

WELCOME to our autumn newsletter, as ever bursting at the seams. Because of this we have condensed the articles, but you'll find fuller versions on our website or you can ask us for them (contact details at the end of the newsletter). In this issue you will find, among other things:

- ♦ a progress report on the pedigree goats
- ♦ an account of Lorna and Val's visit in April
- ♦ the annual Christmas catalogue appeal
- ♦ not one but two conferences in December
- ♦ fantastic news from the bike ride
- ♦ an update on the school links
- ♦ and a brief report on the devastating drought in the eastern part of the country.

GOAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

After a year of delays, mainly due to airline indecision on costings, progress is hotting up on the importation of Boer and dairy goats from South Africa to form a nucleus herd to supply our village and orphan projects with suitable crossbreds. Dr Gideon Nadiope, the vet in charge of the Goat Improvement Project, is sorting out the import permits and we hope the goats will arrive shortly.

Meanwhile, Gideon has delivered the first batch of 14 goats from his Kamuli unit to Moses Ekoi's new breeding unit near Kumi. These are mainly Small East African and Mubende females to be used for crossbreeding with Boer or dairy breeds. A further 10 goats, dairy cross females and pure males will soon be purchased from milking projects near Mbale. Moses has nearly completed construction of a 70,000L underground rainwater catchment tank, to ensure water security in the dry seasons.



Moses Ekoi and the first batch of goats in the goat house at his Kumi Unit

OUR HEROIC CYCLISTS RAISE OVER £3,000



They did it!! 257 miles, 6 days, two thirds the height of Mount Everest, at least 8 punctures and numerous other mishaps after they left Cardiff, the heroic Dolen Ffermio cyclists rode in triumph into Holyhead. From the left in the photograph are Nigel Green, Lydia Homer, Suzanne Kirkwood, James Birkett, Liam Brown, Lorna Brown and Ian Giles, who covered the entire route, and they were joined by others for varying amounts of time en route.

The aim was to get around as Ugandans do, by bicycle (that is the fortunate ones who own or can borrow a bike) and raise funds for the Goat Improvement Project. So far, the total is a staggering £3164. A huge thank you to everyone who supported them but, above all, to our heroic cyclists. The verdict of all of them was that it was thoroughly worthwhile and they are itching to do it again next year!

VISIT TO UGANDA IN APRIL

In April I went with Lorna to Uganda – her umpteenth visit but my first and, as such, even more special for me. We met up with member Carole Ashurst in Kumi who was there to explore links with Kumi Hospital and also investigate the installation of fuel-efficient cooking stoves in the villages to help prevent respiratory and eye problems caused by smoke and reduce environmental degradation by the over-use of firewood. Lorna concentrated on the next crucial stage in the development of the Goat Improvement Project, while my main purpose was to observe and monitor the Kumi Orphan Project with Miriam and Emmanuel Maraka. Everywhere we went we had a rapturous reception, with everyone crowding round to meet us. The gratitude they expressed to us to pass on to Dolen Ffermio supporters, in their speeches, songs and conversation was simply overwhelming. The children were

utterly delightful, eager to shake our hands and the girls curtseying – no wonder I felt like the Queen! We were out in the communities in the bush most of the time, with their tiny villages scattered far and wide. The desperate poverty and hardship there was heartbreaking. The whole family sleeps on the floor in their small, dark huts, with few possessions other than cooking pots, a sweeping brush and rudimentary tools for their crops; not many shoes and certainly no toys. Yet, amazingly - and a lesson to us all - they are so cheerful and resilient and they like nothing more than to sing and dance for their visitors.



Max, a volunteer youth worker, leads the exuberant singing and dancing at Olimai community

We met many of the beneficiary orphans and their guardians, more often than not their grandmothers, and saw the goats, hens and orange trees which the generous people of this area have donated. We talked to the volunteer youth workers who supervise the younger orphans, vaccinate the chickens and so on. They are a credit to their training and they are so proud of their bikes, which they are given when they have proved themselves. Some of them form choirs and we heard lots of their songs with either a cultural or a social message such as the importance of school or the dangers of AIDS and early marriage. We also met members of the committees who help Miriam and Emmanuel to run the project in their own communities.

Apart from these visits, I went with Lorna to Gideon's Goat Breeding Unit in Kamuli and to Moses Ekoi's Unit in Kumi. Both Gideon and Moses are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the pedigree goats from South Africa, which Lorna has written about on page 1. We also spent a day at the link schools in Kamuli, which was a joyful reunion with Moses Kitimbo, Patrick Wakabi and Andrew Ibembe who were here last November. They couldn't have made us more welcome and they were full of praise for the school exchanges. Lorna and I also visited other projects to learn from their experiences of working in Eastern Uganda and met lots of people whom we might form links with, including young farmers at Busoga University and local politicians in Kumi and Kamuli.

I have come back feeling very humbled, but also determined to redouble our efforts to raise funds for these wonderful people. PLEASE carry on helping us to support them.

Val Talbot

KUMI ORPHAN CHRISTMAS APPEAL

It's that time of year again when our thoughts will start to turn to Christmas. There are a few encouraging signs of economic recovery on the horizon, but we realise that this is still a tough time for a lot of people. We were so heartened by your magnificent response last year, with £10,440 raised. Our grand total over 3 years now stands at more than £22,000. This may sound like a lot, and it is, but you only have to think of how many orphans there are (see the table on page 3) and the desperate poverty in which they live with the families who care for them. A goat, laying hens or orange tree seedlings means all the difference in the world to young orphans, helping them to stay in school and contribute to the family income. For older orphans, the training and bikes give them confidence, respect within their communities and hope for the future. We are fervently hoping that the wonderfully warm-hearted people in this local area will once again amaze and delight us with their generosity.

Catalogues will again be distributed with the November issues of the Tanat Chronicle, Yr Ysgub and Plu'r Gweunydd and will be available at Honeysuckle Wholefoods and St Oswald's Church in Oswestry, as well as from our website. Or, please contact Val (see page 4). Happy Christmas shopping with Dolen Ffermio!



Miriam and Emmanuel (on the right) with 2 members of the committee which helps them to run the Project at Olimai Community

Here is Miriam's latest report. The whole report is far too long to reproduce here (4 pages) but is on our website in full and we'll be happy to send you a paper copy on request. Miriam's own words are in italics.

"We are glad to acknowledge that your donations which the orphans receive in form of gifts have been growing each year. This growth has enabled the orphan project to attain the following:

1. *Maintain reaching out into two new communities every year, where among other benefits a total of 70 orphaned families receive direct gifts of chickens, oranges and goats.*
2. *Give additional help to support more orphans, from 70 to 100 families in each of the 6 old communities.*

3. Provide additional training especially to the old communities.
4. Facilitate the project team in making monitoring visits to the various homes where these orphans live.

The people of Kumi are very humbled by this gesture of love and kindness. The message that constantly flows from their lips is 'obuseti kesi ikaru kere' which is translated as 'let God grant long life to the people who have given us these gifts.' In return ... the committees and community workers have promised to ensure that each gift is nurtured well so that it yields more. Their hope is to have every supported orphan meet their financial school demands, other basic needs and realise their dream in life.

Progress on implementation is contained in a very detailed table, extracts from which are reproduced here.

Mobilising and engaging the new communities, which includes identification and verification of orphans to receive the gifts is a vital part of the preparatory work and so is the ongoing interaction with the old communities in order to encourage them to manage their projects with diligence.

Distribution and management of chickens has taken place, including vaccinations, sharing experiences on good practice of housing, feeding, breeding and medication ... Complete eradication of chicken infections remains a challenge. Miriam is pleased to report many testimonies of success which include sale of chickens to meet financial demands, and others have transformed their chickens into goats, sheep and cows.

There is a very similar picture for the goats. Most of the families have had their one goat multiply and the improved he-goats have enabled them to access improved goat sizes. Miriam explains that the emphasis is being put on preparation of supplementary feeds that are locally available at no cost. We are promoting planting of fodder trees in between the farm land.



This is Jane with her grandmother and Emmanuel. Jane's original gift of one goat has grown into a small herd and she has bought her school uniform from the sale of one of them. Her ambition is to be a teacher.

As part of the planting and managing the orange tree seedlings, there is continuous reminder to each of the families to provide adequate care especially manuring and watering of the seedlings, plus creating a fence around to bar goats from reaching the plant.

Training is a crucial part of the Project and is highly prized by the volunteer youth workers. Areas handled include

skills development on practices of sustainable agriculture; conservation of our environment; sexual and reproductive health education plus HIV/AIDS. However, Miriam has identified that "the level of application of learned skills is fairly poor" and this is likely to be due to the inadequate length of the present training course, which needs to be addressed in future.

SHOCKING FACTS AND FIGURES

Uganda is about the same size as the UK, though there the similarity ends and we think you'll be shocked by some of the comparisons below (UNICEF figures for 2007, taken from www.unicef.org/infobycountry)

	UK	Uganda
Population (millions)	61	31
Rural population (%)	8	87
Child death rate (under 5 years of age (per 1,000))	5	130
Life expectancy (years)	78	51
Access to safe drinking water in rural areas* (%)	100	60
Access to health service in rural areas** (%)	100	57
Electricity in rural areas (%)	100	5

* very little water from taps in rural Uganda

** most health care has to be paid for in Uganda

Other shocking facts:

An estimated 2,500,000 orphans in Uganda

52% of the population live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day

DROUGHT IN EASTERN UGANDA

Drought has caused poor harvests in Kumi district, and other areas of Eastern Uganda. Malnutrition is increasing in spite of the efforts of the UN World Food Programme and the Red Cross to distribute food supplies. Miriam describes it as an overwhelming crisis. It is extending through Kenya, the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia and is the worst drought in 10 years. In her report, Miriam highlights the extra challenges it is creating in Kumi District.

TWO CONFERENCES IN DECEMBER

Dolen Ffermio, in partnership with Llanfyllin High School, will stage a 6th Form Conference on 11 December and a Community Conference on 12 December. The theme of both conferences will be on "THE REAL COST OF FOOD" and will consider issues of costs to producers and consumers as well as costs to health and the environment, both locally and in countries such as Uganda. The 6th Form Conference will be for students of Llanfyllin and other local schools; the Community Conference will be for anyone wishing to attend and will be advertised shortly. Speakers will include farmers, consumers, academics, politicians and Llanfyllin 6th Formers reporting on their trip to Uganda. Thanks to funding from the Welsh Assembly, we have been able to invite two Ugandan academics to present papers.

OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

Proud to be Mayor's Charity: Dolen Ffermio is very much a local charity, which makes us even more delighted to be the chosen charity of the new Mayor of Llanfyllin, Councillor Lynnette Kretchmer. This recognition means a great deal to us and we look forward to an even closer involvement with the people of Llanfyllin.

Summer Shows: We had stands at the Llanfyllin, Llanfechain and Llanfair Caereinion Shows this year, as well as the Bodfach Open Day. The weather wasn't brilliant at any of them but it's very good for us to have a presence at these important local events. The Llanfyllin Show was particularly special this year as Lorna was the President and she invited a group of Ugandan musicians who wowed everyone with their exciting performance.

National Eisteddfod: Emyr Owen was asked to give a talk on Dolen Ffermio in the Welsh Assembly's Wales for Africa tent, followed by another talk in the Oxfam Cymru tent, both of which were very well received.

Update on School Links: Barbara Maycock, Gareth Hughes and Jane Bentley are gearing themselves up to apply for funding next year for the next round of teacher exchange visits. Despite the communication difficulties, they keep in close touch with their partner schools and Barbara is very much looking forward to taking a party of Llanfyllin High School sixth formers out there in October. They are planning to take with them a number of discarded desk top computers, which all the Kamuli schools are in great need of. We are hoping to help establish links between schools in Newtown and Kumi in the near future.

Talks: We have a number of talks lined up in the autumn and two of us now have our own projectors, one of which can show DVDs of visits to Uganda. If anyone knows of a group who might like to have a talk, please do contact us.

Annual General Meeting: This will take place on Monday, 9 November at 7.30 pm in the Llanfyllin Institute. As we now have so many members, details will only be sent to them though everyone is very welcome to turn up. We now have 71 members, which is virtually double the number this time last year. Still only £5 a year (free for students) and you'd be most welcome to join us.

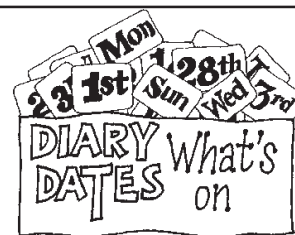
Forthcoming Trips to Uganda: As the newsletter goes out, Emyr Owen will have just returned from Uganda. Together with member Tim Smith they were there mainly to look at and advise on goat husbandry aspects (especially feeding). They will be followed by Cordelia Weedon on the return visit for the photo diary project and, during October half term, Barbara Maycock and Richard Jones are taking a party of Llanfyllin High School sixth formers.

Lorna will be going out at some stage to help supervise the arrival of the South African pedigree goats. Reports on these trips will have to wait until the spring newsletter. Please don't forget that ALL such trips are self-funding.

Sponsored Walk: A group of Dolen Ffermio supporters is walking to the top of Snowdon in October to raise funds for the Kumi Orphan Project. It's very heartening when people volunteer to organise fund-raising events like this and we are extremely grateful to them. If anyone would like to sponsor them, it's not too late! Fingers crossed for the weather and good luck to them.

Gala Concert: Borderland Rotary Club is organising a gala concert with something for everyone from classical to the ukelele at the Oswestry School on Saturday, 30 October. This is to raise funds for a tree planting project in Kumi District, which will be run by Emmanuel Maraka for the benefit of the Orphan Project and the wider rural community. Tickets cost £10 and are available from Neil Ruby on 01691 688799 or email neil_ruby@hotmail.com.

Folk Concert: Chas Nicholson is organising a Folk Concert on Saturday, 21 November at Llansilin Memorial Hall featuring Jock Tyldsley, Vera van Heeringen, John Neilson and other local musicians. More details about tickets, etc will be posted nearer the time.



Saturday, 30 October: Oswestry Borderland Rotary Club's Gala Concert 7.30 pm Oswestry School
Monday, 9 November: AGM 7.30 pm Llanfyllin Institute
Saturday, 21 November: Folk Concert 8 pm Llansilin Memorial Hall
Friday, 11 December: 6th Form Conference Llanfyllin High School
Saturday, 12 December: Community Conference Llanfyllin High School

DON'T MISS YOUR DOLEN FFERMIO CHRISTMAS CARDS

For the first time this year we are having our own Christmas cards, with designs by a Ugandan artist living in the UK. They will cost £2.95 for 8 with 6 different designs and will be on sale at Dolen Ffermio events or direct from Chas Nicholson (free postage for 3 or more packs). Cheques payable to Dolen Ffermio: Nant Gwy, Llansilin SY10 7QQ, 01691 791626

For comments or more information, please contact Val Talbot on 01691 791310 or email val@daval.demon.co.uk. If you have an email address that we don't know of, please email it. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, please let Val know.