

Welcome to Africa Unplugged

Promoting greater awareness and understanding through communication and education



DECEMBER 2010 UK NEWSLETTER

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE

From everyone at africa unplugged: we would like to wish all our members, friends and supporters a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. Your support has been heart-warming and we hope our stories and pictures have shown just how much we have been 'Making a difference together'.

LAURA & MAURO

Latest star volunteers Laura and Mauro from Rome have just spent a month with Chimwemwe Umbrella in Nkhata Bay. Story and pictures on page 5.



FOUNDER SENDS BEST WISHES

Our photo shows founder Chris at the recent cricket test match between Australia and England in Brisbane. He sends best wishes and seasons greeting to everyone at africa unplugged. He hopes to start voluntary work shortly working with aborigine groups.

MALAWI CHANGES ITS NATIONAL FLAG

Malawi recently made a controversial change to its national flag which it had used since independence from Britain in 1964. A full sun now replaces a half-rising sun. President Mutharika told a rally in Lilongwe that national flags depict developments in a nation.



Malawi's new national flag

FRIENDS RAISE OVER £2000 IN SPONSORSHIP

Four recent events have helped to raise over £2,000 for africa unplugged. First Helen raised over £500 at her art show which included a charity auction and raffle. Then our local pub, which came 3rd in a

fun quiz, donated the £50 prize to aup. Founder Chris finally got a haircut and the event raised almost £600. Friend Robin made a marathon effort and raised over £1,000. More details on page 2.



Best Wishes

SAMUEL PEPYS QUIZZED

Many thanks once again to 'mine host' Trevor and everyone at the Samuel Pepys public house in Huntingdon. Early in October the Rotary Club arranged for 30 pubs to take part simultaneously in a fun quiz – Samuel P came 3rd and the pub team very generously gave their prize to africa unplugged.



ROBIN MAKES A MARATHON EFFORT

Friend Robin from Surrey recently raised over £1,000 by successfully completing the Farnham Pilgrim's marathon – he came 35th out of 255 runners which was a super result. Robin is not expecting to get to Nkhata Bay before January as his African adventure has included a month long nature guiding course in Kruger National Park.



HELEN HAS HER OWN SHOW

The George Hotel Buckden in Cambridgeshire was the venue for an art show by talented local artist Helen which raised £1071 split between 3 charities. It was a really enjoyable evening. As well as the art exhibition itself, the evening included a charity auction and a charity raffle. Sincere thanks to everyone who contributed but especially, of course, artist Helen. This was the second time Helen had

nominated africa unplugged at one of her exhibitions – Helen featured in our January 2009 newsletter after raising £1001 for us at her St. Ives exhibition.



Helen displaying one of her pictures

CHRIS FINALLY GETS A HAIRCUT

After something like thirty years, except perhaps for removing split ends, founder Chris finally got his hair cut. All in a good cause of course. The barber's pole was erected at the Samuel Pepys public house in Huntingdon. The 'entertainment' was augmented by local musician Matt Harvey, who discovered a talent for auctioneering, and our friend Helen displayed a few of her paintings. However, the main business of the evening was the haircut.

hat round and mine hosts Trevor, Martin and John joined in the fun. Sincere thanks to everyone who contributed. The event raised almost £600 for aup. The hair is being donated to a charity which makes wigs for children with cancer.



Before



After

AN EXCITING DAY IN MZUZU

Early on Friday morning 19th November an assorted group of 20 friends and volunteers boarded a specially hired mini bus for a long awaited trip to Mzuzu. The friends belonged to the disability group plus 2 children from the Blind hostel. The volunteers included Happy, Gresham, Annie the cook and Laura and Mauro. The trip was organised as a special outing. Everyone was very excited, especially those who had never been on a long journey or to a city before.

The first stop was the Kanyika Club for the Disabled in the Luwanga area of the city. The club helps disabled persons find decent work. Our friends were given a warm welcome. After a round of introductions there were many speeches and much friendly socialising.

The next stop was the St. John of God Centre which is actually a large mental health hospital with occupational therapy and vocational training departments. Our friends visited the day care centre where patients receive skill-based training in carpentry, bricklaying, cooking and many other subjects. The Centre took our friends on a tour of the facilities. During the tour the importance of following basic hygiene rules was emphasised. These included washing hands before eating and after going to the toilet, and using litter bins to

keep communal areas tidy. Another subject discussed was that of equality between men and women.

Everyone felt that the visit had been a real success and that they had learnt much to take back with them to Nkhata Bay. They then enjoyed an outdoor lunch in one of the green areas of the Centre.

Well fed and rested our friends then travelled to the Malawian Broadcasting Centre. They were given a tour of the facilities which included a demonstration of how a radio programme is recorded. Our friend Benson (chairperson of the disability group), Happy, Laura and Mauro were all interviewed and told that their contribution would be part of a morning programme called 'The Morning Basket'.

Perhaps it was the excitement but on the return journey the young girl from the Blind Hostel and Annie "got sick with abnormal ailments" but they eventually recovered.

Tired but happy the friends got back to Nkhata Bay at 7:30 pm. Benson said they had been made so happy at not being discriminated against and boasted that they could all do things that able people could do.



Benson being interviewed



All aboard



Friends all together



Time to relax

CHILDREN'S SHELTER

We are pleased to report that this project continues to attract the attention and support of international volunteers. Children attendance can vary, largely due to whether or not a meal is provided, but ideally we would like to keep to a maximum of 30 children each session. This is partly due to health and safety reasons but also it is about the level of practical support we can provide.

The shelter, which is an outdoor structure constructed in a traditional manner using reed sheets and grasses, is not very large. It requires regular maintenance and is currently

in urgent need of repair – something we will try and arrange in January. We have long supported the 2 teachers and regularly supply classroom materials. When we can, we sponsor the provision of a basic meal.

Volunteers Laura and Mauro spent a lot of time with the children in November and their generosity saw attendance soar far beyond what is sustainable. It is important to take care not to raise expectations. However, it is heart warming to report that this small project continues to be highly regarded by the local community



FIRE DESTROYS CLASSROOM FURNITURE

A bush fire recently destroyed the classroom furniture belonging to the Adult Learning Centre. The items were stored in an outdoor lean-to. Items destroyed included chairs and benches, matting and chalk board materials. Aup sent 10,000Kw emergency funding to help the group replace the items affected.

SOUND BALL DELIGHTS CHILDREN

Food is usually the top of every list we receive asking for support. However, the most recent 'wish list' from the blind hostel was a little different – they asked if Aup could help them obtain a sound ball. We are delighted to report that the answer was yes. Teacher in charge Peter Munthali went to Mzuzu and managed to purchase a ball but unfortunately we could not use the pictures he sent us.

TROPHY FINALS

The football final was played between Young-Stars and Kachulu. At half time the score was 1-1 but Boniface Mshali scored late to give All-Stars victory 2-1.

The girl's basket-ball final was between Young-Stars and Makomboni. Young-Stars won 48-21 with Ellen Manda voted 'outstanding player'.

We were not able to use the pictures sent to us.

As a small charity it is not possible for us to recruit volunteers directly but we are always delighted to introduce suitable persons to our friends in Malawi. We cannot, of course, accept any liability for any loss or inconvenience that may unfortunately arise but then we don't make any charges either. Volunteers make all their own travel and accommodation arrangements and visit entirely at their own expense. However, once a volunteer arrives in Nkhata Bay the team do all they can to make them welcome.

Laura and Mauro, a couple from Rome but living and working in the Netherlands, are the latest volunteers to visit our friends in Malawi. They spent the whole of November volunteering with Chimwemwe Umbrella.

Although many mornings were spent teaching at Kunyanja Secondary School, they also made a number of visits to the Blind Hostel and accompanied the disabled group on their trip to Mzuzu. But the real centre piece of their visit was the time spent with the shelter children. Laura wrote 'we simply fell in love with the children and we would really love to continue supporting them from Europe.' They gave each of the 35 children a school bag, notebook, some colours, pen, pencil, eraser and ruler plus a couple of colouring books and a small toy. The children's names were written on each item.

A farewell party was held with dancing, singing and story telling. Both Laura and Mauro agreed that the 'whole experience is not one we will easily forget'.



'Making a difference together'

AN EVENING WITH THE NYIKA-VWAZA (UK)

Chairman Michael recently spent an interesting and enjoyable evening at the Royal Geographical Society. The event was organised by the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust.

Since 2004 its sister charity, the Nyika-Vwaza Trust in Malawi, has worked tirelessly with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife to improve the conservation of wildlife in the Nyika National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. The Nyika was Malawi's first national park (established 1965) and is the largest area of montane

grassland and evergreen forest left in Africa. The Vwaza marsh became a wildlife reserve in 1977 and is home to the widest variety of large mammals, including elephant herds, in Malawi.

The main event of the evening was an illustrated lecture by Professor Anthony Young entitled 'Thin on the Ground: Land Resources Survey in Malawi and the Commonwealth'. Prof Young was formerly Emeritus Professor and Honorary Research Fellow in Environmental Sciences

at the University of East Anglia. His lecture told the story of how the agricultural potential of Malawi was assessed, as a contribution to Colonial history and the history of science.

Want to know more: visit www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org



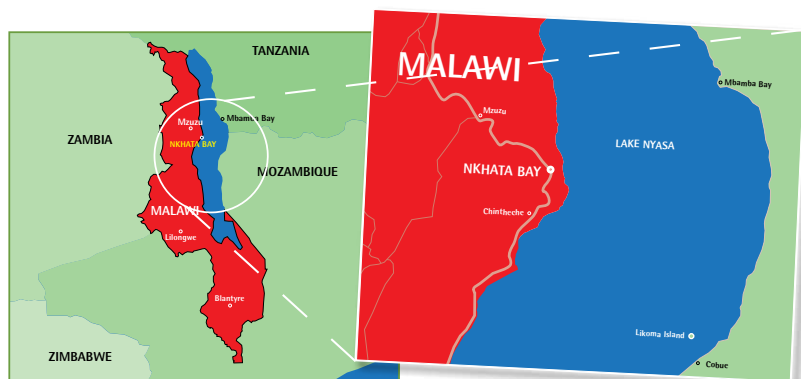
Nyika - Western escarpment

UPDATED WEB SITE ATTRACTS MORE INTEREST

After many months in something of a moribund state we have finally added some current information about our projects and activities. We had over 1,000 unique visits to the site in November. Direct contact has been made with well wishers as far apart as Buenos Aires in Argentina and Queensland in Australia. Please visit our site and tell us what you think. www.africaunplugged.org.uk

If you would like to know more about any of the projects mentioned please get in touch

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