

## Malawi 2014

Perhaps we should name this trip “ Beyond Our Wildest Dreams” as things that we often talked and dreamed about are actually now happening.

After a relatively short and thankfully uneventful journey, we were being greeted by our dear Mr Lupia, and by 6.30 pm Wednesday evening we were settling into our accommodation.

This year we were to stay in a house/hostel which had been specifically built for volunteers by the Non-Governmental Organisation, Ungweru which had co-funded a project with us at Thandazga Nursery last year. It was basic but comfortable and most importantly safe, and we were to be joined at the weekend by nine young ICS (VSO) volunteers.

After a sound sleep the maidens were ‘on the road again’, ready to visit groups, deliver banana boxes and plan the next three weeks. First stop, Thandazga Nursery, where our widows’ house, built 2013, stood proudly, next to the Ungweru Nursery block. The widows were expressing their gratitude for it and for the continued support through the boxes. Apart from some maintenance of the pig corral and some vital vitamins and medicines for the pigs there was nothing pressing here for this trip.

At Chitatata Orphan Care, again, the only pressing need was vits and meds for the pigs and they proudly showed us their maize harvest - abundant, due to the provision of fertilizer by the Trust.

The Winter Feeding Programme, the banana boxes and the provision of fertilizer is paying dividends and we hope to continue with this.

On to the Junior School where the classroom block, (funded by the donations to the Trust at the time of Chrisanne’s and Stewart’s wedding) was underway, but we quickly realised a lot of time would be spent here pushing and prodding if it was to be finished by the 28<sup>th</sup>. It was looking good however, and there behind it, in the kitchen built by the Trust in 2011, Mary’s Meals was at work -a dream come true indeed!

Out to the wilds of Chamalaza, and we had an idea ourselves what the real need was there -yes - the most basic of all, fresh, easily accessible WATER.

Supposing it took up all our time, we would fully investigate how to get water to them. Through talks and the hire of a survey by the Water

Development Board, a site has been earmarked and drilling will start in September, when the water levels are at their lowest; this will ensure that the necessary depth, to sustain water all year round is hit.

Another dream is about to come true! We hope to invest a lot more here too in the future as there is a group of youths desperate to do something with their lives. The chief was a carpenter to trade and he is willing to train some of them, but they have no tools. Please look in your sheds and if you have any redundant tools we will gladly take them off your hands to supplement those we hope to buy when our coffers have been replenished.

By the 28<sup>th</sup>, the classroom block was ready for handover and what a splendid building it is. It was hard to believe looking at it, that we were actually responsible for creating it, but as the sign went up and the tears flowed, another dream had become a reality.

Lots of amazing, positive moments, but also many reminders of the stark poverty and hardship that is life in Malawi.

Our visit to Mzuzu General Hospital generated a reaction that was reminiscent of our first visit to Malawi, " this cannot possibly be happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

Medics trying to save lives with little or no equipment, sick children lying on the floor because there are not enough beds or mattresses, it was hard not to cry but as we often say, " they don't need our tears". Premature babies four to a cot, mothers nursing them on the floor. Very little sign of linen or blankets so they were delighted with the gifts we had brought. Our own groups have benefited so much from all the knitting that has been going on, but we urge you please, if you can, keep it up for the hospital. Also, any old linen, and if you have access at all to out of date medical supplies they will accept them up to a year past their use by date. We also had a trip to a mobile clinic where the Maidens experienced a change of career for a day. Reay was very ably assisting the doctors with the vaccination programme (not quite sticking the needle in) but everything else that needed doing. Chrisanne, meanwhile, was doing weighing and B P readings at the ante-natal clinic. After sorting the mistake of the upside down cuff

on the first patient, she got into the swing of it. We can smile about it, but that is how desperate things can be -literally all hands on deck.

We hope this gives you an insight into our trip and we hope to share it further in the form of a presentation before too long.

Once again, thank you all for your interest, love and support - we couldn't do it without you.

The Maidens.