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### Visit to Uganda February 2009

We visited our schools in Uganda during the first week in February 2009. There were 10 in the group including new trustee Chris Bishop and his son William, Charlotte Brinsley, Matthew Houghton, Jonathan Mount, Mike and Jean Oglesby, Denise Ead and Catherine Gregson. Fr. John came back from Kenya for the visit and Fr. Francis who had just completed a period in USA was also there with us. We were looked after by the Sisters at Gogonya Convent and were able to see the start of term, the start of the new Secondary School at Mubende and the official opening of Good Shepherd at Fort Portal. Once again we met the parents children and community leaders and were able to find out what they felt was most important for the future.



### Our Schools

We are now supporting the two Primary Schools, St. Zoe's with 340 children and St. Kizito's with 470. Our third school, Good Shepherd school for Special needs children opened on September 8th and now has over 30 children. The new Secondary school at St. Zoe's opened on February 2nd with 30 children enrolled but we expect to have about 60 this term. We also visited the PMM Girls Secondary school at Jinja (famous for being the source of the Nile)



### St. Zoe's

Our arrival coincided with the start of the new term for 2009. In Uganda the children have their long holiday at Christmas time. So parents were arriving to register their children many for the first time. We got to the school very early and in time to see Assembly with the singing of the Uganda National Anthem and the School Song. The Uganda Flag is then raised up the flagpole and the day begins. Boarders have been up from 6.00 to have a wash and breakfast.

### St. Kizito's

We arrived on a Sunday and out of term time but several hundred children arrived to meet us. The welcome was amazing. Matthew had brought football shirts for all the boys and girls and every child got one. Then the football coaching started and this is Matthew's speciality. He had a great time but the children had an even better one.



## Good Shepherd

We arrived in Fort Portal on February 4th which is just 11 months after the idea of starting to support the idea of a school for special needs children was first put to us by Sr. Theresa Abigaba who was in UK doing a Masters degree in the University. The last 12 months have been pretty hectic for her to get all this work designed and done and for all our supporters who have helped to raise nearly all the capital cost of the 6 classroom building as well as buy the land and establish the farm to provide the food for the children. The celebration and Grand official opening was a wonderful and moving experience. Lots of entertainment from the children and about 3 hours of speeches from all the dignitaries. Peter kicked off his rather short speech in Bunyoro language which soon dried up but caused great amusement. Lots of support promises were made and we are now reminding the officials and trying to collect them. The children who attend are those with the more simple needs and learning disabilities are a main group.

Radio coverage of the event was very widespread and we met people 100 miles away who had heard about Good Shepherd.. This is a first in Western Uganda and over the next few years we plan to build the remainder of the buildings.

## Future Plans

**St. Kizito's** has done well in its first year taking the Primary School end of term examinations and is recognized by the villagers as one of the best primary schools in the area. But there is much to be done and we felt that attention to the quality and appearance of the buildings was not what it should be. Lack of money is part of the problem and we have asked the teachers and staff to develop a plan and let us have it. We will provide between £3000 and £4000 this year if we see a really good and well thought out plan. But it must have local ownership and not be 'what we tell them'.

## Good Shepherd

Now that the school is open we have concentrated on finding some ideas which help to make it self sustaining with our funding assisting with capital items. We have two corporate sponsors (Swire and Oglesby Charitable Trusts) and we made the decision to fund the purchase of a pickup truck which the sisters could use for rental. We looked at the success of this idea at St. Zoe's' and at another venture in Fort Portal and although in its early days it looks promising. We have managed to reach about 70% of the annual running costs by these means and are seeking others. Already parents are feeling very happy about the school and are making some payment to their children. We made it our ambition that the school would be really well built and attractive and this is impressing everyone.

Future developments are to enhance the teaching aids, to build a proper toilet and kitchen block and to start thinking about guest accommodation for volunteer workers.

## At St. Zoe's

After consultation with the elected leaders and community we decided that this is the main priority. A rapid start was made by the villagers and during our visit we met the first 30 children who started their secondary education at St. Zoe's on February 2nd 2009. Borrowed and rented buildings are being used but we had a ceremonial 'cutting of the first sod of earth' while we were there and we expect a 3 classroom building to be ready by late May this year. The school will deliver the normal Uganda curriculum but we have decided to focus very strongly on vocational skills and therefore the campus which includes St. Zoe's primary and Secondary Schools will

be called the Kagoma Education Development Centre. The campus is about 70 acres and we have decided that we probably need to increase this to over 100 in order to develop the farming capacity properly. This has become much more practical now we have been able to use a rented bulldozer and create what will be a substantial reservoir at the bottom of the site. Plans for the Secondary School have been completed but we are now looking at the best models for setting up a Vocational Institute over the next 5 years of so. The reason this is important is very much like in UK. If we can equip young people with really practical life skills then they are that much more able to create a livelihood and not have to expect that some employer will create one for them. We have had two benefactors make substantial gifts to equip our school library and the Oglesby Trust will be helping to fund computers and the development of professional financial management for the campus, to help refurbish the Primary School and to assist with the funding of the Vocational Centre.

During the next few months we will be registering a Ugandan Non Governmental Organization (an NGO) which will be a registered charity and will hold the land and buildings title to the campus. The NGO will have perhaps two respected Ugandan Non Executive Trustees one of whom may be the local Chairman.

Below is a picture of Good Shepherd Special needs School in February 2009.

HUGs completed the financial year in December and raised over £69,000 for our schools thanks to all our supporters.

All your money goes to Uganda and for the schools and you are all making really great impact on the lives of so many.

Sine we started in 1995 we have raised over £205,000 and have made a good start in 2009. If each supporter could find just one more that would be wonderful. Our web site has details and standing order forms

