



S · M · O · A · T
ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

Newsletter - Winter 2010

Dates for your diary:

Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 5th December, 10am, St. Mark's Church

Full details of the appeal are included in the enclosed letter, but this is an occasion to hear at first hand more about the projects to be supported in the Appeal.

East Africa Children's Project: A part of our Christmas Appeal will kick-start three small-scale projects they are planning.

Faith in Action is another small UK-based charity; we aim to raise the funds to support loans for an irrigation wind-pump. The profits from the irrigation scheme will repay the loan in a few years, enabling the money to be applied over and over again.

Scrabble Evening

Friday 28th January

Speaker evening

Friday 4th March 2011

Chris Aldridge, Announcer on Radio 4, and
IMPACT - reporting on a SMOAT-funded project in Cambodia

Details of these events are included in this newsletter, and more details will be available nearer the time on our web site: **SMOAT.org.uk** or from any of the committee.

From the Chair:

I hope you will enjoy this newsletter. Take your time. There is much going on behind the words.

We welcomed David Lear to the committee in the Spring and he is now also a member of the Projects sub committee. Elsewhere in this edition will be his reactions to the work of the committee from the perspective of a new member. We look forward to that perhaps with apprehension!

In some ways it has been a difficult year. The joyful celebration of the 150th anniversary of St Mark's Church has meant that we have tried to avoid any clash with its many events. Nevertheless, the "Sunday Lunch Under the Downs", held in the magnificent setting of Pauline Young's garden, was blessed by good weather and excellent company and was a great success both socially and financially. However, the total outcome for the year may well be less income from fund raising events.

In other ways it has been an extremely rewarding year. Increased contact with many organisations working overseas has given an enhanced appreciation of the many good people so committed to working for others. That can be inspiring.

We are enclosing two copies of the SMOAT Mission pamphlet referred to in the Spring edition. Please pass these on to your friends and refer any who are interested to myself or one of the committee.

I should like to commend the Christmas Appeal to you. The projects selected have been very carefully chosen. One organisation is new, works on a small scale and needs a helping hand in its early years but is soundly based with direct contacts with the actual recipients of aid in Africa. The other is also small but is well established (about twenty five years) and behind the particular project selected for support is a very sound record, not only of dedication and realism, but of growing practical expertise. What is really impressive about this project is that it will transform the participants from uncertain subsistence farmers to market gardeners committed not only to repay the cost of the whole plant within eighteen months but also to continue to finance the setting up of local social and health services. That will grow the local economy.

Finally may I wish all our readers a very happy Christmas.

Calling all Radio 4 listeners

SMOAT is delighted to welcome Chris Aldridge, who will be known to many radio listeners as a Senior Announcer with BBC Radio 4. On March 4th 2011 he will talk about his experience 'behind the microphone' and give us an insight into the world of radio.



Also that evening we will hear from IMPACT, a charity that SMOAT has supported over a number of years. Recently we funded a project in Cambodia setting up home gardens for village families, thanks to the proceeds of a musical evening held in February 2010.

This will be a varied and interesting evening, so put the date in your new diary and come and join us. More details to be published in the New Year and available from any committee member or on the SMOAT web site.

The photo, by Steve Bowbrick, shows Chris in the Radio 4 continuity suite.

ANN DALE

Project Uganda

Ron and Ann Gotthard returned once more to Rukungiri, Uganda, for three months this year to oversee the inception of a health programme principally concerned with the installation of mosquito nets in the boarding schools of this area of Uganda. Malaria is still a deadly disease there.

Local carpenters and students form the Gables Vocational centre sponsored by Project Uganda built the wooden frames from which the nets are hung. The unit cost of the nets is £5 each which cover two students. The SMOAT contribution from last year's Christmas Appeal funded nearly 900 nets protecting about 1,700 children. Thank you.

Project Uganda is now installing washing facilities in the same schools and piloting a permaculture agricultural project aimed

at substantially improving yields and diversifying agricultural produce.

The schemes involve irrigation, composting, growing vegetables under trees, and other innovations. Marketing has not been overlooked and it is hoped to transform local farming from subsistence to a commercial basis to reduce hunger, stimulate the local economy to reduce poverty, and restrain the movement to urban slums.

Ron and Ann's visit was closely followed by a month's trip from Matthew and Emma Gotthard and their two sons to oversee the two projects described above. Thus there is commitment from three generations of Gotthards, supported by most organisations in their home village.

HARRY INGRAM

Microloan Finance Foundation

The other half of last year's Christmas Appeal, £4300, supported the extension of Microloan's activities to Zambia.

By now most readers will understand that these small loan facilities are essential to support very small enterprises, usually run by women, to enable the poor to raise themselves out of extreme

poverty. The process involves training in the basics of business practice, marketing, finance and elementary book-keeping.

Nearly 100% of the value of loans is repaid and commonly the borrowers soon increase their income by more than double. These are not hand-outs but hand-ups. As the incomes of

families increases they are able to eat regularly and better, fund their own family education and health needs and in the longer term live a little better.

The repaid loan finance, of course, flows on to others. Furthermore, the spending of the increased income generates more income for others. That is the way small economies grow.

Nevertheless the process of operating such facilities is not without its difficulties. In trying to open the new branch in the Lundazi region with SMOAT funds, MFF found that the local banks wanted to charge 20% of its interest return for the use of bank accounts to accumulate returned funds before reinvestment.

This was thought to be far too high and MFF is now setting up its own organisation to cover this function. This has delayed the opening of the branch there.

So, instead, the SMOAT funds have been used to open a new branch of three lending groups in Petauke. The money has funded core loan capital, training and mentoring.

The women borrowers operate mainly in the retail and wholesale markets. The periods for instalment repayments for some borrowers has been doubled without any fall off in repayment performance but with some reduction in operating costs. The operation of the new branch is going very well.

HARRY INGRAM

Sunday Lunch under the Downs

Sunday 6th June dawned fine and bright - but would it last? Seventy SMOAT supporters were due for lunch in Pauline and Bob Young's beautiful garden under a glorious backdrop of the North Downs. Marquees were erected, the hog roast was tickling the taste buds, the stage was set as guests began to arrive - and yes, all went well; very well.

A delicious four-course meal was enjoyed whilst Ginge, a larger than life character with voice to match, entertained guests with a medley of songs old and new. Dogs and children played happily as adults relaxed with coffee and chocolates and the sun shone throughout (well almost)! More importantly almost £1500 profit will help a South African charity, Uthando, to develop one of their agricultural projects in Cape Town. Thank you, Bob and Pauline for your hospitality - a most successful event.

RUTH SIMMONS

Flower Festival



In June, SMOAT, together with about 25 other organizations, was asked to provide a Flower Display for St Mark's Church's 150th Year Celebration Flower Festival.

I selected our theme as "Water is Life", showing the importance of

water in growing crops in the developing world. The display had a sand base, a water pump and water chute, with some lettuce and beans at the foot of the chute.

Not a flower in sight! However it received many favourable comments for its thought-provoking theme. We took the opportunity to hand out copies of our new pamphlet to the many visitors to the Festival.

Our thanks to Fanny's Farm Shop for the loan of the pump.

IAN STRATFORD

Junior Church

In the summer I gave a talk on SMOAT to St. Mark's Junior Church and probably learned more from it than did the children.

I learned that there are teachers in local schools who explain to their children not only about the problems of climate change but that there are less fortunate children in difficult circumstances in the Developing World. This

clearly not only informs them, but makes corrections to their own focus.

I also found that they are already supporting Sarah's School in Kenya through Junior Church.

My third lesson came a few weeks later when I received a letter with a small cheque for SMOAT from a teacher at St Bede's. Charlotte

Davis of our Junior Church had organised a cake bake for her form and these were the proceeds. She had also told the form about

what SMOAT tries to do. It is not the unsolicited advertisement, but the spirit behind it, which is moving.

HARRY INGRAM

In memory of the Revd. Ian Kitteringham

The death of Ian last January was reported in the Spring Issue. Ian was a man who changed others. They did new things.

Two of these were the birth of SMOAT in Reigate and, when Ian moved to Caterham, COAT (Caterham Overseas Aid Trust). The continuing work of these two organisations is, in a way, itself a memorial to Ian.

The gifts made in Ian's memory were to be divided between SMOAT and COAT. How do you find a project fitting to a man like Ian? The short answer is that you can't, but you have to try.

The first decision was that rather than divide the money, we would try to find a project acceptable to both organisations and make it a joint one to signify the commonality of our aims.

We finally settled on a project which seeks to achieve its result by change in the way the recipients improve their lives.

Build Africa is setting up savings and loan societies in the villages

of the rural area of Masindi, Uganda. This will enable the villagers both to save and to borrow.

First the villagers need to understand the potential and to set up a savings association. The method is explained to local leaders, and community-based trainers are selected and trained before they set up groups of about twelve, and associations of between 180 and 360 members.

It is the money saved locally which is lent out, and the groups ensure repayment is on time so that other members can benefit in turn. The money borrowed is used mainly to fund implements and stock for cottage industry and retailing, but may also be used to pay for medical treatment.

The £2120 from the memorial will fund the training of 10 community-based trainers and the annual expenses of one trainer for the first year. Once established the associations are independent and self sustaining.

HARRY INGRAM

Scrabble Evening

Friday 28 January 2011

The Scrabble Evening is taking place on Friday 28 January 2011 and is to be hosted by Barbara and Nigel Perkins. The evening will consist of timed games. After each game, players will move to another table to make it a more sociable event. Tea, coffee, cake and biscuits will be served, with a donation bar also available.

So come on all the wordsmiths amongst you. Gather your wits, revise your dictionaries, memorise all those two letter words and look up a few obscure words to baffle us all. It promises to be a fun evening.



Of course, the Scrabble Evening will be for the purpose of raising money.

The project for which the money is being raised this time is one from the Fresh Start Foundation in the Kwinella district of The Gambia.

All monies raised will go towards buying mosquito nets. The Kwinella clinic alone deals with 20 to 30 cases of malaria per day. Mosquito nets cut out the transmission of malaria by 50% and the mosquito population by 90% and yet only 49% of people in The Gambia own a net.

Malaria is one of the world's biggest killers, the most vulnerable being children and pregnant women, and for the price of £7.00 per net, we could be saving many lives.



£7.00 does not seem a lot of money to pay for a life-saving necessity, but to people living in poverty, it is simply too much.

With this in mind, tickets will be £7.00 per person (on sale in January at St Marks, after 10am Sunday services, or by ringing 01737 772811). You can have an enjoyable evening in the full knowledge that you will be saving someone's life, most probably a child or their mother.

BARBARA PERKINS

BRINOS

Britain-Nepal Otology Service (BRINOS) was founded in 1988 by Neil Weir, a Guildford-based Consultant Ear Nose and Throat Surgeon. BRINOS's aim is to assist Nepalese ENT surgeons and nurses to provide treatment to those suffering from ear diseases outside the reach of the ENT hospital in Kathmandu.

In 1992, whilst in Nepal on business, I had the privilege on behalf of SMOAT of visiting Bir Hospital in Kathmandu and meeting Dr Laksami Prasad, the Nepalese ENT surgeon who was the founder of BRINOS with Neil Weir and seeing the ENT facilities at the hospital. We discussed how SMOAT could support these ear camps.

SMOAT supported them from 1992 to 1995 by providing surgical equipment for treatment at rural Ear Surgery Camps run by volunteer British surgeons and medical staff.

These camps have brought medical treatment to people in

far-flung parts of Nepal and provide training to Nepalese surgeons and nurses including Community Ear Assistants and local village volunteers.

Since 1988 BRINOS has undertaken 41 camps in both East and West Nepal and have performed 1,500 operations and treated 7,400 people. The work was extended in 2005 to include testing hearing and providing and fitting hearing aids.

This year SMOAT is providing £700 to support Gurung Tikajit, a Nepalese RAMC Operating Department practitioner, who is taking part in the November 2010 Ear Surgery Camp in the rural area of Nepalganj in Nepal.

His RAMC role covers anaesthetic, scrub and recovery work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and he will be using these skills in the Camp. In addition he will be liaising and translating between the team and local people.

IAN STRATFORD

A Word from the Treasurer

As we approach the end of the year it looks as though SMOAT's income for the year will be around the level achieved last year (£15,836). Given the current economic climate that is gratifying. However, an important contribution is still awaited – the tax repayment from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs on Gift-Aided donations made in the year to 5 April 2010. This should exceed £2,400, so clearly the ability to derive this extra income from the Revenue is important to SMOAT.

Currently, as many readers will know, for every £1 donated to charities under Gift Aid the charity can recover an extra 28 pence. But, as some may not know, from April 2011 the amount recoverable will be reduced to 25 pence per £1. So next year there will be even more reason for each of us, if our donations are eligible for Gift Aid, to ensure that every one we make to SMOAT is Gift-Aided.

ALAN PRESTON (*Treasurer*)

Reflections of the newest SMOAT Committee Member

As a SMOAT supporter for more than two decades, I had often wondered how the projects that were funded had been chosen. The answers to this and other questions have started to become clear in recent months, after I joined the SMOAT committee in the spring of 2010.

Before becoming a fully-fledged member, I was invited to observe some of the committee meetings. I attended two, enough to show me that there was a great deal going on: the planning and arrangement of fund-raising events, the assessment and selection of projects that would be supported financially, the preparation of publicity material, ongoing tasks such as producing committee meeting minutes and accounting for donations ...

In May I became the ninth member of the committee, which meets every month. Committee meetings, always full of lively debate, are structured and limited to two hours' duration (or maybe just over!). It is customary for sub-committees of perhaps three people to take responsibility for the detailed planning of an event, although we all (plus, of course, many other SMOAT supporters) tend to become involved as the date in question draws closer.

I have joined a sub-committee of three whose role is to research organisations seeking funding assistance from SMOAT. We then assess their viability against a number of criteria, and recommend to the main committee whether or not support should be offered.

With so much clearly-expressed need, this can be a difficult and time-consuming task, but one which the committee, as the trustees of SMOAT, considers to be vital in helping to ensure that the money raised is used wisely and to the best possible effect.

So, how would I sum up my experience so far? A steep learning curve, challenging but enjoyable. There have been plenty of light-hearted moments along the way, and the talent and knowledge of the other committee members is impressive. It's a good team - I'm glad I joined.

DAVID LEAR

What difference does your support actually make?

Quotes from two recently received feedback reports :-

Lake Malawi Project - We donated £1000 last year towards an agricultural project:

"Thanks to the support of SMOAT, backyard plots are proliferating and flourishing throughout the District and dependence on vegetable imports is falling steadily. For the first time the District is producing enough maize to feed itself for 5 months of the year (compared to just 1-2 months when the programme began in 2004). Most farmers are now adopting the basic sustainable techniques we promote - hence the improved and diversified yields. SMOAT's support has also helped us lay the foundation for a small-scale forestry industry which will generate income and meet local demand long into the future."

Practical Action - £3300 provided last year for a water project in Mukuru, Kenya:

"Ten water points have been provided with the support from SMOAT. For every water point the donation was used to provide site pumping at the water point, improve waste water drainage, provide a 2500 litre water storage tank and provide a $1/2"$ galvanised iron pipe for getting water from the chamber. Practical Action, on behalf of the people of Mukuru, would want to say a big THANK YOU to the management and well wishers of SMOAT for their generous donation to this worthy cause."

V.S.O.

Dr Serena Sabdo-Ceraldi, an Italian surgeon until recently working in Guildford, took up her two-year VSO position Lilongue, Malawi, on 2nd October. Her background experience is in A&E and surgery. SMOAT funding is £1250 for two years.

Malawi's health service suffers from a chronic lack of trained staff and poor training facilities. Most doctors complete their training out of the country and all too often do not return.

Serena has already written to SMOAT. She has several functions in Lilongue. At the college of Health and Science she is a lecturer in surgery and her students will later become local district doctors. She is involved in the building of a medical school. She also works at the Kamazu hospital as surgeon and trainer of eight local surgical trainees. When they finish the course they will be the first Malawian surgeons to qualify there and include one woman. She is also involved in updating the curriculum.

She is finding adaptation quite challenging because of the chronic shortage of resources, which she says complicates her "war against bacteria" and she also mentions the laid-back attitude to time keeping. Her own accommodation is basic and in need of renovation and protection against mosquitoes as their season approaches. This first account suggests that her tasks, in themselves quite challenging, will involve an uphill struggle with local conditions. Its phraseology also suggests that she is a happy, resourceful and determined young woman.

HARRY INGRAM

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