



Newsletter

Second Term, 2004



Board of Trustees Meet at Bana ba Metsi on the 4th of June, 2004
(Seated, left to right) Barbara Mogae, First Lady; Quill Hermans, Chairperson.
(Standing) Steven Harpt; Jennifer Egner, Secretary; Oliver Groth; Malcolm Thomas; Bosi Mpuchane, District Officer; David Tregilges, Vice Chairperson.

Update, August 2004

As you can see from the photo above, the School was graced with the presence of the members of Moremogolo Trust. The Trust was set up in 1999 to receive and disburse funds to programmes which support and assist youth at risk. To date we have only been able to fund Bana ba Metsi School but, if sufficient money becomes available, other schools or centres could be established. The meeting was a memorable occasion since it was the first

time Barbara Mogae, Botswana's First Lady, visited the School as a new member of the Board of Trustees. Our thanks go to her for lifting our spirits. I know the boys really appreciated meeting her. And to the rest of the members, thank you for coming again. May all your efforts be fruitful. Like a sign on the road out of town, we hope you enjoyed your stay.

I have a pet theory that nothing is ever so bad that it can't get worse. In the last issue of this Newsletter I reported that several of our new students were keen on stealing. Money is always the first target, pocket knives, small radios and cameras come a close second. From there they move on to things they have never seen before or mistake for something else, such as a disposable camera. Imagine the surprise they will get when they find out all they have stolen was a set of photos of a volunteer's holiday. A GPS looks vaguely like a cell phone. I can just see the little gears working in the boy's head: "WOW, look at *this* fancy phone". And then it probably gets sold for a pittance, if at all. In the last Newsletter I explained how we had tried to fool the boys into thinking we were leaving at the end of the term without a search and then searched outside the gate on the football pitch after they had packed everything and were in the truck. I went on to report that nothing was found, partly because it was all done in a hurry since it started to rain. This term, in the bushes where I made the right turn to the football pitch, one of the volunteer's short wave radios was found, trodden on by cattle and unusable.

The problem of theft didn't go away during the second term. Two new boys who had been referred to us by the courts for house-breaking managed to get into my house and found a fair amount of money. They then encouraged 2 other naughty boys to join them on a holiday trip to Maun, stopping along the way to have a few parties. When the 2 boys from Palapye, in the eastern part of Botswana, arrived home they must have thought that being a thief was an easy way to make a living but were promptly arrested. We will only know whether they return after the court case.

In the first term we had one boy who tried unsuccessfully to drive off in my car but did succeed in getting my motorcycle to the gate before realising that it was more difficult to ride than a bicycle. During the second term we accepted a boy from Gaborone who had quite a lengthy record. Yes, the keys are taken out of the vehicles when not in use, but if you reverse the car to the brickyard you would think you could collect a load of bricks without problems. The new boy was quite bold however, and after the staff member and the rest of the boys had gotten out of the car, he got in. I was away at the time and only heard later that he seems to know how to drive, given the distance he travelled (with the whole school running behind the car) and the way he brought it to a halt near the library.

July is the month we are visited by UK students on their "gap year". One of the groups had a "boy", named Anthony, who was well over 2 metres. At the right is a picture of him, and our smallest student, who also happens to be the boy who took a tour of the school yard in my car. (Hard to believe he could see over the dashboard or reach



the clutch.) Getting back to the tall one, all the UK students played our boys in a football match one afternoon. I was playing goalie since I wasn't up for running around in the heavy sand. At halftime we were losing 5 - 0 so, having realised that I wasn't the right person to have guarding the goal, I headed for the bench. Anthony was playing defence and came up with quite an effective strategy. Whenever our boys were on the attack he would charge at the boy with the ball, waving his arms and roaring like a lion. It was quite funny to see how well it worked.

July is also the month that we have a 4-day weekend, right in the middle of the school term. The best place for a group of boys like ours under those circumstances is an island, and 2 friends of mine, Chris and Mark Harbour, obliged by allowing us to visit them. They are in the process of starting a campsite on an island about 70 km's by road from the School. We had a bit of trouble in the last couple of kilometres because of the sand, but that isn't such a problem when you have 42 boys in the truck. After letting some air out of the tyres and a bit of pushing we reached the river and travelled the very last kilometre to the island in their very small boat. With 42 boys and 6 staff members, we had a fair amount of luggage, but nothing that 8 trips in the boat couldn't move. Since the behaviour of the students was exemplary (they were the proverbial pigs in mud), we have been invited to visit anytime we want. Thank you Chris and Mark.

Every year we get 2 volunteers from a programme called Project Trust. They arrive in September and leave in August. I would like to thank our latest pair, David Graham and Will Conder, for their dedication to the School. What they lacked in skills they made up for in enthusiasm. An ex-volunteer, Ivar Milligan, spent nearly 2 months with us in July, having used his own money to travel from Scotland to do some work here. He is the kind of volunteer I like, a farm boy with an abundance of practical skills. Another lad, Dan Bruestle, spent 3 months with us. He and his father Art, a long-time supporter of the School, visited us in June. When Art left he forgot to take Dan along. As it turned out, Dan was one of these very observant people who always seemed to know what the boys were up to. I have this feeling he will be a detective when he finishes school. Soon after he arrived we were putting gum poles in the ground for a staff house and I asked him if he thought he could get them in straight. He said he was sure he could do it because at home he is the one who puts up the Christmas tree. Our thanks to all those who have volunteered at Bana ba Metsi School.



Will, David and Ivar

Swimming races were held in the pool donated by the German Development Service, and school records were set in all categories. This could, I suppose, be expected since it was the first time we held the races. The top swimmer was Kesego Tiro. I would like to thank the GDS again for the most refreshing donation we have ever received. Dive in when it is 42° C (108° F) and you go "aaaaaahhhhhh".

Focus on Funding

Since we had a successful term in the fund-raising department, this section is rather long. What better way to begin than with the longest cheque. First National Bank has helped us in the past with a very large donation of P180,000 in 2002 which kept us afloat for nearly a year. They have now followed that up with another generous donation of P250,000 to be paid out over 5 years. FNB is well-known in Botswana for their community assistance programme,



and on behalf of all of us involved with Bana ba Metsi School, our sincere appreciation for your continuing support. The man at the right of the photo is the most accessible bank manager I have ever worked with, Mark Rijntjes. Two points for you if you can pronounce his surname. Thanks for your support Mark!

Other cash donations were received from a wide range of people. Prince William gave us a very nice donation, but for some reason I am not allowed to say how much it was. Martin Flattery, feeling sorry for our sorry financial situation popped out P10,000 which got us through the month of June. Two school friends of mine, Terry and Randy Romenesko, sent me \$1500. They have lived in Nome, Alaska, almost as long as I have been in Botswana. I visited them on one occasion and would highly recommend it. Thanks to all of you.

As mentioned in a previous Newsletter, John and Rosemary Cox, who have raised a substantial amount of money for the School since we opened in 2000, were due to visit. They finally made it in July and I enjoyed greatly meeting them. They came with Rosemary's brother, Richard Arden, who worked at the British High Commission in Botswana when we started and was instrumental in getting us off the ground. Always on the look-out for funds, John and Rosemary arrived with £100 from a relative of theirs, Ruth Coward. Forge on J & R, our thoughts are with you. During their visit Richard was moved to donate \$100. I promise I will make an effort to see your band in Lusaka. And to the British High Commission, thanks again to all of you for your continuing support of the School.

Continuing with this terms long list of contributors, Art Bruestle, who regularly donates even when his son isn't here, sent us \$400. Art also has a plan or two up his sleeve since he genuinely wants to help us. We also have Mr. and Mrs. Thompson-Bailey from Scotland who have sent two £100 pound instalments. Thanks go to both of you, and to Ivar for introducing them to Bana ba Metsi School. Mr. and Mrs. Hardie from the US, who visited the School with an old friend, Janet Hermans, forwarded \$100, and a friend from London, John Bryson, sent us £50. Closer to home, Brijesh Vora from Maun popped out P200 and has promised us a discount at his hardware store, A to Z. I love hardware stores!

On a sadder note, Francine and Goggins Markides, long-standing friends of mine here in Botswana, lost their son Daniel in a motorcycle accident. Being a keen biker myself I could sympathise with what they were going through. All of us who ride do it for the freedom it provides and know that we could come short. So, while it is small consolation, at least he died

doing what he loved. As I write this there is a tear in my eye. The memorial fund for Daniel's funeral amounted to P1550 and was donated to Bana ba Metsi School. Subsequently, Anders Lavik sent P5000 in Daniel's memory and Francine dug up \$130 from some American friends of hers. My compliments to all of you for doing something for disadvantaged children in your time of sorrow.

Around the same time I was sad to hear that my Grandmother, Margaret Kowalski, had passed away. She at least had the advantage of living a full life, passing away in her sleep at the age of 96. Being one of the most peaceful people I ever met, I have no doubt she will go where the good people go, wherever that may be. Some of the money from her memorial fund (\$100) was donated to the School, along with \$50 from my Aunt Jane Warren and \$100 from Father Paul Demuth who conducted the funeral. May she rest in peace.

And in Conclusion . . .

I have been getting quite a bit of mileage out of some old photographs of myself and members of my family. But, it is now "time up" for this particular regular feature of the Newsletter. At the right is a picture which brings me up-to-date, taken on my annual pans trip in August this year. My good friend Ollie, who is also a member of the Board of Trustees, was the photographer (see his shadow?). Both of us are addicted to the peace and tranquillity we find there. For 8 days we travelled over 600 km's, mostly on the pans themselves, sleeping wherever we ended up at sunset. The view beyond my motorcycle is of Sua Pan, looking north from the southern "shore".



I am now going to try to put the final full stop on this issue. It is late at night, the generator is off, my computer screen is covered with insects, and the third term is coming to an end. (Remember, this is the second term Newsletter.) Enough is enough, right?

Steven Harpt
Director.

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August, 2004
Private Bag 06, Shakawe.
Tel: 72 437948
E-mail: banabametsi@info.bw
Web Page: www.banabametsi.org