



# Newsletter

Third Term, 2002



*Up, Up and Away: Bana ba Metsi students on their way to Pompom, compliments of Okavango Wilderness Safaris and Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Charity.*

## Update, December 2002

Even before starting this School, I had described the process of setting it up and developing effective ways of rehabilitating boys as evolutionary. While I am not a naturalist, I suspect the biggest advances in evolution come during times of adversity. And so it is with Bana ba Metsi School. In October our first group of students to complete the full 3-year programme wrote their national exams and did not perform as we had hoped. In November when the results were released I probably felt the same as ancient camels did when their bodies decided they needed to find a way to store water, miserable.

We were all fairly confident that most of the students could pass, but were sadly disappointed when only 6 out of 16 succeeded. It is all rather irrelevant however, since there is now universal access to a junior secondary education in Botswana, so all of the boys are able to continue. And if there is any good news to come out of this, it's that all 16 of the students have gone on to secondary school. The other comforting thing is that the behaviour of the boys was good and they are not afraid of manual work. Thus, they have left with more skills than most primary school graduates which, we are hopeful, will help them get through life successfully.

Before the exams were even written we had realised that we needed outside help to deal with some of our students who have learning disabilities. To adequately address the problem, I had asked my friend Jenny Egner and her associate, Sue Liddle, to spend some time with us. Jenny does remedial teaching and writes primary school mathematics books, and Sue is a trained special needs teacher. They graciously agreed to spend 3 days at the School assessing the students and setting up a programme for the students with specific problems. Eight of the remaining 26 students were found to be in need of special attention and the programme they set up is now being offered to the students by our 2 volunteers. Let's hope this will take us some way toward getting all of them to at least learn to read and write.

A party was held for the Standard 7 students who were leaving. The guest speaker was Lieutenant Andreck from the Botswana Defence Force. Many of our students aspire to being soldiers, something which I wholeheartedly support since the BDF is a well-disciplined organisation which would help the students fall into line. The boys were a bit surprised to find out that it is difficult to get in without finishing **senior** secondary school. That should give them some incentive to study more in the next 3 years at junior secondary.

On a lighter note, 2 boys recovered some of my juggling balls. I will repeat here what they told me. You can believe it if you want. When I asked them where they found them, they said they were in a shallow nest near the river. They saw 2 large birds dancing around and when they went to find out what they were up to, they found the balls in the nest. I told them I found that hard to believe, but gave them a pat on the back for at least having a vivid imagination and returning my balls.

From the cover photo, you will notice that some of our students were invited to a one week outing at Pompom Camp in the Okavango Delta. Paul Newman, the famous actor, has a charity called Hole in the Wall which runs camps for terminally ill and disadvantaged children. During the December holiday, 12 of our students were the beneficiaries of this once in a lifetime opportunity. Thanks go to all who organised the trip, especially Kris Krueger of OWS and the counsellors from Hole in the Wall. I am sure the boys will never forget the experience.

As promised in the last Newsletter, this issue contains profiles on our staff members. I wish to point out that all of them are working tirelessly for much less than they could be earning elsewhere. They survive on one weekend off a month, when they do their shopping. Otherwise, they are here, by choice, doing whatever has to be done to keep the School operating smoothly. It's just a pity we can't find a way to raise more money and pay them what they are worth. I, for one, wish to congratulate them on the fine job they are doing and for their devotion to the boys, through thick and thin.



Education

**Mr. Tshoagong** is the School's grandfather at the ripe old age of 80. But Phalatse is alive and definitely still kicking. He has many interests and is, in fact, a bit of an expert on almost everything. He is also an accomplished writer. The School relies on him mainly for his building skills although his elderly wisdom does also come in handy. He served, long back, as a building instructor but has assured me that, at that time, cement **had** been invented.



**Lephantshira Tlhabare**  
Head of Academics

**Mr. Tlhabare**, our first trained teacher, hired in June, 2000, is the Head of Academics. He is in charge of all matters relating to the School's academic programme. Lephantshira is also in charge of the moulding of bricks during the afternoon work sessions. He has been in the teaching profession for over 12 years. And of course, one cannot fail to mention that he is a football fanatic and coach of the School team. He once commented to the students that he knows every football player in the **world!**



**Mr. Tshere** is fondly referred to as "Biki", a nickname from his childhood meaning "big". Very appropriate! He is the newest member of our staff and at over 100kg he is, physically, very well-qualified. Biki has taken a rather large load off my mind, being the main problem-solver now. He has a degree in Social Work from the University of Botswana and has arrived with a wealth of experience in the childcare field and lots of ideas. I would



like to wish him a long and fruitful stay here.

**Mr. Kushuka**, playing the sewarawara, is in his third year as a teacher at Bana ba Metsi School. One of the specialities which he has brought to the School is his green thumb. Look for a picture of our irrigated garden in one of the upcoming issues.



**Malebogo Moseki – Admin. Assistant**  
**Mashave Thindimba - Cook**

olds they are very capable. Ivar is a farm boy and has the kind of practical mentality I adore. Felix is about as pleasant and cooperative as they come. Both have been a welcome addition to the staff.

**Ms. Moseki** is in her second year out volunteering and has now been our Administrative Assistant.

**Mr. Thindimba** worked for me in Shakawe and was one of the 2 people who arrived here at the school site with me in March, 2000. He is now the school cook.

**France Kushuka**  
Teacher

with us. She started formally employed as



**Ivar Milligan and Felix Wright**  
Project Trust Volunteers

**Mr. Milligan** and **Mr. Wright** are 2 lads from the U.K. This is the second year we have had volunteers from Project Trust. For 18 year



**Joseph Diayunga and Bolokang Mosidi**  
Night Watchmen

**Mr. Diayunga** and **Mr. Mosidi** are our night watchmen. Both have been with us since June, 2000. Joseph is from Sekonduko, the community next to the School, and Bolokang is from Shakawe. In terms of performance, they have both been solid as a rock.

## Focus on Funding

Where to start? How about with a friend of a friend of a friend story. A former Peace Corps volunteer, Bill Burns, told his friend Stacy Jackson about our School and she volunteered to give us a used Apple laptop. Before we could arrange to get it here, a friend of hers, Rebecca Layton, offered another one. Both were shipped to my friend Lin Cassidy in Florida who was being visited by Janet Hermans, Jenny's mother, and she brought everything back to Botswana. Talk about a team effort. Thanks to all of you.

Meanwhile, on this side of the Atlantic, our main benefactor, Sponsor-a-Child Trust, reimbursed us over P75,000 for capital expenditures. Of the original P300,000 donation we are still left with over P85,000 to use. Their contribution has been a real life-saver. The UK/Botswana Appeals Fund made another substantial donation in 2002 of over P25,000. This is in addition to the P16,000 they donated in 2001. Other UK supporters of the School include Sir Peter Fawcus who sent 2 donations in rapid succession totalling over P4500 and the Cox family who sent a P2000 Christmas present. Bless their hearts.

Speaking of presents, we received one on New Years Eve from Dr. Von Bother, the German Ambassador who donated P3000. Jacob & Jane Swartland and Kathy Zerbe each sponsored a student for P1500. Kingsley acquired 4 used computers from KPMG which he passed along to us. PPC donated 100 bags of cement and Builders Merchants continued to keep us in mind with 3 pallets of nice leftovers. Crocodile Camp held a Christmas fundraising for us which netted P1600. They have also been very helpful in terms of hiring a few students during the holidays, which I appreciate, since it keeps them off the streets.

Carole Arneson, the mother of a friend, and Carole Vanden Langenburg, a friend of my mother (I like how that works), each donated \$300. Bill Burns, mentioned above, is busy trying to raise funds and has set up a website for

us at <http://www.banabametsi.org> which, for now, only contains the previous Newsletter. Like the School, it is still under construction. Good luck Bill. In November I was invited to dinner with Dan Quayle who was visiting Botswana. That evening I received \$200 donations each from Greg & Julie Vogel, Bob & Ruth Lavinia, and Terry Lee.

Money is the bane of my life, so I want to sincerely thank all who have contributed and allowed us to continue operating. As the mechanic in the oil filter commercial said as he rebuilt an engine, "pay me now, or pay me later." If we don't deal with school drop-outs when they are young, they will come back to haunt us later. Anyone who has any ideas on how we could become more financially secure, I'm all ears.

## And in Conclusion . . .

In this section of the last Newsletter I promised on a stack of bibles that this issue would be out on time. It seems even divine intervention can't move me. But then the Lord said, "Let there be light". This morning, it was as if the light bulb in my head switched on and it all fell into place. Rest assured, you **will** get 3 issues a year, probably evenly spaced over 12 months, and each one just as late as the one before. Amen.

In this issue of the Newsletter you have had a chance to learn a bit about the staff of Bana ba Metsi School. As for the Director, I have decided to start a bit further back with a picture of my great grandparents on the Harpt side. Before I die, I hope they get the time-travel thing worked out. They look like my kind of dinner guests.

Steven Harpt  
**Director.**



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