

Visit to Tabora Girls' Secondary School

This was the fourth time that Tor Bridge High/Estover Community College has visited our link school Tabora Girls' Secondary School in Tabora, Tanzania.

The first was an initial visit by Graham Browne and Bob Mountjoy back in 2001, the second in 2004 when six students were accompanied by Bob Mountjoy, Ken Ringwood and myself.



Graham Browne with Tabora Girls' Head Helen Makala and Avodia Nshunju during their UK visit in June

It was not until 2010 that I organised another visit, when we took another five students. This time I was accompanied by Miss Davidson.

During 2012 we were involved in a British Council funded joint project which financed a visit in March by Helen Makala and Avodia Nshunju from Tabora Girls' School.

In July, Jean Hague, James Perry and I, along with three students, Adam Hill, Connor Reed and Becky Truman, took part in our latest expedition. We were part of a larger group going on this latest adventure as we were joined by Becky Deacon, a photography student from Plymouth College of Art, seven nurses/care workers, two FUM Officers Suzanne Horsfield and Pat Bates, and Emily Westerway, a young lady who works in the fashion business in London.

The first leg of our expedition was to fly to Doha in Qatar when, after a short wait, we proceeded to Dar es



Our bus, seventeen in our group



Salvation Army Hostel accommodation in Dar

Salaam, arriving on the morning of July 16th. On arrival, we were picked up by a 20 seater bus and were taken to our accommodation. The lack of luxuries, modern conveniences and comforts were more than made up for



Inside the hut

by the friendliness of the 'visitor loving' Tanzanians. After a night of rest we took off for the long 16 hour bus journey. This, an essential way of viewing this part of Africa, brought with it a wealth of ways to increase our understanding of the environment and culture.



£70 each return Tabora to Dar

The 700 mile journey was on a busy single track road which, up until a few years ago, was made of mud. The traffic, predominantly huge trucks and over-sized coaches, thundered past us in both directions while our bus chose a slower, safer pace. As it was nearing darkness, the decision was made not to travel to Tabora that night as it was not safe due to potential bandits (Dick Turpin Tanzanian

style), so we stayed the night in Nzega, 4 hours from Tabora.

Up again at seven, we took the long, now dusty and bumpy road to Tabora, arriving at the School by mid morning.



Ugombi Dam

The second trip was to see the dam and water treatment centre at Ugombi. This was originally built by the British in 1958, but has been greatly improved and expanded. However, there is not enough water to supply the whole of the region, water supplies being heavily supplemented by the use of wells and water tanks harvesting rainwater from roofs.

We visited Tabora Hospital which was extremely clean and appeared to be well run; it has much improved since our visit in 2004.

The houses in Tabora that most people live in are made of mud with leaky tin roof and children play outside in dry dusty conditions. Most houses look as if they are falling down, many without doors. The contrasts of rich and poor are great; the teachers houses and those of the high up government workers being extremely luxurious in comparison.

While at Tabora Girls' we did do some teaching in after school clubs when Mrs. Hague with tremendous



Emily Westerway and Becky Truman with a teacher from TGS



enthusiasm, helped by Becky Truman, introduced the girls to silk painting and block printing onto fabric. The results were fantastic and the activity



was greatly appreciated by the girls who do not do Art and Design or Design Technology in school.



Mr Perry and I focused on aspects of the British Council joint curriculum project which our two schools have been involved in. I was helping the girls make badges using the slogan 'Save water save lives' and with the help of a group from Tabora Boys', a debate was held on whether domestic chores in the home should be shared. The outcome? There is still a strong feeling in Tanzania that it is totally the woman's job, not the man's.



We continued after the debate with a question and answer session involving a much smaller group, looking at issues in their lives which made them happy and healthy in life. Our aim is to compare teenage attitudes from our two cultures. It was during this time, when the reading room was packed with people, probably two hundred,

that the very brave and talented Connor Reed (vocals) and Adam Hill (ukulele) introduced some different culture to the crowd by singing a set of two songs including the Jeff Buckley/Shrek song, Hallelujah. The audience loved it.



At last! It had been such a long time since we had left School. We had travelled nearly five and a half thousand miles over two and a half days. Our welcome was overwhelming, as usual, where the whole school assem-



bled to watch a wonderful display of dance, drumming, acting and poetry readings, given in our honour.

We stayed in teachers' houses this time, all eating together at Joyce's.



Over the next few days we visited local government offices and schools, meeting old friends and making new ones. I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by one primary school in particular, Westlands Nursery and Primary School, which is less than a mile from Tabora Girls'. Apart from being the first pre-school I had seen in



Tabora, the walls in every classroom were covered in visual resources; usually in Tanzanian schools they are virtually bare. This was a very encouraging sight. The pre-school classrooms were unlike ours, with rows of hard desks. I questioned the formal academic setup, "Do they not play, have brightly coloured visually stimulating learning games etc?" The second mistress was quick to respond, saying it was all going to change. I can only think that the problem with



soft furnishings in Tanzania is perhaps a mixture of the amount of dust and the damp in the rainy season, so hard desks are more practical. I look forward to seeing how things change. We came away thinking that this school would be a possible school for Plymbridge Nursery and Tor Bridge Primary to link with.



As the days passed, we were merging with the culture, all taking on with great enthusiasm every new Swahili word, African food, different places, meeting new people and ways of doing things. We managed to visit the houses of two old friends of Estover/Tor Bridge and the FUM. Elias Masatu, a Tabora Regional Planning Officer, and the ex-Headteacher of Tabora Girl's, Elilumba Ruoja, both were extremely pleased to see us.



Very sadly, Masatu is recovering from a recent illness and Mama Ruoja is suffering from stress.



Masatu, at home

Our visits to local sights included the Livingstone Slave Trade Museum which houses artifacts, photos, maps and journals; Tabora was used as a holding location by an Arab slave trader called

Said, before they made the 45 day journey to the east coast on foot and chained. Livingstone, as well as being an explorer and missionary, was a major force in trying to stop slavery in East Africa.



Emily, Connor and Adam with Tabora Girls' teachers

We all became very good friends with the teachers looking after us, who went out of their way to make our stay so happy. The last few days brought a mixture of sadness and excitement of going home. It was a long way home, made even longer by



Avodia with Becky Truman, Tor Bridge High student

the three and a half hour wait for the bus. This is Africa!!

With another overnight stay in Nzega, a few Tanzanian beers (for the over18s) then an early start for the sixteen hour trip back to Dar es Salaam, thoughts of home kept us go-



Picturesque scene at Tabora Girls'



Buildings at TGS

ing. The landscape is vast and varied and in some areas huge stone outcrops would dwarf Dartmoor's finest tors. The lush green mountainous



Rocky landscapes viewed from the bus

region of Morogoro signalled that we were nearing the end of our journey. But excitement was short lived as we were to be stuck in rush hour traffic on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam.

Tired, dusty and hot, we arrived at the Salvation Army hostel for our last night. Here we stayed in small huts enclosed in a walled compound. We only had one task left which was to go to the Mwengi craft market in the morning to find gifts to take home. Once there, we were



Suzanne waits patiently for the bus

spoiled for choice: necklaces, carvings, paintings, drums and much more. The couple of hours browsing and buying ended with desperate, eager sellers chasing our bus as we sped to the airport.

We had a good send off as friends and their families joined in the sad farewells.

The warmth of our friendships and sadness of parting was interrupted by



Avodia resting under a mango tree

the realization that we needed to pay an extra £7 each to leave the country; we were not impressed. The air travel was luxurious compared to the bus and being tired and content after our expedition, most of us slept for

some of the journey. The final leg of the journey on familiar home ground began when Mr Browne arrived with the school minibus. After the much appreciated Burger King and lots of excited chat about the visit and our journeys, we arrived back at school mid-afternoon, very pleased but extremely tired.



James Perry, Tor Bridge High geography teacher



Around Tabora Girls' School

Words cannot describe what it is really like in other countries. It has to be experienced, and Tanzania is no exception. The people, the landscape, the economy, the ways of doing business, the human rights, the motivations and aspirations are all different to ours and the more we try to understand the cultures of others, the more we can understand our own, reflecting on what is right and what is wrong in how we live in the UK.



Found in one of the classrooms