

Our school in Lewis

What the Trustees have been calling "Our School in Lewis" is in fact Airidhantuim Primary School in Shader on the north west coast of the Isle of Lewis.

This is a small school by mainland standards having only 3 teachers and 26 pupils. However the size of the school is irrelevant in the light of recent events. What is of enormous relevance for the Trust is the initiative, enthusiasm, and generosity of spirit shown by the pupils and staff towards the AIDS orphans in northern Malawi whom the Trust was set up to help.



It all came about following a conversation about the Trust's work in Malawi that one of our trustees, Chrisanne MacLeod, had with a good friend called Mary Murray who happened to be a cousin of Margaret Anne MacLeod, a teacher in Airidhantuim Primary School. In a short time Mary's enthusiasm for the work being done to help AIDS orphans in the Widows' School and elsewhere was picked up by Margaret Anne. She was equally enthusiastic and saw it as an opportunity to promote it as a Global Citizenship / Enterprise Project for the school. The enthusiasm snowballed as pupils and teachers aimed, initially, to fill 26 banana boxes with clothing and various resources and also to raise enough money to pay for the freight to Malawi.

In the words of Margaret Anne herself, "All the pupils worked together to think of ideas to raise money. They wanted an element of fun so decided on having a bottle stall, baking stall and some raffles. Teacher, Mrs Alice Macleod thought selling curries would be a good way to raise money so it was decided that both ideas would go together." Local magazine FIOS takes up the story as follows: (The Trustees are grateful to FIOS www.spornis.co.uk/site/fios.html for permission to reproduce the photo below together with the text.)

"Big hearted pupils at Airidhantuim School are ensuring that some of the world's poorest children will be receiving treats and gifts through their support of the charitable initiatives of Inverness based primary teachers, Chrisanne Macleod and Reay McGill, who are arranging to send 'banana boxes' filled with items destined for Malawi. The teachers have given up their summer holidays and are visiting a school in Malawi (where there are few resources for children, and the pupils of Airidhantuim School have been learning about the people, education and culture of Malawians over recent weeks.

Sam, a pupil at Airidhantuim, told Fios: "It is the seventh poorest country in the world". Ryan added, "It is very hot and they don't wear shoes".

Joanna said: "Only a small percentage of them go to school," while Heather advised that, "They really need soap" to help them with washing and to keep them healthy..

Letters, drafted by pupils, were sent to various island companies and businesses asking them to donate to the appeal. With twenty six boxes destined to go off to Malawi, pupil Mathew described how the boxes will cost £10 each to send to Africa.

During Fios' visit to Airidhantuim school, teacher Mrs MacLeod asked the class who had phoned the school with exciting news earlier that day, with Samuel immediately responding: 'Macaskills' lorries are going to take our boxes to Inverness for free!'

The as-yet unfilled banana boxes were picked up from the Stornoway Co-op store by Mary MacLean, Port, and these will soon be packed with various goods that have been kindly donated."

At the time of the FIOS interview the children said they were hoping to raise £260 to cover the cost of sending 26 banana boxes to Malawi. In the event things turned out rather differently, but in the loveliest possible way. If you read the 2 charming emails from Airidhantuim pupils you'll see what we mean. The 1st one is from Luke in P7 (sent before the event).

Hi Chrisann

its luke p7 we are just writing to you about our fundraiser on saturday the 13th of November. We are going to have curries on the day and there are takeaway curries for only £3.50 for adults sit in and takeaway it is £2.00 for the children. The school is going to sing a few songs related to Africa and there is going to be a baking stall a bottle stall and a raffle. The tickets will be sold at the hall on the day. We have filled 8 boxes and there are 12 to fill yet. There are a lot of bags with clothes and blankets. we are getting lots of useful stuff from toys and games to clothes, blankets and toiletries.

We made a wall display with a sunset over Malawi and we stuck animals and transport on the land and water.

We are hoping to hear from you again.

Yours sincerely Luke p7

...and now the 2nd one which was sent after the fund raising event

15.11.10

Dear Chrisanne,

We hope you are well. Our class (P1-7 English) are from Airidhantuim Primary School on the Westside of Lewis. On Saturday we had a fundraiser in our local hall (The Clan MacQuarrie community centre in

Borve) to raise money to send our banana boxes to Malawi. We know that you have been doing lots of things to help the children in Malawi and we really enjoyed looking at the photographs you sent us.

On Saturday we were selling curries that the teachers made the night before-I think we had about 250 curries to sell in the end and we sold nearly all of them. We also had a bottle stall, a baking stall and raffle on the day. Lots of people came to our fundraiser and they brought lots more things for our banana boxes. We sang a few songs to entertain the community and I think everyone enjoyed our singing. We raised a grand total of £1,371 which we were really happy with. We are going to ask the Head teacher if we can get a little money from our school fund to make it up to £1400. We will need to get lots more banana boxes because we have already filled 20. We have asked the co-op to keep another 20 for us and Mary is picking them up tomorrow. We hope this has updated you with what we have done so far and we would like to keep in touch. We hope to hear from you soon,
Kind Regards,

P1-7 English (and Mrs Alice Macleod-teacher)

What a heart-warming story! The children backed by their teachers and supported by a generous community exceeded their target 5 times over!

On behalf of the St Mary's Malawi Hospice Trust we salute you and thank you. This is truly, for us, an answer to prayer.

Chrisanne, Reay, Brian and Iain

Trustees

Chrisanne is travelling to Lewis on 10th Dec. to express our thanks personally and present a certificate from the Trust in grateful acknowledgement of this magnificent fund raising effort.

Visit by Chrisanne MacLeod (Trustee) 10th Dec. 2010

EXTRACT FROM STORNOWAY GAZETTE - 16.12.2010

www.stornowaygazette.co.uk

"As part of their Global Citizenship and Enterprise project, Airidhantuim Primary School recently linked up with The StMary's Hospice Malawi Trust and set themselves the target of filling 26 banana boxes (one for each child in the school) and raising £260 to cover the cost of transportation to Malawi. The children set about sending letters to parents and local businesses for their support with this project. A curry afternoon was organised and took place on the 13th of November in the Clan MacQuarrie Hall, along with a raffle, baking stall and bottle stall and it

raised the amazing total of £1,400. This was down to the wonderful support of parents and the local community. Sgoil Araich Airidhantuim also got involved and filled fourboxes. This brings the total to 55 boxes.

The pupils and staff would like to thank all local businesses, parents and the local community, as without them this would not have been possible.

Chrisanne Macleod, who is a trustee of the St Mary's Hospice Malawi Trust came to Airidhantuim Primary to thank the children and accept the cheque on their behalf."

With thanks to the editor of the Stornoway Gazette for permission to reproduce the text and photograph.

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A thank you visit to our school in Lewis

Chrisanne accepts the cheque from pupils and staff at Airidhantuim school.