

A Report from Richard Dean in Juba July 2011

The outward journey went smoothly. We flew from LHR overnight to Nairobi, waited 6 hrs in Nairobi, and flew on to Juba, arriving at 3 p.m. where we were warmly welcomed by the Headmaster Philip and Deputy Head, Robert and others. We had been concerned for our luggage. With all the scientific equipment being transported we were up to the very maximum limit, 50 kilos each, but the man at Kenya Airways check in was sympathetic and helped us to get it through without any excess baggage charge. The total load for the five of us was 250 kilos, a quarter of a ton!

At Juba we were concerned about passing these cases through customs – with a new camera and computer to replace those stolen from the school in the armed robbery, plus chemical substances and other valuable equipment. Once again, the Lord was with us, all these things were being taken as ‘gifts’ to the Sudanese people, our actions were just, and the Lord honoured this with nothing to pay.

The petrol shortage in Juba has eased and there were three vehicles to take us to the church guest house. We drove through a town resplendent with new South Sudan multi-coloured flag, raised for the first time on 9 July now hanging from every building and pole. There is a huge sense of joy at this new found freedom. Everyone you meet, after thanking you for coming, wants to talk about independence.

Our accommodation at the church guest house though not quite like the Juba Grand Hotel, is quite Ok. Mosquitoes are a problem, but we sleep under nets, and are faithfully taking our anti-malarial tablet each day. Bishop Hillary Garang, as old friend who has visited Corsley, told me that since arriving in Juba a week ago, his symptoms of malaria have re-surfaced. He mentioned how good honey is as an antidote and I was able to give him a jar of Corsey honey!

Friday at the school was our Day of Preparation for the workshop. The day started at 8.15 with Assembly – 370 students standing in rows in the early morning sunshine. A member of the vibrant school scripture union group led the singing and prayers and another gave ‘news’ items, focusing on the Independence event. (The school now has Boy Scout and Girl Guide ‘troops’, meeting each Saturday morning, and these ‘troops’ were part of the Independence parade in their smart new uniforms.) I then introduced our team and explained the huge importance of science education for the future of South Sudan. I also presented the new camera, paid for by members of Corsley and Chapmanslade Church, and David Richardson presented the new Net-Book computer. These gifts replaced the items stolen in the Armed Robbery on 23 June, and were a tangible reminder that good will triumph over evil, that God will have the last word.

After our busy day of preparation on Friday we were invited to join the teachers, to celebrate the excellent school certificate results; all 60, final year students had passed, with an average of over 50% in the 8 subjects taken. The top student gained 69% and he will be awarded the Salisbury Cup at the school prize giving on 15th October. His name is Tok Maker Kuot (and he was in the science class!) We drove from the school to the ‘Star Inn’, a mile away on the banks of the River Nile, one of the many hotels built since peace came in 2005. It was such a happy atmosphere – the 14 teachers all being so proud that their efforts had been rewarded with such excellent results. They also greatly

appreciated being able to talk to the four teachers from England. There was a little boat at the hotel and they offered to take a group of 8 for a half an hour trip around one of the islands. This turned out to be quite an adventure. Not quite like the 'Yangtse Incident' in 1948 but I think we shall look back on this as the 'Nile Incident' of 2011 ! We praise God, as with HMS 'Amethyst', for a safe and happy outcome.

Mike Hackston led our morning prayers around the breakfast table on Saturday. We looked at Hebrews chapter 13 verses 5,6, & 13 – 'The Lord is with us'; 'The Lord is our helper'; 'We look for a city to come'. The team then went down to the market to buy some last-minute items for the workshop. On Sunday morning we all went to church; George Blake and I went to Gosene whom we were asked to 'bring greetings' and to speak during the 2 hour service.

The science teachers have begun to arrive for the Workshop, twenty out of thirty taking all day to travel to Juba by bus. We will have the opening ceremony at 8.30 tomorrow morning with the press in attendance. We have been warned that our number may increase, once the word gets around!

Teachers for the workshop began arriving on Sunday afternoon and we have 26, including one lady. We are so grateful to God that they have come. 17 staying in the dormitories in Bishop Gwynne college, and 9 coming in daily from Juba schools. The official opening took place promptly. Mr Amos Lugari, Director of Quality Promotion at the Ministry of Education, gave an inspirational speech. He started by saying: 'I would like to thank the Heavenly Father for the gift of this week, the gift of this training.. When I sit in my chair, I think: "How can we get better results?" Science is universal and the gift of this course has come at a time of need!' The press were present and in the evening there was a full item on National TV, with part of Amos Lugari's speech and part of mine, and film of the three visitors from the Ministry of Education connecting up some electric circuits. These circuits were part of the physics kit, that David had arranged to be brought from Rwanda. It was brought from Kampala by MAF, thanks to Margaret Griffin's networking!

We discovered that the Sudanese teachers generally teach Physics and Maths together, or Chemistry and Biology together. They are all so eager to learn about the equipment so they can use it. The Chemistry teachers are proudly wearing their white lab coats, given to us by Esther-Rose and Bath University. In the lesson before lunch the teachers all went across to the school, where they took a class and got the students to handle the equipment for themselves. It is a revolutionary concept here, but: 'If you only hear it, you forget; if you see it you remember for a while; if you do it, you never forget'. One of the principles of the workshop is to introduce the teachers to as many apparatus and substances that can be acquired, or made up locally. Mike Harkston is using Play Dough to demonstrate the structure and formation of cells. He bought some local flour in the market on Saturday, to show them how Play Dough can be made up.

On Tuesday morning we were shocked to receive a 'letter of complaint' from the teachers about the standard of their accommodation. What they wrote was quite legitimate. There was no water in the showers or toilets – only a nearby tap; they had no soap or towels as promised; breakfast was not served on time and there was no bottled drinking water; the main meals were meager. David Richardson and I have done all we can to rectify this. Last

night we took 15 of them out to a chicken and chips supper; we had a happy time together. We have bought soaps and are providing the drinking water, though they still have to use the outside tap for water in the bathroom. They are now content.

I have met with Lawrence, the night watchman who was injured in the armed robbery. He is an older man, perhaps 60. He showed me the scars on his forehead and arm, which seem to have healed well. I was able to give him a small monetary gift, donated into my 'discretionary fund' by some of you in Corsley and Chapmanslade. Thank you.

I have also met with Charlie Goldsmith, who first came out to Juba in 2006, when he lived in a tent! Charlie was crucial to the establishment of the school. He is now married and heading up his own consultancy firm here. We 'happened to meet' on the road, when he was out jogging! God's appointment. He kindly invited us all to a reception at his office on Monday evening. A real treat.

Our team has been remarkably united. Eddie and Mike have taught together at a Zambian school.. They love Africa, and are like two excited little boys with the flora and fauna. I picked up a white egg shell – Eddie said straight away: it's a Namaqua dove's egg! David and Gerry, are close friends, having worked on projects together for the Institute of Physics. David returns to UK today. We shall miss him during our final two days.

I am grateful to Samuel Smiles Abraham, an Indian Christian with most delightful smiles, (who heads up in Juba a charity called Manna Microfinance), for typing these reports and sending them to Tom Dale.

I started writing this report by torchlight before dawn but was defeated by the mosquitoes and I climbed back under my net. We are at the beginning of the wet season here in Sudan but saw no rain until yesterday, when we had a torrential downpour from 3-7 p.m. The stream running alongside the Theological College, where the workshop is based, became a rushing torrent, carrying scores of empty plastic water bottles along in its wake. Temperatures in the classroom up till then had been 35 centigrade (95 Fahrenheit). Science teachers measure temperatures !

On Wednesday night we had supper with Nick Gardner, the 45 year old civil engineer from Salisbury, who is working for the UN as a project manager in road refurbishment. His present project is in the east of South Sudan, near the Ethiopian border and we were fascinated to hear tales of the swamps and wild life there. Nick masterminded getting the mains water connected at the School here and we were able to talk through the outstanding work.

We have also had the opportunity to make good progress on the Science room. Robert Hayward (from Sherborne), who is the Christian Aid Manager for Sudan, came down especially from Khartoum for a progress meeting whilst I am in Juba. (He had to fly via Nairobi as the North has cut off direct flights to Juba since Independence.) The Science Room building should be completed by mid-September. It is costing GBP35,000 of which Christian Aid is paying GBP22,000, Juba Church GBP1,000, with GBP12,000 required from the Support Group. Towards this we have raised about GBP3,000 so far; we have made the

need known in several directions, including Frome Community College who were so helpful in the original design. Please pray. The money is required by the end of September. Robert Hayward was also keen to see how the Workshop was progressing, and watched Gerry Blake, together with the Sudanese Physics teachers, showing a group of 3rd year Science students, how to launch a rocket, powered by compressed air from a bicycle pump. Robert also watched Mike Hackston teaching Form 2B about chromosomes in human reproduction; (46 is a magic number I learnt, 23 from the father and 23 from the mother!) Mike was using Play Dough to illustrate the division of the cells.

Robert said that it was when he heard that a Science workshop was being planned that he was convinced that Christian Aid money needed to be invested into building a Science Room, as this was strategic in the overall plan of raising science standards in South Sudan.

We start the workshop each day with prayers from 8.45 – 9.00 a.m., and are basing it on the profiles of men of science from the Bible. Yesterday it was Eddie Smith's turn to lead and he took the three wise men, who were not only astronomers but also understood the chemical properties of myrrh, an anti-septic used in embalming. He explained how most medicines come from natural products, but today these are synthesized in pharmaceutical laboratories to make them stronger and more targeted for human use. The teachers are overjoyed by all that they are learning. Today is our final day and in the evening we are taking them all out for a celebration 'chicken and chips' at a local Sudanese restaurant. (GBP4 per portion with a drink!). We ourselves were treated to supper last night in the Juba Diocese office. These were tureens of rice and stew, (which we ate African-style with our fingers!, and bananas. They are very generous to us.

I was asked by Lawrence, the teacher who co-ordinates the School Scripture Union group, if I would speak to one of the classes, and so I spoke for an hour to the 45 students in form 2A about Christian Marriage. One of things that spoils many marriages here is the difficulty they have in 'leaving and cleaving', (see Genesis 2:24). For financial reasons and because of tradition, a newly married couple start their marriage living with the bridegrooms' parents, who have unrealistic expectations of their daughter-in-law.. I believe there is a great need here for Christian marriage teaching in the Church.

Yesterday I met all the Year I students who have been selected to receive bursaries, and took their photos.

Today I am hoping to go through matter of financial control with the Headmaster, who has been away sick for 3 days, with a very nasty chest cough.

I want him to see a consultant privately and I am going to use some of the 'discretionary fund' to pay for this.

I am also hoping to discuss with the Ministry of Education a 'Memorandum of Understanding' about continuing the Science teacher training here for 2 more years, and setting up resource centres in Juba, Yei and Kajo-Keji, places which can be accessed by teachers from many of the secondary schools. I am also hoping to bring Miss Nakamura from the Japanese Embassy here to witness the training being carried out.

Please join us in giving thanks to God, for the way that he has led us and for all that we have been able to do. Anna made a special card which I brought with me, with the Scripture: 'May the Lord reward your work, and the wages be full from the Lord, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge' (Ruth 2:12). Our 'reward' has been the amazing gratitude we have received from all of our Sudanese brothers and sisters.

Thank you for your love and prayers.

We set out for home tomorrow. Once again, many thanks to you all.

Richard