



Newsletter

Second Term, 2002



Moulding their Character

Update, September 2002

As I reported in the last Newsletter, the first term was quite interesting with a new group of boys who were, ah, let's call them . . . challenging. The second term, while better, still had it's ups and downs, although some of it was of our own making. More on that later.

The completion of the fence at the end of first term has made our lives easier in more ways than just keeping the animals out. There are times when we need to know where a student has gone and at least now we can be sure they left the school yard through one of the two gates. The tracking can begin from there. The students are very good at tracking people. You can show them any footprint and they will be able to tell you whose it is, and even when they bought the shoes. One day I asked 3 boys to look at some prints in front of my house. After a minute or so of contemplating, one of the boys said he thought they were the prints of some shoes I had bought 2 days before. I went to get the shoes from my tent and, of course, he was right. We all had a good laugh over that one.

We received some help from an itinerant friend of mine, Professor Mike Murray-Hudson. He was in Gaborone waiting for a reply to his job application to the Okavango Research Centre, having recently returned from the University of Florida. With our Isuzu 5-tonne truck in Gaborone at the panel-beaters, we had to rely on our smaller Cabstar to transport the students at the end of the term. There was a serious problem with the clutch however, and the reconditioning and purchase of spares required someone with a bit of mechanical knowledge. All of this was accomplished by Mike, who even managed to deliver the parts and spend the last week here at School assisting me with putting it all together. Thanks Mike!

Along with him came Mike's brother Phil who helped us get some of our computers running. We now have 4 functioning computers for the students and 2 for the staff. The 4 student computers came from Deloitte & Touche and one of the staff computers came from Kgalagadi Breweries. Nothing like having a computer expert for a friend. Thanks Phil!

We continued to host groups of British secondary school students with one of our regular groups, Fulcrum, arriving at the end of June for 3 days. They assisted us with the construction of beds for the students, did some painting and helped us to complete a soak-away at the staff ablution block.

We were then visited by two groups from an organisation we had not previously worked with called World Challenge. To my surprise, they were all girls aged 16 to 17. For our teenage boys, cooped up in this remote part of Botswana, it was a bit hard to take. This was the self-inflicted wound I talked about above since it never occurred to me to inquire about the make-up of the group. With one staff member in the hospital, and being short-staffed at the best of times due to financial constraints, we had our hands full. The girls made a good start on fencing the garden and painted the staff ablution block with interesting designs. As with all the visiting groups, they also participated in the School's regular afternoon development work.

With only one week's respite, the second World Challenge group arrived. I have a theory that nothing is ever so bad that it can't get worse so, sure enough, they were also all girls. Another week of excessive excitement at Bana ba Metsi School. I have lots of theories, and another one is that the source of all evil on Earth is testosterone. By the time this second group left it was all but confirmed.

Developments continued with the completion of our third poultry house, garden storeroom and garden fence. We also began work on the slaughter house and continued with the library. The garden, in the capable hands of Mr. Kushuka, looks quite amazing. You never have a second chance at a first impression, so it's good that the garden is the first thing you see when you enter the School.

E-mail Edition?

The price of postage has been going up steadily, so I would like to float the idea of an e-mail edition. I tested it out on my Aunt and Uncle with limited results. The main problem is that the standard paper size differs around the world. None of this is a problem, of course, unless you want to print it out and make it into an 8-page booklet. The easiest solution is to send it in portrait orientation and no columns which could then be printed out on any paper size. I would thus like to beg you, in order to reduce our expenses, to drop me a short e-mail if you're willing to receive the Newsletter in this way. Our address is banabametsi@info.bw

Meeting of the Board of Moremogolo Trust

On Saturday, the 22nd of June, 2002, we had the pleasure of hosting the Board of Trustees for a meeting at Bana ba Metsi School. Most of the meetings have been held in either Gaborone or Maun, so this was a good chance for the members to see the developments. By all accounts, no one was disappointed to have come all this way for a 2 hour meeting. Thanks go to all who attended.

Their imminent arrival gave us the incentive to make some improvements which might not otherwise have been done by then. Most importantly, we managed to install the solar water heater which was given to us by Martin Flattery. We couldn't expect important people to have a cold shower, could we?

Wildlife Update

One of the reasons for locating the School in a remote part of Botswana was to get the students out of the environment which was contributing to their problems. To be honest, I also prefer the bush. In previous Newsletters I had speculated that we would have some wild visitors and second term was better than most.

Last year we did have a mad hyena rampage through the school yard one evening, possibly a victim of some poisoned meat, since it was intent on getting into the volunteers tent . . . while they were inside. The elephants were very well-behaved however, and could only be heard in the distance on a few occasions. This term they were grazing right outside the fence. Unfortunately, grazing for an elephant means knocking down trees. We have spent a lot of time planting trees and I had considered discussing the matter with them but decided against it. One evening the English girls evacuated their tents, which were located in a line, evenly spaced, right next to the fence. (Their leader was a military man.) And more spectacularly, 2 cheetahs were seen in a ploughed field next to the school in June.

One Saturday afternoon, while the boys were watching a football match, I decided to head down the old track to Red Cliffs on my motorcycle. It's by far the most interesting geographical feature in the Okavango Panhandle, and is only about 4 km's from the School. I left the bike on the track, which is rapidly returning to bush from lack of use, and walked to the cliff a few hundred metres away. Once I got there I climbed a tree, looking down into the river with a spectacular view of the delta. I spent about 2 very peaceful hours there watching the river flow by. Just before sunset, as I was climbing down from the tree, I could hear the elephants coming. I walked wide of the rumblings until I found the track left by my bike and started following it. Unfortunately I soon came upon the elephants moving slowly toward the river. My motorcycle was beyond the herd which posed a bit of a problem. I have a fairly good understanding of crocodiles and hippos, but elephants are something I haven't spent too much time with. So, I tried to imagine what the local Bushmen would do in this situation and decided to squat down behind a tree and wait. I was forced to move back several times and just before it was dark I resorted to walking back to School. It was a nice afternoon.

Focus on Funding

God forbid I should ever have to report in this section of the Newsletter that there is nothing to report. As always there are a substantial number of people to thank again this term.

Let's begin with the "whopper" we received last term from First National Bank. The amount was P180,000 which was received and banked in March, and reported in the last Newsletter. There was the small matter of the big cheque however, so in June, when I was in Gaborone for other business, I had an appointment with the Board of First National for a photo session. Before leaving I asked them if I could take the cheque with me. I noticed that, unlike the other big cheques I had seen, which were plastic and re-useable, this one was made of cardboard. They said I could take it, but wanted to know what I intended to do with it. I told them I wanted to put it under my arm and walk through the main mall with it. It was delightful to meet the members of the Board of First National Bank, and I hope they realise how much we appreciated their donation.

Kgalagadi Management Service Trust continues to be a solid supporter of the School with another P50,000 donation this year. That brings their total to P130,000 in the last 3 years. From Stanbic Bank we received the final instalment of the P50,000 they donated when the School opened. The amount was P10,000. I sincerely hope our fruitful relationship with the Bank will continue.

As was the case last year, Air Botswana offered us 8 round-trip tickets between Maun and Gaborone for conducting School and Trust affairs. This allowed the Board to meet here at the School since most of the members live in Gaborone. Buy & Build donated 60 IBR roof sheets, most of which have already been used on the garden storeroom, poultry house and slaughter house. The American Embassy agreed to pay for all the slaughter equipment and a freezer room. Mega Tyre in Gaborone gave the School 2 truck tyres. Crocodile Camp continued to support the School with the purchase of some softball equipment. The ever-faithful Cox family keep plucking away on behalf of the School with a donation of over P3,000. Sir Peter Fawcus, another regular donor, sent us nearly P2,500, and Roger and Janet Harpt sponsored a child for \$300 which converts to almost P2000. And last but not least, Nevil Newey gave us a guitar and a computer.

And in Conclusion . . .

I want to vow on a stack of bibles that the next Newsletter is going to come out on time. Considering how much my mood improves when I finish it, you'd think it would be the first thing on my agenda during the school holidays. But . . . it's the whole inspiration thing. As I write this I am going on several straight hours of plucking away at the text. I woke up this morning feeling like William Shakespeare and now the words are flowing like water. I just wish I could figure out how to work the tap.

In the next Newsletter I will be doing a profile of our staff members, including a new employee who is heavy in more ways than one.

And finally, I want to thank my friend Lin Cassidy who spent several weeks with us while doing research on veld fires. She was very helpful to all of us while she was here.

Steven Harpt
Director.



with the First National cheque.

©Bana ba Metsi School
September, 2002

Private Bag 06
Shakawe.
Tel: 71 667045

E-mail: banabametsi@info.bw