

What a time we've had since the last newsletter, most of it excellent, though with one disappointment to relate. Pride of place must go to our Gold Star Award and Emmanuel Maraka's visit in March, so we'll start off with that.

GOLD STAR AND EMMANUEL ARE AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL

A very exciting award and a whirlwind visit - it will be difficult to keep this report to a reasonable length. First of all, a brief explanation about the Gold Star Award. This is a UN initiative, which has been taken up by the Welsh Assembly Government to recognise the work of charities like ours which are striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. After a gruelling application process, with an interview in Cardiff, we were thrilled to be awarded the Youth Gold Star for our work on the Kumi Orphan Project, the School Exchange Programme and the Photo Diary Project.

The Welsh Assembly Government paid for Emmanuel to come over to receive the Award with us on behalf of all our Ugandan partners, which was a huge bonus. Twenty of us travelled down for the ceremony in the Senedd on St David's Day, with sunshine all day matched by smiles all round, as you can see from the photograph. We asked Barbara Maycock and Kate Breedon of Llanfyllin High School to represent the Dolen Ffermio end as the school played such an important part in the Award.



At the Senedd from left to right: Emmanuel, First Minister Carwyn Jones, Kate Breedon, a UN representative, Barbara Maycock and, behind, the chair of the Gold Star Award Panel

This was the highlight, of course, but the rest of Emmanuel's visit was utterly inspirational. He made a lot of very promising contacts and reached out to many different groups to reinforce existing partnerships and set about building new ones. We spent a fair bit of time in Newtown, where we are hoping to link the High School and Penygloddfa Primary School with schools in Kumi, which will include an extension of the Photo Diary Project. Emmanuel was honoured to be asked to open the new Music Block at the High School. We are also hoping to forge links between Newtown and Kumi town councils and an environmental project.

Another special occasion was an assembly at Llanfyllin High School, which was also attended by pupils and staff from the two primary link schools, Llanfechain and Llansanffraid. Emmanuel presented Carl Mincher, the head, with the superb Welsh slate plaque to keep on display there. We are

enormously proud of our close ties with Llanfyllin High School and we will do everything within our power to support the vital campaign against the threat of closure.



The Gold Star Award plaque presented to Llanfyllin High School

Emmanuel was invited to speak at an International Development Summit in Cardiff along with two Dolen Ffermio trustees, Barbara Maycock and Tim Smith. He took part in Sunday worship at Rhiwlas Chapel with the Llansilin chapel congregation and the Community Church in Llanfyllin. Other visits included Oswestry Borderland Rotary to update them on the Tree Planting Project in Kumi which they have funded, Pontbren (an environmental farming group), and Cwm Harry in Newtown. Environmental concerns are a very high priority in the whole of Uganda, which is already suffering from the effects of climate change. During the visit, we heard of a terrible landslide caused by flooding in Mbale, just 50 km away from Kumi. Emmanuel is very keen to do what he can and the Tree Project will be a big step forward. You can see what we mean by a whirlwind visit which achieved such a lot and holds out great promise for the future.

GOAT UPDATE

Just before the expected arrival of pedigree Boer goats from South Africa we had the bad news that an outbreak of Rift Valley fever there would prevent export of our goats to Uganda. A great blow to our hopes, but much worse for the South African sheep and goat industry. This is the first outbreak of this devastating mosquito-borne virus disease since 1976. We must now consider other options for importation and will continue with the AI programmes.

The good news is that the goats delivered to Moses Ekoi's unit in Kumi district are doing well and some have kidded to the Toggenburg billy. A new house for does and kids has been constructed. The underground water tank was completed before the rains, and an overhead tank stand built, a generator is being installed to raise the water for delivery to the paddock, perhaps solar powered one day?

TRIP OF A LIFETIME FOR 6TH FORMERS

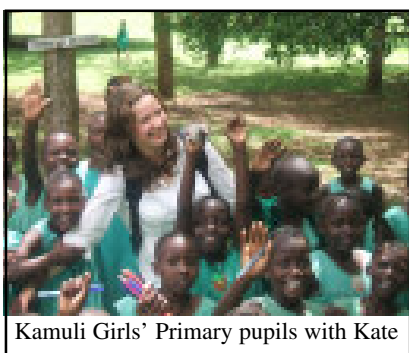
Through Mrs Maycock's involvement with Dolen Ffermio, Llanfyllin High School has a link with Busoga High School in Uganda. When she decided to organise a trip there, I, and 13 other sixth form pupils, jumped at the chance to go. Over last October's half term holiday, we spent 10 days in Uganda seeing the country, visiting schools, going on safari and even doing a bit of white water rafting. It was an absolutely amazing experience.

We left the High School at 3 am with the bus loaded with boxes full of second hand computers to give to the school! Kampala was a bit of an eye opener – it was like being in a completely different, somehow more old-fashioned world, with a few modern things thrown in. Our next stop was Jinja, the second largest city, and the source of the River Nile. As we explored, local children started following us, holding our hands and chatting to us. This was the first time we experienced the curiosity and friendliness of the children. They loved using our cameras to take pictures and to see pictures of themselves. Their huge wide grins were so infectious, though we could see how very poor they were. We managed to get in some very exciting white water rafting and swimming in the calmer stretches of the river before leaving the next day for Kamuli.



Lapping up the Ugandan sunshine

When we arrived at Busoga High School, the students all gathered round to meet us, as well as groups of children from the surrounding primary schools. We shook hands and chatted to the students about music, family, religion – they couldn't understand how some of us could not be religious. We



Kamuli Girls' Primary pupils with Kate

helped to set up the computers and got them all working, apart from one. We spent three days in the schools, meeting the pupils, having tours, joining in with lessons – and being treated to spectacular welcomes wherever we went. The children were inspirational – full of energy, chatty and cheerful. They consider education as extremely important and work hard.

After saying our sad goodbyes, we set off to Murchison Falls National Park, a long journey but with so much to see – people going about their daily lives drying out beans on the ground, women planting crops and working the land by hand, children running alongside the bus shouting hello, waving and grinning at us. It was really colourful with the bright

sun, blue sky, red roads and thick green vegetation. We stopped at the top of Murchison Falls, where the Nile squeezes through a narrow 6 metre gap, then on to the safari where we saw giraffes, warthogs, baboons, gazelle, elephants and even a couple of lions under a tree.

None of us wanted to leave Uganda when the time came. We sat on the bus at the airport asking to stay longer. It was such an amazing experience and we all had a fantastic time. I can definitely see why people go back again and again. The people we met were all so warm and friendly and it really struck me that, although most of them have hardly any possessions, they are still cheerful, welcoming and generous. I'd heard that said before, but it's so true!

Kate Breeden

WHAT'S NEXT FOR SCHOOL LINKS?

The visits of the teachers and students, in both directions, have left a desire to strengthen what has become more than a partnership. Real friendships have been established as well as a desire to learn more about each other's country. Pupils in all of the schools have already learnt about a different culture, way of life, education system and it seems natural to deepen their understanding and knowledge. One way of achieving this will be an application which has just been made by all the teachers involved to the British Council for the Global Curriculum Grant and we are keeping our fingers crossed for the result. As well as this, letters will be exchanged, together with texts and emails where possible. The IT technician from Llanfyllin High School will be visiting Kamuli in June 2010 to establish an internet link between the schools. The school exchanges have already enriched the lives of many individuals and solid foundations laid for what we hope will become a sustainable, stimulating partnership between two rural communities in Uganda and Wales.

We are planning to extend the Llanfyllin-Kamuli partnership by involving Ysgol Pennant (Penybontfawr) and Kamuli Girls' Primary School. In addition, work is under way to facilitate a link between schools in Newtown and Kumi District. This has already started with Cordelia Weedon's Photo Diary Project and has gained significant momentum following Emmanuel's visits to three schools while he was over for the Gold Star Award.

Barbara Maycock

AWARENESS RAISING TALKS

As part of our aim of raising awareness of world food and farming issues and the problems confronting the developing world, we are very happy to give talks, some with slides, others with a DVD of a recent trip to Uganda and we have visited a number of different adult groups in the past 6 months. We are also delighted with the response we have had from many primary and secondary schools. At Ysgol Bro Cynllaith the pupils made their own very moving and thoughtful presentation on our work for their parents.

FUND-RAISING

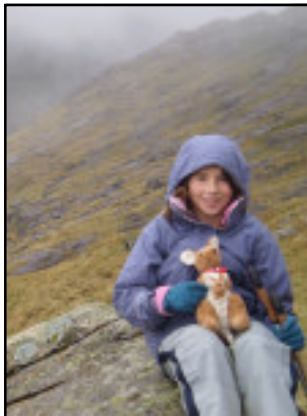
We have been very fortunate in the large number of groups, churches and schools who have helped us to raise funds in the past six months, as well as the individuals who have donated or contributed to the Christmas Catalogue. Apart from the funds, which are obviously very welcome and much needed, we are also greatly heartened by the expressions of support that come with them.

We were honoured to be chosen by Councillor Lynnette Kretchmer as her Mayor's charity which has resulted in generous collections from the Mayor's Service in St Myllin's and the traditional Christmas Eve Carols in the Square. The variety concert organised by Chas Nicholson in Llansilin in November was hugely enjoyable and we raised over £1000 into the bargain. Very grateful thanks to all the performers and everyone who came along. Our youngest fundraisers, Nieve and Eira, raised a staggering £700 and here is Nieve's own account of their adventure.

TO THE TOP OF SNOWDON AND BACK

On October 10th 2009 it was raining when Mum, Dad, Eira and I arrived at the foot of Mount Snowdon so we put on our waterproofs and set off. The summit was covered in mist and cloud. As we walked the sun came out. When we got to the top we put our coats back on as it was very cold and windy. It took us so long to walk down it was pitch black for the last bit and we wondered if we were going the right way, then we saw car lights in the distance and we knew we were nearly there. We were very happy that we managed to raise over £700 for the Kumi Orphan Project.

Nieve Walling (age 10)



Nieve and kangaroo on Snowdon

FUTURE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Please sponsor another fit and hardy supporter, Lindsay Needham, who is running the **London Marathon** on 25 April and has nominated us as one of her two charities. Log on to www.virginmoneygiving.com and under "Find a Friend" type in Lindsay Needham or go via our website or you can send a cheque payable to Dolen Ffermio to Val Talbot (contact details at the end of the newsletter). Please don't forget to gift aid if you are a UK taxpayer by saying so and giving your name, address and post code. Thank you, Lindsay, and **GOOD LUCK!**

Trefonen Hill Walk: we are thrilled that the Trefonen Hill Walk committee has chosen us as their overseas charity this year. This is such a well known and well loved event and it will be a golden opportunity to spread the word further afield. There will be lots of varied and interesting events

on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, 28 to 31 May (with a warm-up garden trail the previous Sunday) - walks, runs, concerts, motor bike trial, fun ride, bonfire, a special service at Trefonen Church and abseiling at Nantmawr. Full details are on the attached flier and on our website.

Lorna's Plant Sale: Spring wouldn't be spring and gardens wouldn't be gardens without Lorna's plant sale, plus bargains galore in books, household items, clothing, bric-a-brac, new gifts, etc. This year it's on Saturday, 15 May from 10 am to 1 pm behind Bronafon, Bridge Street, Llanfyllin, as always. **A special plea this year for plants as Lorna will be in Uganda during the crucial planting season.**

Second Epic Bike Ride: they enjoyed it so much last year that they're off again on a second epic bike ride starting on 16 August (with the possibility of another earlier in the year if anyone can't make it in the summer). You sponsored our heroic cyclists magnificently last year to the tune of £3,500 and we hope that you'll support them again.

More Fundraising Ideas and Help Please

We've had a super idea from a supporter for raising funds through local craft groups to buy treadle sewing machines in Kumi to provide livelihoods for young girls leaving school. We are exploring this with Miriam and her Mothers' Union and the idea is to form a partnership between the groups and the girl they are helping. Does anyone else have any ideas or offers of help please? You'll find that forging links like this are equally rewarding to us here as to the beneficiaries over there.

Coffee Morning Ideas Pack: we are producing a pack to help with ideas and organisation and we are, of course, happy to help with anything that people might wish to arrange. We'll put it on the website and send it out on request when it is ready.

CHRISTMAS COMES TO KUMI ORPHANS

A huge thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas catalogue appeal. We are delighted to announce that, despite the recession and uncertainties about the future, £8095 was raised for the Kumi Orphan Project. These funds are going to make the world of difference to the lives of hundreds of orphans in the forthcoming year, keeping them in school, giving them skills, security and hope for the future.

From Miriam comes this message: "It's such a good thing to hear that your gifts are many, given the current economic crisis. This contribution is still generous and kind of all the gift buyers. We shall always be very grateful for this kind and wonderful gesture of love. We will work to allow better lives to be realised by many of the families that will receive these various gifts." (The latest report from Miriam in February is too long to reproduce here but is on our website or please do ask for a paper copy). PS Please don't forget that you can buy gifts for any occasion throughout the year.

“THE REAL COST OF FOOD”

Two conferences in December, one for sixth-formers and one for the community set out to consider “The Real Cost of Food” in terms of cost to the environment, the producer,



Sixth Form Conference with Cllr Aled Davies and Dr Jolly Kabirizi in the front row

the consumer and (human) health, within the context of countries of the North and South. All the speakers were excellent. Dr Jolly Kabirizi gave an overview of research into sustainable food

production in Uganda, while the hot topics of methane production from livestock and carbon footprints of UK and imported food, health issues of meat and milk, and insight into food supply chains were addressed by Prof Chris Reynolds, Prof Gareth Edwards-Jones and Prof Nigel Scollan, of Reading, Bangor, and Aberystwyth Universities, respectively and Dewi Jones of Innovis Ltd. It was a relief to know that there are ways to reduce methane, and to hear good news about the positive health effects of meat and milk: yes we do need red meat to counter anaemia, and men who drink plenty of milk do live longer! Local farmer Cllr Aled Davies and Tim Dobson of Chestnut meats, Cheshire gave very good explanations of their family farm enterprises and we enjoyed sampling Tim’s goat burgers for lunch, while we were entertained by carol-singing by Llanfyllin young farmers.

We were very grateful to Llanfyllin High School’s Head Carl Mincher, staff and students for their excellent organisation and the visiting students from Newtown High School, Harper Adams University and North Shropshire Further Education College for lively participation in the workshops. Many thanks also to FUW president Gareth Vaughan for chairing the community conference and Lembit Opik MP, Mick Bates AM, and Glyn Davies for their participation. Special thanks to Craig Owen who explained the Wales-Africa community linking initiative of which Dolen Ffermio is part, and which sponsored the conference. The conference talks are available on CD

PHOTO DIARIES LINKING WALES AND UGANDA *by Cordelia Weedon*

For many years I have worked with participatory photography, often with groups of people who are vulnerable or marginalised. I have learnt a lot from this work and have seen how it can empower individuals and communities, and sometimes lead to a source of income. Working with Dolen Ffermio has enabled me to use my skills to link young people

in Wales and Uganda that are proving of great benefit to both communities.

The Welsh Assembly’s Gold Star Programme funded Emmanuel Maraka to come over to start the project in November 2008. As part of this, Arts Connection funded photo diary projects in Llanfechain and Llansanffraid Primary School during a visit of Ugandan teachers, taking the photo diaries back to their pupils in Uganda.

In Oct/Nov 2009 I visited Uganda for 3 weeks to run photo diary projects in Kumi Township Primary School and Mukongoro High School. Working in collaboration with Emmanuel and the teachers was essential for the project to be successful. We worked with 30 young people overall, and started by looking at and discussing photographic images, giving them some digital cameras to share with some tasks that would help them with composition and technical skills. They then took disposable cameras home with the brief to photograph important things about their lives. We edited their images with them, and got them to write captions to bring their work together as a group project.

Most of these children had not used a camera before; however, the work that they produced gives a wonderful insight into life in Africa through the eyes of young people. It also conveys a kind of intimate perceptiveness



Taking photos at Kumi Primary School

that an outsider would have difficulty capturing. It shows us a different view of Africa from the one we so often see. They take us to meet their family and friends, show us something of their lives and culture, and share their joys and sorrows. This kind of project is one way of engaging with our African partners at a grass roots level to address issues around health, environment, and sustainability that are very much part of the Dolen Ffermio ethos. Miriam provided me with much support on my visit, especially when things didn’t always go to plan! She looked after me and took me places that helped me to understand more about life in Kumi.

During Emmanuel’s visit this March we visited several schools in the Newtown area. We showed many pupils the Ugandan photo diaries and having a more personal contact really engaged the children we met. There are plans to run photo diary workshops in 3-4 schools in partnership with local arts organisations that will form part of an ongoing link between the schools.

Photo Diaries Exhibitions
Workhouse Y Dolydd Gallery Llanfyllin 4-13 June
First Editions Book Shop, Beatrice St, Oswestry
2-29 November

For comments or more information, please contact Val Talbot on 01691 791310, Graigwen Cottage, Llansilin, SY10 9BL or email val@daval.demon.co.uk. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, please let Val know.