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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Winter 2013

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## *Dates for your diary:*

### **Launch of Christmas Appeal**

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 10am, St. Mark's Church  
*Full details of the appeal are included in the enclosed letter.*

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### **Barn Dance**

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014  
Enjoy a family evening of easy dancing,  
led by the caller, with music from

#### **The Odd Bods**

Bar and interval meal

*More details on our web site nearer the time  
For tickets email [richard@smoat.org.uk](mailto:richard@smoat.org.uk)*

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### **Quiz Evening**

Advanced notice of the date for a repeat of this ever-popular  
event, with quiz-master Helier Dreux:

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014** - *More details in the next newsletter!*

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Further details (and tickets) of all SMOAT events will be  
available nearer the time on our web site:

**SMOAT.org.uk** or from any of the committee.

# *Editorial*

Fund raising is not everyone's cup of tea. It involves hard work, uncertainty and sometimes disappointment. It is more fun to spend money. So why is it that over 33 years there have been only six chairmen and four treasurers of SMOAT and most committee members have served long terms?

Not infrequently I am asked who is on the SMOAT Committee so a few words about that may not go amiss.

These days most voluntary organisations find it difficult to recruit officers. SMOAT is no exception. Our committee, which used to be twelve or more, is now eight with one keen member on sabbatical.

Working life was always long and arduous but today those couples in middle years often have to cope with both work under high pressure, which sometimes take them out of the country, and young children to care for. Time for them is at a premium.

We have had to change some of our ways. For example, much is done via e-mail, and again, though we do have differences of opinion it is some time since we needed to vote on an issue and there is never a lack of a volunteer when something has to be done.

The committee is a disparate lot. We have an accountant, a retired barrister, a senior civil servant, an environmental health officer, a non employed mother with heavy social commitments, a leading broadcasting engineer, and a senior citizen of leisure. Note there are no experts in the field of overseas aid. But all have a constructive imagination, none is afraid of hard work, they all have enthusiasm and most of all they work well as a team and give each other their support. Really one could not wish for a better bunch. With them fund raising is fun.

So, my answer to the question I posed in the first paragraph is that committee members serve such long periods because they find a great deal of satisfaction from doing something so worth while amongst a small number of like minded friends.

But, of course, success takes more than a good committee. We depend entirely on your support, much of which comes from the congregation of St. Mark's. SMOAT is really part of the family of St. Mark's in every way other than legal form and governance.

I have previously written about the problem of finding events which appeal both to the more mature in our congregation and to young

families. When we cater for only one of these it is hard to get enough to show a decent financial surplus. However, one way and another, year by year we do raise considerable sums which do give good value for money in the developing world and this is due to the great generosity of you all.

Alan reports later on donations we have received since the summer. May I thank all of you who responded for your generosity? Regular giving will now increase by about 50% and will stabilise our finances. And I must not overlook the great generosity which is represented each year by the response to our Christmas Appeal. This year we have particularly good projects.

So, at this Christmas time may I end with a great thank you to all the many faithful supporters of SMOAT and wish you all a very happy Christmas.

HARRY INGRAM (*Chairman*)

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## *Micro-hydro electric jazz*

Think of those places associated with the rich history of jazz music, and Rudgwick in West Sussex is unlikely to spring to mind. But it was here, many years ago in the Kings Head pub, that the Sussex Jazz Kings first performed.



Decades later, they are still delighting audiences up and down the country with their traditional yet distinctive renditions of jazz favourites. All of them highly accomplished musicians, they can be guaranteed to roll back the years, get feet tapping and lure the unsuspecting on to the dance floor.

The difficulty, so we learned when they came to play at St Mark's

Church Centre on 15 November, lies in the "up and down the country". They were with us on a Friday evening, having played in Suffolk the night before. On the following Sunday they were heading off to Cornwall for an engagement at Bude.

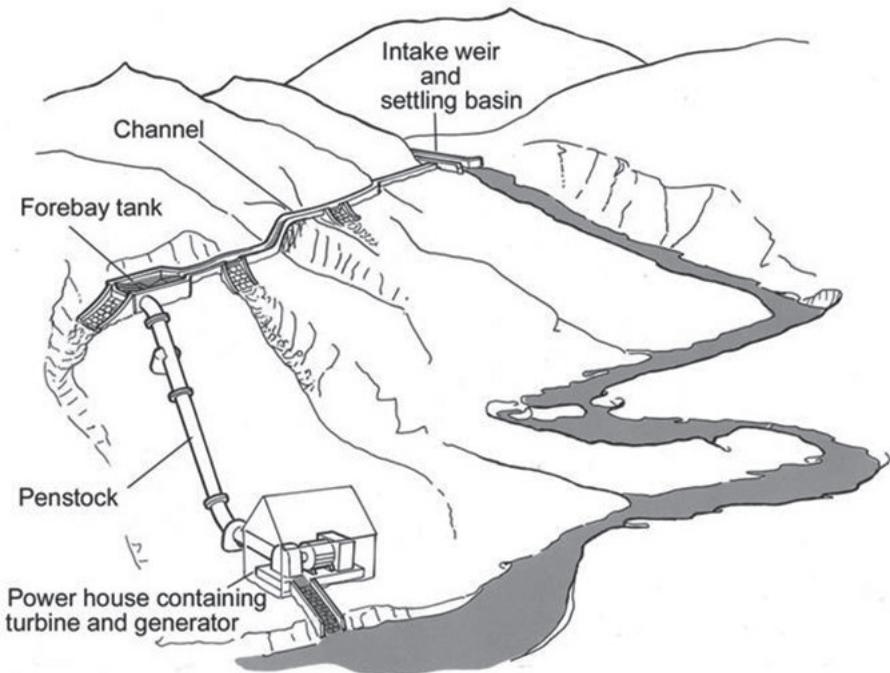
It was clear that jazz was, as much as anything, a way of life for the band, and their enthusiasm for the

music that they produced was irresistibly infectious. Equally obvious, however, was their growing dislike of the long hours spent on motorways, a decreasing percentage of which seemed to be spent actually making forward progress. Such are the joys of the M25, A12, M4 etc.

While it was a little disappointing that a larger audience was not present to hear them perform, despite the event being widely advertised, the 45 or so who were present not only enjoyed their evening immensely but also patronised the bar and the raffle to good effect, ensuring that all costs were covered and a small surplus achieved.

And the project that the event was supporting? Imagine for a moment how different our lives would be if we had no access to electricity. No electric light, no power sockets, no computers, no fridges, freezers, television, washing machines ..... the list goes on and on.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with the tenth highest infant mortality rate of any country. Average life expectancy is 52 years. 85% of the population live in rural communities, and of these only 1% have access to electricity. Within its boundaries, however, stands Mount Mulanje, the highest and wettest mountain in South Africa.



Making use of this welcome natural resource, Practical Action has devised a micro-hydro electric power scheme which will benefit about 5,000 people (almost half of whom are aged under 15) in the Upper Bondo region of Malawi. The project began in 2012, and is due to be completed in July 2014.

A survey of households in Upper Bondo revealed that 92% used paraffin as their main source of lighting, with the remainder relying on candles. The risk of burns is high. The soot causes bad coughs. The region's two health centres have no electricity and cannot therefore store refrigerated blood and vaccines. The children's education is adversely affected because, even if computers were available to the three schools, they could not be powered, while qualified teachers are deterred from working in the region because of the lack of electric power and light. And the cost of paraffin and candles is, relatively, extremely high and rising rapidly.

Practical Action's scheme is run by a committee of local men and women. As well as overseeing the physical operation, the committee involves people from all parts of the community in implementing and sustaining the scheme.

Having access to electricity will help Upper Bondo's economy to grow, because so many tasks currently undertaken by hand will

take much less time to complete using electric power. And - something we probably take completely for granted - people will be able to recharge their mobile phones locally, instead of having to walk to distant shops to do so.

When a similar scheme brought micro-hydro electric power to another region of Malawi, it was reported by Practical Action's Development Manager that "in a community where there has never been electricity and the only source of lighting is firewood or the moon in the sky, electricity is a distant dream.

Even when Practical Action started the project, very few believed that it would be a reality... Last night the first light at the power house came on; the Practical Action team who were doing the testing all huddled together and watched the people's happiness and sheer disbelief as the lights came on. It was a moment of self-reflection - we take electric power for granted, while for others this was the very first time they were seeing electricity being used."

The proceeds from the jazz evening, augmented by funds previously raised by SMOAT, will be used to help bring similar joy and disbelief to the people of Upper Bondo. For them, the sight of the first electric light being switched on will, we hope, prove to be a truly life-changing event.

DAVID LEAR

# *The Battle of the Somme*

After the 10am service and coffee on Sunday 30 June, the eve of the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, about fifty people came together to hear Jonathan Fisher tell us an illustrated story of one of the worst battles of the First World War. Most of those present will be children of the generation which took part in the battle but there was also a sprinkling of grandchildren.

Perhaps it was Jonathan's personal connection as well as the photographs which brought to his talk so much realism and poignancy. For me it came across as an event which may have been necessary in its time but resulted in so many killed and wounded on both sides that it can never be justified. It was difficult to comprehend the suffering of the vast numbers of wounded and dying in the worst of circumstances both on the field and slowly under primitive medical care. Nor, even in the context, with which the battle was conducted. But those are personal reactions from hind sight.



It was clear those in the room were gripped by the pictures, the account, and their memories and reactions. Just one of them said to me afterwards, "it was so very good that I wished I had not come". But we

promise every year not to forget and surely this was an accurate reminder of what we should not forget. It gave us pause too to reflect on the futile necessity of war and that it should not happen till all alternatives have been thoroughly exhausted.

The retiring collection, made up with other donations, was given to "A Bridge2 Aid". This was not for its apparent reminder of Arnhem but because of its activities in Tanzania.

Did you know that very few Africans have any access to dental services? Pause to consider what that means? Minor tooth problems cause long periods of pain and develop into ulcers and more serious conditions which dominate the life of the individual and force him to seek local remedies, which may only exacerbate the condition. Bridge2Aid sends teams of dentists and assistants frequently to Tanzania to carry out dental camps in the countryside, train local health workers in dentistry and leave them their instruments. The organisation also runs a permanent dental centre there.

Africa is populated by people very much like you and me. As you know many suffer from lack of clean water, food poor diet and from disease. It is another kind of battle field we are not obliged to share.

Thank you Jonathan.

HARRY INGRAM

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## *An experience of Zimbabwe*

One of the aims of SMOAT is to increase local awareness of the problems facing poor people in the developing world. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. When funds are donated in support of a project, feedback is requested as a matter of course, and frequently provided, although not always in a format that can be easily passed on to SMOAT's supporters.

On those occasions when SMOAT has helped to finance the provision of a volunteer to work in a developing country, for example a VSO worker, it has sometimes been possible to arrange for the volunteer to report back in person on what has been achieved. And, in recent years,

the SMOAT committee has counted among its members a handful with personal experience of living in or visiting some of the countries to which the funds raised by SMOAT have been directed. There is no substitute for having actually been there.

Later in this newsletter is a report on SMOAT's 2013 Quiz. The funds raised by this event have been used to support a Practical Action project: "Now wash your hands, Zimbabwe". Running until 2015, its aim is to help 200,000 people in Southern Zimbabwe by improving their access to clean water, ensuring that they have adequate sanitation, and reducing the risks to their health from poor hygiene.

With this focus upon Zimbabwe, the SMOAT committee was delighted when Revd Sue Weakley agreed to speak about her experience of visiting the country in 2011 through her membership of the Croydon Zimbabwe Link.

The Link, whose logo reads: "Sharing in faith and friendship - working together for a better future", is a partnership between Southwark Diocese's Croydon Episcopal Area and the Anglican Diocese of Central Zimbabwe, and Revd Sue joined it four years ago.

Her talk, on Sunday 22 September, attracted an audience of 60, and, together with the photographs that accompanied it, vividly illustrated the harsh realities of life for the majority of Zimbabweans - the lack of employment opportunities, the prevalence of HIV, the scarcity of clean water, the intermittent electricity supply.

For many adults, these difficulties are exacerbated by the memory that, until relatively recently, Zimbabwe was a prosperous country, developed rather than developing, and able not only to feed itself but also to supply food to neighbouring countries, becoming known as "the bread basket of Africa".

The Croydon Zimbabwe Link party's destination was Gweru, in the southern part of Central Zimbabwe. Revd Sue stayed with a local priest (another Father Martin) and his family, and she told how she had taken part in a church service lasting nearly three and three quarter hours.

During this time music was provided by, among others, three separate choirs (adult, youth and children's), detailed arrangements for a shared lunch were finalised, and Revd Sue delivered a sermon which had to be reasonably lengthy because "for the first ten minutes they'll barely notice you've started".

The faith, optimism, generosity and humility of the people whom Revd Sue met shone through her talk alongside the descriptions of the extreme difficulties which many of them face each day.

Some things are starting to change, e.g. the availability of computers is becoming more widespread, making contact and communication easier, while the Practical Action project has the potential to make a huge difference to the lives of a large number of people.

DAVID LEAR

## *Beetle Drive – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013*

### *The Lewis Kaisi Mosquito Net Programme*

Following on from the success and popularity of our family Beetle Drive, we decided to go ahead and hold another. Once again, the hall was full of families having fun and being sociable. Competitive streaks came to the fore and many people's faces were reddened by the effort of having to throw a six to start the game!

One of the best things I have found with the game is that people move around the room – the person with the highest score on the table moves one way the person with the lowest score moves the other, so every game is played with different people at your table. Thus, everyone gets to socialise with people they may not know very well; however, by the time the game is over, everyone is well acquainted!

This year, we were holding the event to raise money for Faith in Action's Lewis Kaisi Mosquito Net Programme, a scheme set up in the name of Lewis, who died, aged four, from cerebral malaria. Sadly, Lewis is only one of many thousands of people who die each year from a disease which is preventable. Unfortunately, most families lack the knowledge,



*A demonstration in the use of a mosquito net in Dwanya village, Malawi*

as well as the finances, to protect themselves with mosquito nets and so the programme sets out, not only to purchase the nets but to teach people how to use them and care for them.

Families were delighted to receive them as they did not know that they could protect themselves from malaria in this way. They said it was as if they had been given gold; a feeling I am sure we would all have if we thought we could protect our families.

The current price of a mosquito net is just over £5.00. Therefore, everyone who attended and paid their £5.00 admission to have a pleasant afternoon's entertainment with tea and cakes thrown in, was potentially saving the lives of a whole family in the rural districts of Malawi. We raised £325, the equivalent of 65 nets. Thank you to all those who attended.

Somewhere in the rural areas of Malawi, 65 families have been given the gift of life by you.

BARBARA PERKINS

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## *Quiz Evening*

That hardy perennial, the SMOAT Quiz, came into full flower again on Friday 18 October. A gratifyingly large number of participants tussled with an amusing, intriguing and sometimes baffling array of beautifully illustrated quiz questions dreamt up by our regular guest quizmaster Helier Dreux, who, as always on these occasions, was ably assisted by his wife Anne.

To refresh the brain power during the mid-evening break members of the SMOAT Committee provided an excellent supper of chilli con carne. For those in need of more frequent stimuli a range of liquid refreshments was available throughout the evening.

As well as being thoroughly entertaining and great fun the event was again a huge success In financial terms, raising just over £1,180 for Practical Action's "Now Wash Your Hands" project in Zimbabwe. Some of you will have been fortunate enough to attend Revd Sue Weakley's illustrated talk in St. Mark's Hall after the morning service on 22 September in which she shared some of her experiences of rural life in Zimbabwe. A fuller account of Sue's talk appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Her talk provided an illuminating background to the problems Practical Action's project aims to redress and we are very grateful to Sue for the presentation she

gave. Donations of £49 received on that occasion will also go to support the project. To give a better idea of the activities envisaged by the project and the scale of some of the problems it tackles I thought it worth repeating here some key points from Practical Action's proposal to SMOAT.

Less than 30% of people living in rural areas of Zimbabwe have access to safe sanitation. And no more than 50% have clean water at the turn of a tap. Outbreaks of cholera are rife, with the last epidemic in 2008-2009, causing nearly 5000 deaths. The project, which ends in 2015, is working with rural communities in the southern provinces of Gwanda and Mwenezi to help 200,000 people improve their access to clean water, ensure they have adequate sanitation and reduce health risks from poor hygiene.

Incidences of diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery and jaundice can be greatly reduced with improved awareness of good hygiene practices. The project's health and hygiene education programme aims to change behaviour to maximise the benefits of new water and sanitation facilities.

Many families in Gwanda and Mwenezi do not have toilets in their own homes because they simply cannot afford to build them. Under the project over

4,500 new toilets will be built. 180 local builders will be trained to build safe new toilets and to develop their expertise so they can start their own businesses thereby expanding the supply of toilets. It is expected that by the end of the project the communities themselves will have built an additional 13,000 toilets.

In partnership with local water committees the project will rehabilitate 1,000 water pumps which have fallen into disrepair, construct 20 new boreholes to ensure that women and children across the districts have to walk no further than one kilometre to reach a supply of clean, fresh water. Rainwater harvesting tanks for clinics and schools will be built to ensure adequate water supply there all year round.

The project will also support research by four Masters students in Zimbabwe to identify low-cost, appropriate, water and sanitation technologies which can be utilised by poor, rural communities. The results will be published and thus shared with other rural areas in Zimbabwe. Practical Action will also seek to influence local and national policies on water and sanitation, helping to create a country where everyone – regardless of wealth – has clean, fresh water at the turn of a tap, a decent toilet, and a life beyond poor health.

ALAN PRESTON

# *The Value of Giving*

Readers of our Summer newsletter will recall an article with this title by Harry Ingram in which he referred to the value of general donations to SMOAT. As Harry pointed out, these give us the capacity to top up the proceeds of fundraising events so we can fund the full requirement of the chosen project.

When seeking suitable projects for fundraising events we often receive more very worthwhile projects than the number of fundraising events we are able to run. General donations can play a part here too by enabling us, when funds allow, to support one or two such additional projects each year.

Following the distribution of the Summer newsletter we have received a number of individual donations and several standing order forms for making regular donations. I am pleased to report that the individual donations total £802 which, with gift aid added, will total £985.

The new standing orders will produce £1,590 over a full year and £1,987 with gift aid added. We are greatly encouraged by these responses and thank most sincerely all who contributed. It is of course only through the continued generosity of all our supporters that SMOAT can continue to support projects to relieve poverty in the developing world.

Thank you all.

ALAN PRESTON

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*For more information, or to join our mailing list,  
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*For further details of SMOAT and  
our planned fund-raising events,  
please visit our web site*

**SMOAT.org.uk**

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