

13 August 2020

Photo of girl with rations

### **9 October 2018**

Every so often it is important to stop and remind ourselves why we have been working so hard at St. Michael's Girls School for 16 years - and why, with your help, our support now spreads to the development of Bishop Willigers Secondary School, and school lunches at St. Mulumba's Mixed Primary, 1,200 pupils next door to St. Michael's School.

Starting at St. Michael's Nursery School - through 7 years at St. Michael's and 4 years at Bishop Willigers Secondary School we will continue to play our part so the girls get 14 years of quality education - by focusing on:

School Lunches + Nutrition.

Literacy - Funding books, the librarian, literacy teacher and literacy + phonics workshops.

Computer Room + IT teacher.

Medical Centre - nurses and medicines - personal hygiene initiatives.

Play - Sport - Art and Crafts.....and so much more.

Your support is vital, please do spread the word and encourage Giving so we can do more to help!

If a child is healthy and not hungry they have a good chance of a happy childhood -and can learn at school....every child's right.

### **5 April 2018 JENNY AND KEITH'S VISIT – written by Keith**

Jenny had been before, back in 2011 and we have photos and small reminders in our house, so I was prepared, or at least I thought so!

We arrived early on the Saturday evening and were soon surrounded by children and from there on it never really changed. We stayed inside the Convent and were blessed with incredible hospitality throughout our stay. Of course, it's basic (the power went down on Tuesday morning and didn't return until Friday), but the love and care more than makes up for any small sacrifices.

We went to the Church across the road on Sunday and the joy of being with hundreds of others, was exhilarating. I'd explained to Sister Phina that I wanted to help with the older children and she took me at my word. Patrick, the P7 teacher, was brave enough to allow me to teach (mainly English & RE) for a few hours each day and that was an incredible experience.

The curriculum is very structured and while I loosely followed it, I also broke away. We learned some songs, we discussed life through question sessions and went into rhyme and jokes; there isn't really time for things like this in their schedule, so they were often tough concepts for the kids to understand, but we got there.

Games started at around 4pm; Jenny & I helped most days for about 2 hours. There was never an argument; any collisions were accepted; the kids brush themselves down and carry on. It's vigorous and tough, but free flowing and huge fun. A local girls football tournament took us with the team to another

school, which was fascinating and proved that St Michael's ethos is extremely positive, especially when taken into a local context.

Jenny worked with younger children and helped Nurse Zam, through direct support and encouragement, to bring forward the importance of mosquito nets, tooth brushing and hand washing. We helped restring dormitories, so that nets could be easily set, laminated posters (made by the children) to remind them of these key things and helped instruct on tooth brushing. Everything was done with a cheerfulness that is very inspiring.

What I could not appreciate was the huge improvement in infrastructure, whereas Jenny could. The boys' dormitory; an incredible shower block (which has massively reduced infection for the children and the smell in the dormitories); a vast covered stage area which was used constantly; solar power to some classrooms and dormitories. There will be many other examples that I have missed, but the overall impression is of constant improvement.

The underlying issues are always there, but the charitable work that St Michael's receives makes an enormous difference and it is hugely appreciated; what's more, it is working. While we were there drought was forcing up the price of maize to new highs; the weekly banana for each child was under threat. The school has been supported during this crisis. Money is very tight, but determination and positivity is strong.

I think that our advice would be for you to engage and see, through the newsletters and maybe even by a visit, just what is being done for the children, with very little waste or loss. We had an incredible time and was flowing and huge fun. We had an incredible time and this brief summary doesn't really begin to cover the experience.

## **8 April 2017 ST. MICHAEL'S NURSERY SCHOOL**

In February 2015 St. Michael's opened their doors to start a nursery class for the village. The interest and response has been amazing, and already there are over 100 children (girls and boys) at St. Michael's. They have expanded and have opened another nursery school in Busembatia. ...again with over 100 children.

Such has been the response and interest that the facilities are struggling to keep up with the need. At St. Michael's half of the dining hall has been sectioned off with a wooden screen....and the two teachers have made all the educational resources. The children do not want to walk across the school grounds to the latrines and just squat around the back of their classroom. There is also no playground or outdoor equipment, and with only two teachers to look after them there is considerable support needed. The facilities are somewhat better up at Busembatia, but the primary need is to help at St. Michael's. We have tried to obtain a grant to help with the funding of playground equipment, and have had some success so we will be going ahead in 2017 linking in with East African Playgrounds and a group of University students from the UK who will spend several weeks at St. Michael's constructing really robust playground equipment. The Project Leader from EAP will visit the school several times and have consultations with the teachers and pupils so that the design of the playground meet the needs of the school....nursery pupils and older children.

**NEWS FLASH:** The details are now finalised - Students from the Universities of Aberystwyth, Cardiff, University of the West of England and Manchester arrive on the 10th June to construct the long awaited playground. Many thanks to everyone at East African Playgrounds. The students under guidance from EAP, will build in the morning, and organise arts and crafts activities with the girls in the afternoon. They

will be living, eating and sleeping at St. Michael's for 4 weeks...so plenty of time to settle into the rhythm of rural Ugandan life.

### **1 February 2017—LIZ'S PLACE - THE SCHOOL MEDICAL CENTRE**

Nurse Jude after 4 years at St. Michael's has gone back to college to enhance his qualifications, and we are delighted to welcome Nurse Zam to St. Michael's. She is assisted in the Sick Bay by Nurse Rose. Having two resident nurses at the school means that the 4 bed medical centre is fully staffed every day throughout the year. Malaria continues to be our major concern. Fast testing and treatment is essential to save lives. Every child who has a temperature is tested for malaria - a simple prick test with results in 15 minutes- We only purchase medicines from Joint Medical Stores a really excellent and reliable source of high quality medicines...mostly from Europe, India and the US. Shockingly 30% of medicines available at local drug stores are probably fake and many of the deaths in Africa are because of the widespread availability of these fake drugs which have no benefit to the patient. We are starting a strict policy of no antibiotics without doctor's approval.

The Nurses are working with the dormitory matrons to ensure that the girls cover themselves properly at night with the mosquito nets...we have funded more window screening. The school was sprayed against mosquitoes earlier this year, but like so many services in Uganda there was a feeling that the technician did not use the correct sprays or dosage as the benefit only lasted 3 weeks rather than 3 months.

We are trying to make contact with USAID in Kampala and other NGOs for their guidance as to who to use, as some train up technicians in IRS (Indoor Residual Spraying)!

### **1 December 2016 BISHOP WILLIGERS SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Bishop Willigers is a secondary school, located next door to St Michael's and a few minutes' walk down the road.

We are really pleased that Bishop Willigers Senior School continues to grow—A huge thank you to Morriston Rotary Club in Swansea for helping in so many ways to get this school "off the ground". The big news is that in May 2016 the school received Exam Centre status. This will mean that the students can now take their National Examination (equivalent to GCSEs) at BW rather than having to travel daily to another Exam Centre several kms away. Within the next twelve months the school needs to build two classrooms to accommodate students not taking exams, to keep the UNEB happy, even if it just four walls and a roof, left unplastered with a dirt floor. Kennedy the Headmaster is striving to mobilise the community to volunteer their time and donate bricks.

There is still a long way to go! - and we are looking for donors to support us with this venture.

### **November 2016 THE BOYS DORM PROJECT**

Between July and August, a group of 6 boys visited the school with a big project in mind - to build a dormitory for the boys living in the school. Successful with their venture, two of the volunteers, George and Tobias, have written a thorough recap of their time at the school. There are many challenges to be faced in a venture such as this, and we commend them for their generosity towards the people of St Michaels School!

## **Background to the Boys Dorm Project**

We are a group of 6 friends, 4 of whom went to St Michaels Girls School for the first time in 2014 and 2 of whom went for the first time in July 2016. For one of our group it was his first time in a plane!

St Michaels is a predominantly girls school with 200 boarders and 600 day pupils and about 20 boys who are a mixture of teachers' sons, orphans and special cases at the school. In our trip in 2014 we thought the boys were overlooked. For example the room where they slept had rats, was at constant risk of flooding and often had to sleep two to a bed. We saw a need for a proper place to sleep and when we were back home we decided to fundraise for a new boys house. This was to cost up to £8k which we raised over lots of fundraisers and individual donations. Most notably a film night, a barn dance and a swish (ladies clothing swapping event). To get out to Africa and stay there we had to save up and earn £1500.

### **5 weeks in July-August 2016**

We arrived in hot and humid Kampala and travelled east for 6 hours, after waiting for our driver! (He arrived 5 hours late - we would get used to Africa time!). We caught the setting of the sun just as we arrived at the school. The sun seemed huge, a lot larger and more orange than we were used to. From twilight to absolute darkness is 15 mins unless there was a full moon.

### **Arrival**

We arrive to a cacophony of screams and chanting from boys and girls. We were also welcomed by the sisters and teachers and told supper was at 8pm. The school is a collection of 14 large single storey buildings - a mixture of classrooms, a medical centre, teachers rooms, boarding houses and a convent where the nuns live. Also there are lots of smaller buildings which are washrooms and latrines. There are a several large trees inhabited by many weaver birds and the soil is very red. (You'd think you were getting a good tan until you washed your legs and realised it was red dust!).

The first thing we did was go and check on the boys dormitory - the boys house as it was called at the school. This is what we had spent the last 2 years fundraising £8k for with your help. We were amazed by how large it was and the quality of the work, and even more pleased to see that 2 extra rooms were attached to the main house: 1 for a teacher and 1 for the senior boys to revise and sleep in when their exams are on. We were equally impressed by how quickly it had been constructed (6 weeks). Tom the contractor was there to show us around which was nice.

### **Food**

The usual meal for us at the school would be full of carbs. We'd go up to the convent for lunch and supper. We'd wash our hands out of a jerry can, take off our shoes and enter. Usually 5 or 6 covered silver dishes, we'd open them in trepidation hoping for our favourites: pancakes, chips, chapatis and chicken or even mince meat if we were very lucky. The worst was over boiled rice and pasta! In between good and bad was 'posho', a ground cassava root powder, boiled cassava, eggplant, matoke, plantain and beans. We bought out lots of condiments from the UK to make the food more palatable. The sisters ate with us and enjoyed the 'Maggi' sauce we'd brought. Sister Christine also particularly liked Reggae Reggae sauce. After every meal we would We'd wash our hands out of a jerry can, take off our shoes and enter. Usually 5 or 6 covered silver dishes, we'd open them in trepidation hoping for our favourites: pancakes, chips, chapatis and chicken or even mince meat if we were very lucky. The worst was over boiled rice and pasta! In between good and bad was 'posho', a ground kasava root powder, boiled kasava, eggplant, matoke, plantaine and beans. We bought out lots of condiments from the UK to make the food more palatable. The sisters ate with us and enjoyed the 'Maggi' sauce we'd brought. Sister

Christine also particularly liked Reggae Reggae sauce. After every meal we would be treated to either watermelon, pineapple or mangos, all of which were as fresh as could be. We'd have breakfast in our volunteer compound, usually pot noodles from England and Ugandan bread with Nutella, golden syrup or local honey.

### **Our daily routine**

We'd wake up around 8.30am and plan the day which would range from painting the dorm, planning its mural, visiting local projects and schools and occasional touristy trips. The rest of the day was spent fulfilling these tasks. We also interacted with the girls and boys, playing games with them and answering their numerous questions concerning our lives in England: "What crops do you grow? What food do you eat? Do you wash your clothes by hand at home?".

Most days at 5pm we'd go to St Mulumbas, a local primary school, to play football in a team with the St Michaels boys against the local men. We usually won until our star player, Dylan, returned to England a few weeks before the rest of us. Our last 3 matches were 3 consecutive defeats. We often played with or against the same men so by the end of our trip we were dreaming up tactics about how to break through their defence.

We collected our water daily from the local bore hole and would empty it into a water butt in the garden of our compound. We'd need water for washing ourselves, our clothes and flushing the toilet. Whenever we started doing the water run the boys and girls would insist on helping us and putting our jerry cans at the front of the queue. When it rained we'd put out all our plastic basins under the drip line of the building. They'd be full in 10 minutes.

Our main focus was painting the boys dorm. 3 base coats inside and out and then two top coats plus skirting. Lots of attaching sticks to rollers to reach unreachable places. There were wonky ladders made from 2 sticks and halved planks lashed together.

To do the mural one of us had the idea of using the projector at night to project up our plan on to the wall. We got attacked by mosquitos due to the bright light and had to keep the kids at bay. In the day they'd come and shake our ladders, and sometimes we'd get a volley ball in our backs! We learnt the hard way that we couldn't leave the paint cans out as they would get kicked over by mistake. We designed a mural of the Union Jack and Ugandan flags, outlines of the 2 countries next to each other and below key facts about the countries like population, land area, national animal (lion and the bird, the Crested Crane).

Once we'd finished decorating, the bulk beds had been repaired and everyone had a mosquito net, the local priest, father Joseph, came and led a service in which he blessed the new dorm and sprinkled holy water over the rooms. The girls did a performance and the boys slept their first night.

On the last night, the students put on a show for us. It was what they had been practicing for a local singing and dancing competition. All the performances had a different meaning but all of them to do with empowering women and stopping domestic abuse. It gave us an insight into what problems the community faces and how they deal with it in Uganda.

There is lots of work that still could be done, if not at the school then in the wider community. This trip has helped us establish links elsewhere, particularly at a secondary school called Bishop Willigers where the pupils need basic science equipment to sit their GCSE equivalent exams. As a group we cannot take up this project but hope to set up a group from a secondary school in Bath. Hopefully we can use our experience to make their trip as successful as ours. Please encourage any young people to get in touch.

We'd like to thank the charity and our family and friends for their support as the boys dorm would have been impossible to complete without their help.

George and Tobias Leigh-Wood

### **October 2016 - THE PORRIDGE POT—SCHOOL LUNCHES NOW IN THE 9TH YEAR**

Availability of maize continues to be a real worry for Sr Josephine, the Headmistress, who has to buy 1000s of kilos of maize every week, for the boarders as well as the day girls. The school has small pockets of land that they rent around the village but most of the maize has to be brought from local markets, at the prevailing prices, that fluctuate according to the harvest and weather.....and then taken to a commercial mill for grinding.

One option we are thinking about is supporting the community in having their own maize mill in the village. This will immediately benefit all the villagers as every household grows maize, it is their staple food. Having a mill that they can walk to will be a great benefit. But sustainability and a proper business plan is essential as well as the expertise on the ground to run and maintain the mill. But this venture does have a lot of promise and we are looking at this seriously as a co-operative community venture.

We are continuing to work really hard to promote the growing of Moringa (the Miracle Tree) throughout the village. The girls have the powder from the leaves sprinkled on their porridge. There are enormous nutritional benefits (lots on the internet about Moringa) All the fruit and vegetables go to improve the girls' diet. There are new projects for us to work on within the gardens - improving the soil - both by animal manure and green manure - processing and storage of crops - proper crop rotation and trying to find a cost effective solution to feeding the animals during the dry seasons.

### **February 2016—A NEW WASHROOM—THANKS TO CARES 4 KIDS**

Thanks to a Grant awarded to us by Cares 4 Kids we have been able to build a new washing facility for the girls.

Immediately on receipt of the Grant work started at record pace with a team of local workmen, headed up by our loyal builder (and St. Michael's parent) Tom of Kayoro Construction Ltd.

Matt Watts, a Financial Advisor from Eames Laurie based in Newbury, Berks, was instrumental in securing the Grant from Cares 4 Kids -The Openwork Foundation part of Zurich Community Trust (UK) Ltd - and did not want to miss out on being involved on the ground.

He arrived at St. Michael's in late July to volunteer and helped with the build. This was Matt's first visit to Africa and it did not take him long to see that this new washroom was going to transform the girls' washing routine and improve significantly their personal hygiene.

The existing washrooms were over 30 years old and were in a terrible state - they were falling down with no roofs - Unfortunately they were also right next to the dormitories, with plenty of standing water that attracted mosquitoes. This meant that throughout the night if the girls did not cover themselves properly with their mosquito nets that there was a real chance of being bitten and contracting malaria. In a report from the Uganda Ministry of Health malaria is still the biggest killer in Uganda. Our mission is the girls' health and we must do everything we can to prevent the girls getting bitten in the first place, and the new washroom placed away from the dormitories with proper drainage is going to have an immediate impact on their health, and classroom attendance.

## **20 October 2015 - ST FRANCIS SCHOOL PEWSEY**

We are delighted that our link with St Francis School Pewsey- now in its 7th year - goes from strength to strength. They have been very supportive in so many ways. Andrew Mugabi — Head of English at St. Michael's - spent a week at St. Francis and a teacher from St Francis has been to St. Michael's — living at the school and fully participating in school life ( Report of his Visit in 2012 is in News)

We asked David Sibson, the Headmaster to explain why St Francis places so much positive emphasis on the link between the two schools and this is what he said :-

*Here at St Francis School in Pewsey, Wiltshire we are keen to give our pupils a more global perspective by developing our strong links with St Michael's. Each of our classes has a representative on our Africa Link Committee which is assisted by a member of staff who has been to St Michael's. The committee plans ways in which all pupils in their respective classes can engage with pupils at St Michael's: in recent terms these have included exchanging games, writing details of clubs and activities, and also making collections of clothing such as nightwear for the girls in Uganda.*

*We were delighted to welcome one of the senior teachers from St Michael's to spend a week at St Francis learning about the English prep school system. We also enjoy regular updates in school assemblies from those who have visited St Michael's.*

*As a school, we sponsor the Librarian at St Michael's and follow with interest the work carried out by Evelyn. The whole school community is involved in supporting St Michael's financially through collections after the annual Carol Service and Harvest Service, as well as when the need arises such as when a collection was taken after a recent St Francis School Community Choir performance to provide emergency mosquito nets.*

*All of this activity helps the pupils at St Francis to develop a broader perspective of the world beyond their local environment.*

## **15 March 2015– PROJECTS AROUND THE SCHOOL**

There are now hand washing stations around the school. The girls fill the tanks twice a day, but with over 600 pairs of hands using them they empty very quickly. So although they have been a success this project will need to be improved and monitored throughout 2015.

There are drinking water stations all around the school and in every dormitory. Again these drinking stations empty very quickly. So visitors from the UK have been saving empty bottles and now every girl has a bottle she takes to class. We have had educational workshops for staff and pupils run by local health workers pressing home the important of hand washing and hydration.

There is still some way to go to ensure that the girls drink an adequate amount of water every day. Nurse Jude is working hard to ensure that every girl is hydrated. The making of washable sanitary pads is in full production and has made a real difference to class attendance for older girls and female staff. We have slowly been able to take out wonderful old Singer Sewing Machines (they weigh 13kg each!!) We love these machines they are just so robust and keep on going despite little fingers fiddling.

The girls still forget that there are no optional ways of threading sewing machines. ..there is only one way. So when the stitching goes crazy it is always down to the girls being creative with the threading and

thinking they can get the machine to work. The girls are now following a short course to learn basic hand stitches. On completion of the samples they were able to make bags to take home.

### **23 February 2015—VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL IN 2014**

We have had some really dedicated and enthusiastic visitors this year. Thank you to all the volunteers who contributed so much to the development of the school.

#### **Nick and Vicki Beach**

Vicki a Trustee and her husband spent 2+weeks at the school in February. Much of their time was spent in meetings and undertaking evaluations of the many projects we support around the school and in the community. They were entertained by a Thanksgiving Day for Leavers - singing, dancing, a meal and speeches. St. Michael's is now one of the best schools in the District and several local dignitaries attended the event.

#### **Emma**

Emma came from Dauntsey's School to spend a month at St. Michael's. She helped in the classroom and the library. She was warmly welcomed and her enthusiasm was much appreciated by all the girls and staff.

#### **Mary Lizzy and Tom**

Mary, a Trustee, heads up our Literacy Support team and with the help of Lizzy a Teaching Assistant they spent two weeks running workshops, and giving encouragement to all the teachers. Tom, on his Gap Year, was an extra pair of hands and really involved himself in the Computer Room. The school has been recently externally assessed by the Dept of Education and the Inspectors commented on how surprised they were at the high level of literacy and numeracy at the school, bearing in mind the location of the school and the family background of many of the children.

#### **The Uganda 14 Group**

A group of 5 post GCSE boys and a leader spent three weeks at the school in June. They really threw themselves into sports and games IT teaching and music. Everyone loved having them and we have been asked by the Headmistress if we can organise other post GCSE groups in the future. We are hugely proud of the boys who behaved impeccably -picking up very quickly on the rhythm of African life and showing so much respect to all the girls and staff. Thank you Jess for being such a wonderful leader. After leaving St. Michael's the boys spent a week on Safari up at Murchison's Falls National Park organised by Red Chilli Hideaway.

#### **Fiona and Lisa**

Fiona a Trustee spent five weeks at the school during July and August. She is very much the heart of the charity, and to the school she is their daughter. She had several meetings with the School Management Committee talking about the next Five Year Plan. She also was on the interview panel for the new Librarian. Lisa, who travelled out for a week, threw herself into everything that was asked of her. Barbara one of the older girls is an excellent reader and is keen to be a journalist. Lisa, as an ex-journalist, was able to share her knowledge with Barbara and set her several tasks to do during her stay.

#### **Kay and Bernadette**

This was Kay's second visit - her first in 2009 and she was amazed how much has changed at the school for the better! Bishop Willigers was just a one brick high outline in a field last time she was there and now



they are 100 pupils learning to UCE (GCSE). She and Bernadette helped Evelyn the new Librarian rearrange the library. They did lots of fun activities with the children, and of course lots of reading. Kay is now an Ambassador for the charity.

### **23 February 2015 - VISIT FROM THE DENTIST!**

Following on from the success of the 4 day visit from the UK of the 14 man Dentaaid team in September 2013 we have been unsuccessful in finding a local Ugandan dentist who was prepared to come to the school once a term to treat the staff/girls and to run workshops for the whole school about the importance of brushing their teeth. However, Barbara Koffman, the Dentaaid coordinator, introduced us to Ryan Shinska. He is an American Dentist - a Christian who has been called to serve the poor in Uganda. He lives and works in Jinja about 2 hours away, but comes up with his team of dental nurses once a term to treat the girls who are suffering. At the end of the clinic the nurses talk to the pupils and staff about good practices and demonstrate how to brush correctly. There is still some way to go to say that we have turned the corner and all the girls brush their teeth properly twice a day.

There are still girls who do not have a toothbrush and many parents buy the cheapest toothpaste with no fluoride. Of course there is much relief from the girls that Ryan uses anaesthetic, and although no one likes a visit to the Dentist, the alternative is normally NO anaesthetic and a pair of pliers — so the staff and pupils rather look forward to the “Visit from the Dentist”!

### **24th February 2015—ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **The Library**

Our first professional Librarian was appointed at the end of July, Evelyn. She is a young graduate (Librarianship) and already has improved not only the lay out and cataloguing of the library but also she has been the driving force behind a “Reading Tent” for the end of term activities, a Library Club, a Reading Committee and a Debating Society. These have been massively appreciated by the girls who enjoy their books and these activities. More girls are reading independently now and even the very few boys have been enjoying this. She is very glamorous and motivated an inspiration and role model to the girls.

#### **Animals, Gardens and Grounds**

We have provided micro-finance for a poultry project which got underway this year. There are about 120 chickens some of which lay and some do not. The cattle, goats and pigs all seem to be doing well.

The gardens are very productive with vegetables and fruit, especially aubergines, tomatoes, cabbage and carrots. Erina (the School Farm Manager) must take credit for this as the girls now have fresh vegetables in their diet on a regular basis and this better nutrition has been commented on by the school nurse who has seen the benefit. The garden however is non —productive in the dry season and has to be protected from raiding animals! The Moringa plants are a great success and now every child had the powder added to their diet. It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm for this.

The grounds are tidier, there is a dedicated pit for the burning of waste, somewhere to recycle and plastic recycling bins.

#### **Sick Bay**

Jude is continuing to work very hard, and is succeeding in helping out with many health issues. He is seeing an overall improvement in the general health of the girls under his care, due in part to the better

diet, an understanding of the importance of hydration and the malaria testing kits being effective. In addition the many relatively minor, and indeed major, health problems he can diagnose and treat. February saw a much needed first ever visit by a dentist. We have arranged for this to continue termly.

### **Needs for 2015**

Completion of the partly finished teachers' washroom

Building a Dormitory for the 13 boys who share one small dilapidated room with only 10 beds, so 6 of them double up.

Renovating the Girls' Dormitories which were built in the 1960's and since then have only received a coat of paint. Their overall condition is very poor indeed.

Get running water to the Sick Bay

More learning and tuition for Erina in managing the school garden

Continue emphasising the importance of hand washing, rubbish collection and hydration

Keep providing the funding for the lunch feeding programme at Bishops Willigers (100 pupils)

Bishops Willigers Secondary School is incomplete in its buildings. It has a shell of an unfinished classroom block and in the main building the floor is a dirt floor.

Whether any of these at all can be achieved is unsure with so many other matters competing for available funding/finance.

### **16th February 2015 - THANK YOU**

Without our supporters and regular givers we would not be able to feed the 400 day girls or support the growing number of orphans at the school. We are deeply indebted to so many generous individuals, to the Rotary Club of Morryston South Wales, to the members and congregations of St. Thomas More Church & St. Mary's Church both of Marlborough, Holy Family Church in Pewsey, St. Michael's Without of Bath and to St. Francis School Pewsey, Horris Hill Newbury, Monkton Combe Prep School Bath and Marlborough College.

We also are hugely grateful to Dauntseys School at Devizes who (the whole school) voted St. Michael's as their school charity of the year for 2014. Dauntsey pupils raised money in many various and imaginative ways throughout the year. Some also took part in the famous annual Devizes to Westminster canoe race over the Easter holiday, as they always do, but this year all sponsorship raised went to their yearly fund raiser for our charity. The amount realised was fantastic, humbling and startling. So many people, boys and girls and parents and friends prepared to put themselves out, and in the case of the canoeists suffer no little hardship and pain. At the year-end just over £22,000 was raised which is a wonderful sum which we will put towards helping St. Michaels, the pupils and the local community. In October 2014 Vicki Beach was presented with the cheque during a special Assembly at Dauntseys. Because of our link with Dauntseys we were very pleased that Emma McFarland (daughter of Mark McFarland, Second Master of the school) went out with Mary, Lizzie and Tom in May 2014 and indeed stayed on at St. Michaels after the others went home. It really was wonderful to be able to have that connection with Dauntseys out in Uganda as a reality.

Not only have there been generous financial donations but also clothes and shoes not to mention books, educational equipment and pens, pencils and paper. A very special mention is for **Labaid** — a charity that donated a large quantity of science equipment which all went out to the school in March 2013. Prior to that they had nothing for practical science lessons! Nothing at all. Also a big thank you to everyone who has donated a laptop or other computer related equipment, and to Tom Dilley for the many second hand sewing machines which have been taken out and are now used by the seamstress and the girls themselves.

A massive thank you to everyone who supports our projects.

### **15th November 2013 - TRUSTEE VISIT - Fiona**

My 10th visit to St. Michael's, Uganda — August 2013

It is always hard to summarise my visits to Uganda in only a few words, for even though | have been going to the school for over ten years now, each visit is different.

This visit was made special as | travelled with a friend, Stuart Beech for the first week. It was his first visit to rural Uganda. Only being able to spend a week at the school, he was thrown into the deep end, but you would have thought he had been there a hundred times by the way that he slotted into the community straight away.

He was the perfect companion and is already planning his next visit in 2014.

| stayed at the school for 4 weeks in total, overseeing various projects at the school as well as starting new projects.

Thanks to the team at British Airways, | was able to take a staggering 20 suitcases with me to Uganda, full of clothes for the orphans, as well as science equipment, tennis balls, racquets, art materials and a hand sewing machine all of which were received with grateful thanks & greatly appreciated.

The BA event hosted in June 2013 raised £1200. All of this money was well spent during the visit — overseen by Stuart who brought the money with him, he is a pilot with BA.

- 1) Mosquito screen for the windows of the two small boys bedrooms, where 14 boys currently sleep
- 2) Repainting of the bedrooms
- 3) Matting for the boys bedroom
- 4) Building a wash area for the boys
- 5) Planting Moringa Trees
- 6) Phase 1 of the building of the Assembly Stage

Stuart felt keenly that the BA funds should be used towards specific needs that FSMU were not able to fund. Although there are only a few boys their accommodation was in great need of renovation, the conditions were not good and so some funds were used to improve this. Moringa trees were also bought & planted. It is known as “the Miracle Tree” because of the amazing properties of its tiny leaves, namely 7

x the amount of vitamin C of an orange, 4 x vitamin A of a carrot, 4 x the calcium of milk, 3 x the Potassium of a banana and 2 x the protein of yoghurt. If they grow well the idea will be to plant more.

Lastly at the request of the Headmistress and staff an Assembly area was started, somewhere for performances, for assemblies and so on. Phase 1 was completed.

The purpose of my trip on behalf of the charity was to start, encourage or set up various projects on behalf of Friends of St. Michaels. The following was achieved:

#### **The Volunteers House**

Buy and install matting on the house floor

Building a secure wall around the garden

Renovation of the wash area

#### **The School Lunch Feeding Programme**

Setting up a new feeding programme at Bishop Willigers (the senior school linked to St Michael's) feeding the 95 children

Enabling Jude the school nurse to run a Health Seminar for all the members of staff at St Michael's

#### **The staff room**

Noticeboards for the Staff Room, School Medical Centre and Headmistress; Office

Repainting the staff room

Building pigeon holes in the Staff Room

As always it was fun and memorable. There is so much to do and never enough time to do it in.

### **14th November 2014 - MARY MORRISON (TRUSTEE) VISIT—SHARING AND LEARNING**

My first visit to Uganda in March 2013 with Vicki, Marian Marlow & Matthew and Rosemary Devlin was a truly memorable experience which began as we flew in to Entebbe close to midnight, with dramatic flashes of lightning and driving rain clearly visible out of the plane windows! This was my first visit to an African country and I was looking forward to new and very different experiences and culture, including views of the countryside, unfamiliar sights, sounds and encounters with new faces and communities.

In encountering the school as a teacher, I knew that there would be much to experience and to learn and, whilst I had an expectation of being able to share some of my teaching skills and experience with my Ugandan colleagues at St Michael's, I was only too aware that a period of observation and reflection would be necessary first. The teachers would be likely to have their own practical constraints and ways of working which were likely to be quite different to my own and that any understanding of different learning abilities/ dyslexia was likely to be limited.

Spending time in the classrooms was remarkable for me in seeing the skills and dedication of teachers, very often faced with classes of well over one hundred pupils with very limited resources. The children

were disciplined and keen to learn and I realised that some of the more traditional teaching methods could serve many pupils well in these circumstances. However, as a dyslexia specialist, I also realised that those with learning differences may not be finding life so easy. There would be those who may not be able to see the blackboard, remember instructions, absorb information or read, write and spell efficiently.

It was possible to meet with the teachers on two occasions as a group, having previously sat in on classes for all the different grades (P1 — P7). We touched on aspects of literacy, teaching and learning and I was able to share some resources which were taken away for later discussion. The teachers seemed to find these interesting and useful and I briefly shared my observations and ideas with them. As a consequence of this, I was asked if I could stay on a little longer to continue the discussions. Whilst this wasn't to be possible, it did plant the seed of plans for a return visit.

In November 2013, I will have arrived in the school once more, hopefully with three other companions, two experienced teaching assistants and a psychologist. We plan to lead some teacher workshops which will focus on the area of literacy development as well as spending time with some of the pupils who have been identified as being in need of extra support. We hope that it may be possible to train a member of staff to continue with this work and then for one or other of us to return at intervals in order to help to maintain this initiative..... I can't wait!

### **13th November 2013—STUART BEECH'S VISIT (BA PILOT)**

Some thoughts on Leaving St. Michaels after my stay - August 2013

Some great lessons have been learnt while visiting St Michaels Uganda! One that stands out the most and provides me with clarity is the purpose of life! It seems these wonderful people live life for each day and don't worry about what's in store for them tomorrow, let alone at the end of the week! I think this is one of the main factors to why I feel unhappy living in a city that is so sought after and desired! I'm constantly worrying about future events and trying to over plan and compare to others, rather than enjoying the moment and the fruits of life that it brings, hence not being satisfied! I have learnt that just being around people you care for does wonders for my mood and providing help and assistance satisfying my soul.

Music is probably one of the single most important and influential mechanisms to promote community spirit and being people together sharing a common language! The children adore playing, singing and listening to one another and are extremely supportive of all participants! It is for these reasons that I am becoming an Ambassador for St Michaels's to promote education, cultural experience and nutrition.

After about 10 months of interrupted research it has fallen into place that diet, nutrition and exercise play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of everyone! The Moringa tree will hopefully provide the children with a nutritional boost to increase their academic performance, and general health and wellbeing! It was fascinating to find that the school nurse Jude, had very similar ideas to myself upon arrival at the school. This in turn led to the creation of the Moringa project to farm and harvest the leaves and add them dried to the morning porridge! Father Peter also supported the use of Moringa for nutritional and medicinal purposes! He was quite inspirational and shared his knowledge and wisdom from many years of research and reading.

On a final note before tucking into my British Airways meal I just want to touch on the people of Uganda, well those in the rural east..... They are the most hospitable race I have ever had the pleasure of meeting! A people that operate as a family and a community showing nothing of jealousy or resentment, only love and hope. They are determined but need a little push from a western orientated mind to get

things done and ideas planted! Once seeded, the idea then becomes reality and the final product appreciated with whole hearted passion. I met some beautiful people with such positive and amazing outlooks on life in a place where technology is limited and life bearing fruits are in abundance! Nature is truly rewarding in Uganda, only if you know how to harvest it and use its resources properly.

We in the Western world seems to have lost touch with those natural interactions that I experienced in this beautiful county, we now rely far too heavily on technology and machinery to carry out perceived mundane tasks, that in Uganda make so many people content! We shouldn't lose touch with our origins as Mother Nature, in the end, will always have the final say! What a trip! Cannot wait to go back.

### **EASTER TRIP 2013—TWO TRUSTEES VISIT**

The Easter 2013 trip to the school was enjoyed by all 5 travellers of whom only Vicki Beach had been before. Her fellow trustee Matthew Devlin accompanied her along with his wife Rosemary, Marian Marlow and Mary Morrison. As always it was an eye opening experience for the new visitors, both humbling and joyful.

It was particularly good to see what had happened since the last visit 12 months ago. The fence surrounding the school is of high quality and is almost complete. There are now drinking stations and hand washing stations around the school which serve 2 purposes namely to ensure the girls can keep themselves hydrated and also can wash their hands when needed but particularly before meals. The rubbish situation is benefitting also from a more managed approach now - which was very necessary.

In the last year Jude (the nurse) has managed the sick bay Liz's Place and the medical issues with much skill and dedication. He has not administered any antibiotics without prescription in the last year! This is so good because throughout Africa there has been an over reliance on antibiotics for all sorts of minor ailments (and this was very prevalent at the school too) which has caused their beneficial effects to be diminished and other health issues to arise.

The malaria testing kits have proved absolutely priceless in detection and are a significant weapon in the fight against this terrible disease. When detected Jude uses the 3 day treatment course the charity funds. Both have had a major impact. It is good to report that another nurse has been found who is likely to join Jude in the sick bay to give him support and also free time!

There were trips to Jinja, Matthew visited the local community and of course the joy and excitement of Holy Week celebrated at the local church with Father Vincent hosting a party for parishioners to which we were all invited, a great time was had by all, clergy and lay alike. Sister Teo, what a remarkable woman, is having an orphanage built and we visited twice to see progress. She is very concerned at the fate of the many many orphans who have no family and who have been abandoned. We visited Bishops Willigers, the next door secondary school and met Kennedy, the Head.

Another of the highlights was Sports Day, complete with marching with brass band back from Busembatia and then the fun and competitions of the day. The school was at its best as always. Mary brought her teaching and dyslexia expertise with her, it was good to have a professionals view about what can/should be done. Improving the classroom experience and improving literacy were 2 of the most important.

The garden is now being cultivated by one of the teachers and there has been much planting and it is in a better shape, with tomatoes, aubergines, cabbages, mangoes, bananas to the fore. Importantly we are organising for Sister Teo, a teacher and a member of the local community to go on a 3 week organic cultivation course at Kasenge with the specific aim of training them to enable better use of the school

garden and land with the object of self sufficiency. The land has been underused and this is an opportunity for training and teaching so skills will be brought back to the school. The benefits can be immense. The animals we are pleased to say are thriving, the pigs had a litter born when we were there and 2 more litters due. The goats continue to thrive and reproduce and the cows are happy and produce their milk.

The school feeding programme continues to provide important nourishment; the school minibus now has a garage and Sister Josephine is settling in to her role as Headteacher, with assistance from Sister Teo who is now co-ordinator. It was reassuring to meet the school management committee and also the Governors of Bishops Willigers (development committee) to learn of their needs and to encourage.

As always our time sped by, we departed with some sadness but inspired by everyone we came into contact with and with our thoughts and ideas for the coming 12 months and beyond.

If you would like to be part of a future visit to the school then please contact us. There will be another trustee going out in July this year 2013.

### **28th February 2013—VISIT FROM ANDREW MUGABI—DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND HEAD OF ENGLISH**

In November and December 2012 Andrew Mugabi came to England for his first trip outside Uganda. He is Director of Studies and Head of English at St. Michaels and very much the right hand man to the Head Teacher. His trip was organised primarily to give him an insight into our education system with the aim of expanding his own knowledge to take back to the school and use it not only with the pupils but also the other staff members too.

Apart from the weather his trip was a great success. Coming from the tropics he brought no warm clothes or wet weather clothes with him. However these were supplied and by the end he was getting used to the wet and cold though not appreciating it!

He spent most of his time in Bath and Marlborough staying with various trustees. He was a guest at Marlborough College, had a 1 on 1 with the Head of Professional Development, some computer training and shadowed a teacher - all highly relevant. With them he went to Swindon Academy where he was most impressed by the IT facilities and the skills of the pupils there. He enjoyed 2 days at Horris Hill in Berkshire participating in all activities, drumming and sports and took lessons as well. From there he went to St. Francis School at Pewsey which is the British Council link school with St. Michael's. He had a full weeks programme organised by the Headmaster starting with the first lesson of the day and ending at the close of the day.

A trip was organised for him to see the sea, which he had never experienced before - the Bristol Channel in December! We took him 10 pin bowling, to a Bath rugby match, and to @Bristol which was a highlight for him seeing working technology old and modern and being able to participate and use it. There were many local excursions as well, and an invaluable dyslexia workshop with a specialist teacher to enable Andrew to have some knowledge of what it is and how it affects learning.

All in all a very inspiring time for him and for us as we saw things through his eyes and experience. Our hope is that what he learned will be a motivation to him and a really positive force within the school.

## **26th February 2013 EXAM RESULTS**

St. Michael's continued with its excellent examination record when the results came out in January. P7 (class Primary 7) achieved 24 Grade 1 results and 14 Grade 2 results. With these top grades any pupil will be able to go to a Secondary School of her choice - but only if her parents can/are willing to pay fees unless the pupil has secured a place in a rare state funded secondary school. As always it seems that the school excels in these examinations which are nation wide.

## **13th February 2013 "AN AMAZING SCHOOL RUN BY AMAZING PEOPLE"**

Name: Abby Duration of stay: 16 Days When: July 2012 Occupation in the UK: Teacher

The whole experience was amazing. At first it took me a while to adapt to the differences of live in a developing country, but the love and hospitality of the staff made this transition bearable and a fantastic experience. All of the teachers were lovely and conversed with us regularly, which was lovely. It was nice to discuss the differences between England and Uganda.

The pupils were lovely although some minor problems with discipline in relation to the children turning up/doing the work required when in the classes. As a majority it was lovely to teach them and have fun with them outside of the classroom when they were not studying. I enjoyed sewing with them and doing arts/crafts and sports.

It was lovely to be invited to experience their daily living also, for example helping with supper and going to the gardens. The children were very protective of us and would carry our things at any opportunity if we would have allowed it!

When we were in the gardens they were reluctant to allow us to help in case we hurt ourselves - it was nice to be so looked after and respected in this way. All of the staff and children were friendly and looked after us well which led to it being a very positive experience.

The suggestions we made and resources we took out were gratefully received and incorporated where it was possible. This made me feel very valued. It was lovely to spend time with all members of the school and be included with daily runnings of the school.

I am already planning another visit in 2014 with friends!