezer Matobo. The month started with a much-anticipated event: the Foundation Course Graduation. Marking the completion of their first three months at Ebenezer, this event is a significant milestone for our first years who have thrown themselves into life at Ebenezer and have adjusted to early mornings, heavy duty farming tasks, in-depth discipleship programs and the joys of community living! It's a true celebration indeed and an event in which we love to see our apprentices' parents participating; many of them are shocked by how much their children have grown in three months, both spiritually and physically!

After 2 boost weeks, during which apprentices had the opportunity to visit their homes for a break, it was straight into the Intermediate Course for our first years. This next 9 months will see them dig even deeper into themselves and into God as they continue to grow in knowledge, skills and attitude.

And fresh experiences? Well, towards the end of October, we had an amazing Family Night in which we were all transported to the ancient city of Philippi! Over the next few weeks of Family Nights, we are going to be looking at Paul's letter to the Philippians, so we enjoyed a taste of what life might have been like in Philippi back in 50AD-ish. There were some incredible costumes, some beautiful table decorations and some tasty ancient Greek snacks, as well as a very dramatic performance of the founding of the Church in Philippi, as told in Acts 16.

NEWS OCTOBER 2024



# CROPPING

October has been a mixed month for our cropping teams, as we have experienced both extreme heat and a hail storm which brought some damage to those crops which were at the flowering and fruiting stage. However, on the whole our crops continue to perform well.

This month saw us planting 2 hectares of butternut and 3 hectares of maize. Land preparation for further planting continues, as in the coming month we plan to plant 1 hectare of tomato, 2 hectares of butternut and lots of maize! (see below)

As part of our preparation for planting, we have been clearing the land under our centre pivot irrigation. Alongside the clearing, we have been ensuring the pivot is in good working order – this means we can plant 12 hectares of maize in the coming two months, more than we have ever planted under the pivot.

We have seen some good yields this month with the crops we have started to harvest. 2,703 cabbages were harvested and 1,536 kg of tomato.

Currently in the ground we have 1 hectare of cabbage, 3 hectares of watermelon, 2 hectares of tomato, 7 hectares of maize, 5 hectares of butternut, and ½ a hectare of butternut for seed.





# LIVESTOCK

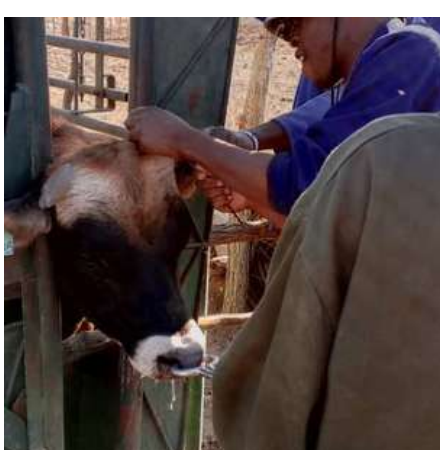
October has been a tough month for our broiler team who lost 609 birds in one night, due to a heavy storm which brought rain and hail into the house. The remaining birds also suffered some stress which affected their performance, though mortality had reduced by the end of the month.

In more positive poultry news, we placed 4,000 layer birds in Layer House 1. These birds are 20 weeks old and just coming into lay. They are looking beautiful and our apprentices are working hard to care for them as they begin to produce. Between our two flocks we produced a total of 147,760 eggs this month.

Our dairy is enjoying a new friendship with the cropping teams who are now growing maize under the pivot to provide food for our cows.

Following a discovery that our dairy cows are overweight, in October we have reduced their daily feed from 17 kg to 13 kg per cow. We have also grouped our cows into milking cows, dry cows and steamers for feeding.

In total our dairy produced 19,369 litres of milk in October. Due to the good quality of our milk, our main processing customer has increased what they pay us, from 70 c / litre to 71 c / litre.





# INTRODUCING...

Many of you will know and have met Renée Cunningham. For those of you who haven't, Renée has been involved in Ebenezer since 2006, when it existed as a concept only! As well as being one of the co-founders of Ebenezer Africa, Renée currently leads the Ebenezer Matobo team in Zimbabwe. She is someone who's face you may be familiar with, but we do not often get the opportunity to sit her down and quiz her about her history with Ebenezer and her current role. So this month we took time to do just that! With so many questions to explore, this interview was too extensive for a single newsletter edition. We will therefore be sharing it across both this month's and next month's issues.

***Tell us about the founding of Ebenezer and where its conception came from?***

The idea of Ebenezer came about in 2006 as the result of conversations around discipleship in grassroots communities. I was particularly interested in how to help young people have a real depth of relationship with Jesus, not just religious knowledge. At the same time, others were thinking a lot about small-scale farmers and asking similar questions. We were seeing that the majority of Africa's population is made up of young people and we were thinking through how to disciple these young people to truly love Jesus but also have the practical skills to make a living and serve their communities in an impactful way.

***So in 2008 Ebenezer was established, providing apprenticeships that combine in-depth discipleship with hands-on vocational experience, particularly in agriculture. How have you seen Ebenezer develop in the years since it started?***

The development of Ebenezer has been a learning-as-we go journey! The heart has always been to disciple young people, but there has been amazing growth in how we structure our community life to ensure discipleship is happening, including one-on-one time and individual attention given to each apprentice. There's obviously also been a huge amount of growth in terms of our sites. When Ebenezer Matobo started there was nothing on our campus - now we have an established campus with four production areas: cropping, layers, broilers and dairy. And of course, we now have additional sites in Mozambique and Zambia!

***Is there anything that would have surprised you back in 2006 if you could have seen where Ebenezer is now, or has Ebenezer naturally developed as you expected?***

While in many ways the development of Ebenezer has been a natural progression from our initial vision which hasn't changed, I have been surprised at how much apprentices have learned and grown through living in community. One of the most common comments we get from apprentices and graduates is how much they have learned about themselves and others through our community living, and how much better able they are to deal and work with others as a result.

***To be continued next month....***