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ST MARK'S OVERSEAS AID TRUST

# Newsletter - Winter 2015

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*Dates for your diary:*

## Launch of Christmas Appeal

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December at St. Mark's  
at 8am and 10am services

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## BINGO!

Sunday 28 February  
2.30 to 4.30 - St. Mark's Church Hall

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## Bucks Fizz, Bangers & Bacon

St. George's Day BBQ Brunch  
Saturday 23rd April  
10am - 12 Noon

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## Quiz - with Helier Dreux

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October  
St. Mark's Church Hall

**put the date in your diary now!**

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Further details of all SMOAT events will be  
available nearer the time on our web site:  
**SMOAT.org.uk** or from any of the committee.

REGISTERED CHARITY No.280091

# *Editorial*

If you could have just one wish granted to you, what would it be? We've had this conversation over the dinner table on many occasions. My daughter and son always used to wish for many more wishes – typical of most children. However, more recently they have thought about it in slightly more depth and haven't been quite so materialistic! At the moment, I am sure that many people would just ask for a peaceful world and, after some of the atrocities which have taken place recently, that is another wish that is well worthy of a top ten spot on anyone's wish list.

But what would *your* one wish be? It really is quite a tough question.

Before you read on, I'd like you to get a piece of paper and a pen and write down ten words which would make this world a better place. My words are: Justice, peace, love, tolerance, kindness, thoughtfulness, selflessness, equality, bravery, understanding. Although there are probably many more I could have thought of, I struggled a little to find ten words and so I thought about all the things that can make the world a difficult place in which to live, which I found easier: Injustice, war, hatred, intolerance, unkindness, thoughtlessness, selfishness, inequality, cowardice, and ignorance.

I think we can probably all relate to the first nine words, particularly in the light of recent heinous terrorist acts which have taken many lives and threatened our safety and that of others. However, my last word, "ignorance", is equally as dangerous as the other nine words as it not only encompasses the other words,

it also adds a few more unpalatable words to the list: disregard, insensitivity, blindness, oblivion, unawareness.

Our world is vast and we live in a tiny part of it. Sometimes, when we are enjoying a beautiful day out with our family or feeling raindrops fall on us, it is hard to imagine, and easy to forget, that in another part of the world a war is raging, or people are dying because it hasn't rained for months and months, or that crops have failed and people are starving. It's at times like this that we must feel truly blessed for what we have and then we must think about those other people living through war and the fallout of war, poverty, starvation and preventable illnesses. We simply can't afford to turn a blind eye to what else is going on in the world. Just because we can't see those people, we mustn't forget them.

If we disregard them and leave them to die and suffer through no fault of their own, it doesn't make us all that different from the people who go to war and kill people. We are one world, one people and we need to make sure we understand the problems faced by our fellow man so that together we can help to overcome those problems. If we all stand together, helping each other, loving each other, accepting each other, perhaps ignorance would be overcome and this would also abolish injustice, war, hatred, intolerance, unkindness, thoughtlessness, selfishness, inequality and cowardice.

I know that in the last few paragraphs I've been idealistic and perhaps slightly optimistic! It will take more than little old me to stop the violence and hatred shown by some people or indeed to change the injustices of the world. However, we've all got to start somewhere and if we all try to learn about other people's hardships and do something to help rather than turn a blind eye, then I hope that we can at least help to make a difference in some parts of our world.

So, what would my wish be? Perhaps it would be a wish for less ignorance in the world; for people to learn about and understand other people's plights and stand with them in their everyday battles to survive.

BARBARA PERKINS, *Chairman*

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## *Strawberry Tea*

As the winter nights now draw in it seems like a long time ago that we spent a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon in June hosting the SMOAT strawberry tea. And what a glorious quintessentially English afternoon it was.

It was hugely generous of Elfrid and Shirley Silcock to allow us to use their most magnificent garden in Lonesome Lane. It made the perfect floral backdrop for our nine-piece flute choir who opened the proceedings with their rendition of "an English country Garden".





As the music accompaniment continued, our guests enjoyed a glass of Pimm's on the (beautifully kept) lawn, before moving to the marquees for a strawberry cream tea with home baked scones aplenty. As the teapots flowed and delicious cakes were served our guests

were able to wander the garden in awe, and even play some traditional garden lawn games.

Appropriately, given Elfrid's career as a dentist, this event was held to raise money for the charity Bridge2Aid. Since 2004, over 3 million people in East Africa have been given access to safe emergency dental care because of Bridge2Aid's training programmes.

We were absolutely delighted that one of the volunteers who works for Bridge2Aid, Jill Nightingale, was able to join us for the afternoon. Jill had just recently returned from a trip to Tanzania working on one of their projects.

She spoke of how fundraising efforts such as ours could make a real difference to those rural communities she had visited who often had no access to the most



simple dental pain relief, leaving them to face a daily battle with pain in the toughest of life circumstances.

The ticket sales for this event combined with sales of raffle tickets and cakes made a fantastic £835 for Bridge2Aid. This amount was topped up with funds from our wonderful regular givers which meant our donation of £1,000 could go towards buying four complete dental instrument

kits and sterilisers. These will be given to 4 Rural Health workers who are helping to give access to oral pain relief to around 40,000 people. What an amazing result.

Thanks to everyone who came and supported the event and especially Shirley and Elfrid, whose gardening efforts and wonderful hospitality made it all possible!

CLAIRE BOWERS

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## *Regular Givers, the backbone of SMOAT*

As you are aware SMOAT organises a number of fundraising events throughout the year in support of particular carefully selected projects. These events are often well attended and serve to both raise valuable funds and increase awareness of the causes, plus a lot of fun is enjoyed along the way.

However, in addition to those projects tied to specific fundraising events, SMOAT is also able to support many other carefully researched charities and projects through the course of the year through the generosity of regular monthly donors.

Over the last year thanks to our regular donors we made the following donations on behalf of our supporters:

£1,000 to support VSO worker Helen Rankin on her assignment to Burma (now named Myanmar), where she has been working at an educational institute in Meiktila to help reform local teaching methods from learning by rote towards an emphasis on pupil stimulus. You can follow Helen's blog at [www.helen-rankin.com](http://www.helen-rankin.com).

£1,500 to Village Water, to rehabilitate a broken water point for a remote community in Zambia. As part of this project villages are also provided with hygiene education and locals are trained



to carry out basic repairs and maintenance of the waters pump. £1,000 to IMPACT to help fund a credit union in Nepal, so women are able to receive affordable loans for income generating business activities such as poultry farming, bee keeping or animal breeding. Poverty can often be best alleviated by providing people with the tools and skills to work their way out of it. By loaning women in Nepal money to start their own income generating activity they not only have a means of independent income, but also become part of a network where they can share ideas, challenges and advice with one another.

£1,000 to the Orskov Foundation, to support their permaculture project in Malawi where agricultural productivity is at risk from deforestation. The foundation's "food forest project" is using a holistic approach to reforestation using currently non productive community land. By mimicking natural native forests and introducing non invasive varieties of plant species the project aims to increase forest productivity, bio diversity, soil regeneration rates and resilience to climate change.

As well as enabling us to support many worthy additional projects such as these, the regular contributions from sponsors also enable the committee to top up the money made at fundraising events to meet our target donation for a specific project. For example, at last year's Beetle Drive we raised £319 but were able to give £1,500 to support Project Uganda rainwater harvesting project.

The committee would like to convey our immense gratitude for the continued support from our regular givers. It provides us with confidence and underpins all that we do together, and we look forward to sharing further feedback on projects past and present with you over the coming year through our newsletters and presentations.

If you are interested in becoming a regular giver or have any further questions regarding the projects and work SMOAT is supporting please do feel free to contact any member of the SMOAT Committee, who would be only too happy to discuss this with you.

CLAIRE BOWERS

# *BEEtle Drive*

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon in September we held our family Beetle Drive game.

As usual, the adults were almost more competitive and excited than the children and the temperature rose as people moved from table to table to see who could be quickest with

the die to throw a six and start to draw their beetle.

Of course, the prize was very chocolaty, which made it all the more important to do well in each round! During the interval, we had lots of delicious cakes, served with tea, coffee and squash and the tombola was in full swing.



*A proud trainee receiving her beekeeping kit*

All in all, another successful, happy occasion, bringing people together in a friendly fashion to raise money for a very good cause.

This year we were supporting a new Charity to us and the project was really quite different from any we have supported before, but equally as important, not only in terms of giving people a chance to improve their lives but also with an environmental twist. Kaloko Trust is a UK based charity which works to relieve poverty and raise livelihoods in Zambia.

We supported a beekeeping project, which has been established in Kashitu, a remote rural area in Zambia, and aims to generate new income for the families of 25 trainee beekeepers.

A co-operative has been established and additional sales through the co-operative will generate increased

income for its members. The co-operative also offers support to its members and it develops and implements a clear marketing strategy. Therefore, once the trainees are established, they are sure of support from their fellow members. And, an added bonus - the surrounding woodland is increasingly valued and protected.

BARBARA PERKINS



*Elsie sporting a beekeeping outfit at the Beetle Drive*



## *Q: How did SMOAT supporters help to save lives in Malawi?*

*A: By making our Quiz a huge success*

Art is available to us in many varied forms. Painting, music, literature, theatre, film, dance – each of these and countless others can be defined as “a medium for artistic expression”. And somewhere on the list of art forms there has to be a place for the Helier Dreux Quiz.

The structure and appeal of Helier’s quizzes are such that they can be enjoyed simply by watching them. Participation is not strictly necessary to appreciate the skill and inventiveness that create them, but, if you do decide to take part, it is possible to answer the majority of the questions wrongly and still spend a most enjoyable evening admiring Helier’s performance as question-master, aided by the colour and visual attraction of the on-screen presentation: an art form indeed.

Plans for Helier’s return to St Mark’s Hall for the annual SMOAT Quiz is a sign that Autumn is well underway.

This year, it took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Michael Fish’s non-hurricane: Friday 16 October. After checking the weather forecast, 90 people turned out to enjoy not only trying to solve some of the more cryptic clues (while agonising over exactly when to play the joker) but also an excellent supper of chilli, rice and pitta bread. Trade at the bar was brisk, the raffle was well supported and the event raised more than £1,200 in total - an outstanding result.

The Quiz was staged to raise funds for an InterCare project in Malawi. InterCare provides surplus medical aid to rural health units in sub-Saharan Africa. In its 40 years of operation the charity has sent more than £13 million-worth of aid to the region, whose peoples have, on average, the worst health in the world. Malaria

is the cause of much of this illness; the disease kills an African child every 30 seconds.

In Malawi, malaria is the leading cause of death among children aged under five, who make up 17% of the country's population of 13 million. Each year there are at least five million instances of malaria being caught, with almost half of the under-fives likely to contract the disease.

The Government of Malawi is taking action to address the situation, and provides a drug (Coartem) to treat the disease. However, if the treatment is to be successful, a quinine sulphate infusion and quinine tablets must be taken during the week after Coartem has been prescribed. While the Malawi Government makes Coartem available free of charge, many health centres cannot afford to buy quinine, and so the Coartem treatment may be rendered ineffective.

Thanks to the money raised through the Quiz, and by making use of additional funds held in reserve, SMOAT has been able to send £1,500 to InterCare. This sum will enable 450 malaria sufferers in Malawi to receive the quinine that they need to complete their treatment. Without question, lives will be saved as a result.

The SMOAT Committee sincerely thanks all those who, by supporting the Quiz evening, helped to raise money for this most worthwhile cause. Please come back to the 2016 Quiz!

DAVID LEAR

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## *Introducing Naomi - our new Treasurer*

I'm delighted to have joined the SMOAT team this summer, as the new treasurer and a Trustee. For me, this role in SMOAT is more than just a small volunteer role to 'keep me busy'. It's an opportunity for me to be engaged in something I feel passionately about, and dedicated over 10 years of my working life to.

Inspired by stories of my father's volunteer work with VSO in Sierra Leone as a young adult, and the collapse of apartheid in

the 1980s, I choose to study African politics and economics for developing countries. After completing graduate and postgraduate degrees, I moved into a career in international development in my mid 20's. I had the opportunity to work and travel in over 10 Sub-Saharan African countries, as well as across some of the poorest parts of Eastern Europe on projects funded by the World Bank, UK Department for International Development, and the European Union.

For three years I worked on projects in Tanzania and Uganda designed to support their governments to improve the opportunities for small businesses. In these countries, up to 80% of the economy is 'informal' comprised of small-scale business – individual traders, farmers and service providers. Our projects focused on reducing 'red tape' and removing opportunities for bureaucratic corruption. This type of reform enables individuals and communities to develop their own enterprises and business in a fairer environment, even if it's as simple as selling home-made produce at a local market.

With enterprises, comes livelihoods; the opportunity to make a living, to feed and education their children, and remain healthy. This is true 'development' and has far reaching impacts on poverty reduction. I felt proud to be part of something that was changing "the way things work" in countries well known for their corruption and high levels of poverty.

I'm at a time in my life right now where it isn't practical for me to be working for long period overseas on these projects. With two young girls of my own to care for, my priorities have been within the home. However, as they grow a little older and I find myself with some free hours, I have sought opportunities to think about how and where I can make some contribution.

In fact, there is another important side to the work I was a part of in East Africa.

People need opportunities to develop their own enterprises. They need education. They need good health and clean water. They need infrastructure, like roads and water supply. They also need skills – to learn how to operate a cooperative for example. They might need equipment, like a bee keeping kit or a simple

irrigation system. They also need access to finance – many live in communities where people don't have access to banking or any kind of collateral against which to borrow.

Many of the projects that SMOAT supports focus on exactly these things. It's development at a micro level – helping individuals and communities to seize opportunities for themselves. Our projects are carefully selected and assessed to focus on both the social and economic returns to our generous investment gifts.

To see poverty, first hand, and in its most raw state, is a humbling experience. To be involved, in some small way, in helping to alleviate it, is hugely rewarding. Sadly not all aid programmes achieve their desired objectives. Money is wasted. Wars and conflict, environmental change and disease materialise, knocking everything off track. Politics gets in the way of progress, Not all things remain equal and it's often hard to see where progress is being made. It is a continual learning curve for all involved, especially for large aid programmes funded by governments and charities.

What I do know, and what I have seen first hand, is that small, carefully targeted and carefully managed projects can have tremendous impact, even when the wider circumstances can seem very bleak. There is much more to be done – and here our contributions really can make a difference. I'm really proud to be involved in SMOAT and really excited about our forthcoming programme of events and planning our donations.

NAOMI FLOOD

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*For more information, or to join our mailing list,  
please e-mail: [richard@smoat.org.uk](mailto:richard@smoat.org.uk)*

Barbara Perkins (Chairman)      e-mail: [chairman@smoat.org.uk](mailto:chairman@smoat.org.uk)  
Naomi Flood (Treasurer)      e-mail: [treasurer@smoat.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@smoat.org.uk)

Louise Barr  
Claire Bowers  
Harry Ingram  
Richard Salmon  
David Lear