

AUTUMN 2007

MAMIE MARTIN FUND

NEWS



'FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN MALAWI'

School partners meet in Malawi !

In June and July, groups of students and teachers from Balforn High School, Kinross High School and Falkirk High School set off to meet their partners in Malawi after nearly a year of preparation. One teacher from each Scottish school was funded by the Mamie Martin Fund, from its Scottish Government grant, to help establish long-term and sustainable partnerships, and one teacher from each school in Malawi will be equally funded upon their reciprocal visit in 2007-08.

Until the summer, the Scottish schools had been corresponding with Robert Laws Secondary School, Livingstonia Secondary School and Bandawe Girls Secondary School mainly by text messages and letters, but now they were finally going to meet the teachers and pupils in person, in what promised to be a life changing experience, particularly for the young Scots.

For all those involved, particularly the teachers, there had been a lot of preparation going on: not only to organise the programme and logistics (accommodation, transport, insurance, flights etc), but also for all participants to gain a deeper understanding of the history and culture

of Malawi, and prepare curriculum activities that would be undertaken jointly whilst in the host school.

There were presentations made by pupils on various aspects of the country (environment, health..), Malawian meals prepared and tasted, 'Malawi weeks' organised in the schools as well as pupil link groups; Tumbuka phrases had been learnt and awareness raised of the difficulties pupils face when going to secondary school in Malawi. But that was not all, the 3 groups from Balforn, Kinross and Falkirk also raised all the funds they needed for their visits, through concerts, ceilidhs, abseils, bake sales, calendar and card sales and also through applying for the British Council/ DFID Global Schools Partnership grants.

So when they set off this summer, they were well ready, even if the prospect of their visit filled them with trepidation and excitement. The visits they made fulfilled their promise: they not only deepened and embedded the partnerships with the Malawi schools, they also forged new friendships. **You can read all about those visits in detail on pages 2-4....**



Pupils in the MMF-supported schools achieve great results!

In July, Nicola Jones— MMF Committee member— undertook a governance visit of the 5 schools the fund has been supporting in Malawi. She had lengthy discussions with the Head Teachers and Staff about the needs of the schools and also about the many great achievements of their pupils. The results for 2006 were good, particularly for JCE (2nd year exam) where 94% passed the exam at ROLASS, 97% at LIVSS, 83% at KAGSS, 90% at EGSS and 87% at BAGSS! The MSCE (final year exam) results were slightly lower than the previous year, in line with national results, but still very good with a passing rate of 58% at

ROLASS, 61% at LIVSS, 78% at KAGSS [an outstanding result from the whole country], 60% at EGSS and 49% at BAGSS. At the time of the visit at least 26 pupils from the 5 schools were expected to succeed in the National University Entry exam, of whom a significant number were girls. **To read more about each school and also the girls' own words, turn to pages 5-7....**

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Falkirk High's visit to Bandawe Girls Secondary School

The three teachers from Falkirk HS who visited BAGSS described their experience as both unforgettable and hugely enjoyable. One of them, Neil, said *"I count those two weeks as the best in my life"*, and Claire- who was the teacher funded by MMF-found herself deeply affected and touched by many aspects of the visit and had the life-changing experience she had hoped for. As for Mariot Dallas, the third teacher- and Mamie Martin's granddaughter-the mixture of the personal and the professional experiences was very exciting. She declared feeling really welcome at Bandawe.

The party of three spent a week at BAGSS and were warmly welcomed by the school and community. They spent most of that time at the school where they met the staff and generally helped out, invigilating and marking exams. They spent a lot of time informally with the staff, talking about education and all sorts of things, but also talking to the girls, taking pictures, making recordings (some of the girls and staff used the camcorder to make films). They interviewed the girls and staff using the mp3 recorder.



One of the visiting teachers from Falkirk also taught a BAGSS lesson on HIV/AIDS to Form 4 and later to the whole school; they observed a Geography lesson and made preliminary plans to set up joint projects in English and Maths. They also met formally with Mrs Msowoya (HeadTeacher) and Mr Chimaliro, (Depute) to agree a joint statement on the schools partnership, which was signed at the farewell lunch.

They taught BAGSS Scottish dances and took part in sports and Malawian dancing on their last day! The Scottish dancing made a lasting impression as one of the BAGSS

teachers, Mrs Nyasulu, explained, as *"the girls really appreciated the good days they were with [the Falkirk HS teachers] especially the Scottish dance which they kept on practising until the day they left for their summer holiday."*



The Falkirk three also visited the historic site of Old Bandawe, with its big old church and the graves of early missionaries; Bandawe Primary School and McAlpine Primary School; the Orphanage established by Lizzie Banda; the new Chintheche Hospital; Nkhata Bay Hospital and the Education Offices in Nkhata Bay.

The partnership between the 2 schools benefited greatly from this visit. For the Falkirk visitors, meeting the staff was very valuable and there was real deep discussion. Mariot Dallas said *"The girls at BAGSS are full of energy and focus when they are in class and they have an inspiring attitude to their studies. Materially there are many needs, however there is strong and inspiring leadership and evidently clear prioritising and development planning at this school."* The Head Teacher at BAGSS, Mrs Msowoya, had just returned from a visit to Scotland in July -upon an invitation from Ayr Presbytery- and had greatly enjoyed the trip to *"smiling and welcoming Scotland"*. She had visited Falkirk High where a partnership ceremony had been held. So real mutual understanding was building up with Mrs Msowoya describing the partnership as one of *"mutual relationships rather than donor relationships"*, with a chance to compare teaching methods, observe learning, and use resources and

opportunities to learn about each other's culture. A return visit from another teacher at BAGSS is now planned for the end of 2007.



Kinross High's visit to Livingstonia Secondary School

Here is how the party of 5 (2 teachers and 3 pupils) from Kinross describe their visit to LIVSS:

"Brief it was. All too brief... It may not have been our lifetime's 15 minutes' quota of fame exactly, but we certainly were elevated to a platform far above our normal station in Scottish school life. So very pleasant, the attention; so touching, the gratitude for just having come, for just thinking about the people of Malawi; so uplifting and enabling, the admiration and uncritical friendliness. Malawi, a second home? No home was ever this harmonious and full of respect! Our welcoming group of staff and pupils had been preparing for weeks in advance – a programme had been drawn up, a staff house had been spruced up, local institutions had been informed – but they admitted they were half-expecting to be disappointed by our non-appearance. So the staff and pupils celebrated our arrival. A welcome meal was given in celebration of the forming of our school partnership. There was dancing and music and speeches and party pieces and a special "Partnership Dish" of banana and custard !

Our arrival to observe in the classrooms was celebrated: quick were the complaints if a class thought we might not be visiting them that day.



From those earlier observations, we had seen that lessons were very much "chalk and talk"; pupils did not participate to any great extent, although there were some very good lessons where students were kept on their toes by the teacher's keen questioning; student textbooks were not seen in any of the Maths lessons – exercises were copied from the blackboard. We aimed at giving the students a taste of some investigative Maths involving some physical activity, the gathering of information, and the

organizing of that information to allow analysis. Questionnaires were handed out that will be filled and compared in both schools to compare similarities and differences between learners. It was different. It was entertaining. And it was shortlived... As celebrity must be. Our status was maintained, possibly even enhanced, by the fact that we did not have to plough through the daily coursework and routine exercise that those in it for the long haul must champion. And possibly we were more changed by the Malawians' permanence than they were affected by our fleeting presence among them. In all the relationships we were exploring, there was so much for us to learn. We were celebrated as visitors with an afternoon of special entertainments laid on by the students. We were celebrated as friends with a "Leaving Party". And, finally, we were able to drop the celebrity, to swirl around in our mouths the many emotions which had stormed our tastebuds, and to spit out all those which would not stand the test of time. Carrying a resolve and a commitment, and daring to trust these two inner companions, we left as part of a new family.



"Celebrity" often gets a bad press. However, even now, we can find ourselves feeding from the scraps that continue to fall from the celebrants' table in a distant, dimly lit school hall, high on a mountain plateau in a place they call "Warm Heart". Thank you, Livingstonia, one and all! "



Balfron High's Visit to Robert Laws Secondary School

Balfron High's technical teacher on the visit remembers fondly arriving the first night at dusk. There was much activity in the already named "Balfron House". A cook was busily preparing a "traditional Malawian" chicken curry, the schools Mr Fix-it was repairing the balcony of the walk way out to the kitchen, the physical science teacher was rewiring a bulb in the living room with all the other lights on in the house, the head teacher and his deputy directing the hanging of mosquito nets from long pieces of string As darkness fell the sound of singing could be heard as a group of ROLASS girls visited, armed with things we needed. It wasn't long before I saw my team of eight staff on the edge of tears touched by the warmth of these people ... a sight that was to be often seen. As is always the case in Malawi the team of eight staff from Balfron High school were in no doubt as to how welcome they where in Embangweni and were soon made to "feel at home".



During the school day the Balfron staff planned, taught with and observed the ROLASS teachers. After hours they socialised with them and shared ideas about education, faith and life in general. A new tradition "tea under the tree" began. An opportunity for staff members to meet together and share ideas about teaching. The Balfron team ran sessions during prep time for pupils on problem solving (puzzles to most people!) debating, woodwork, music rugby. They hardly seemed to be at home! Though when they where, there was always a well cooked meal waiting for them and on some days even an enormous chocolate cake.

The visit to ROLASS was about building relationships between the schools. Relationships between individuals that were both personal and professional. Partnerships that will be carried on long into the future.

Neither school looks on this partnership as a short term event. Initially we will be working on curricular links, supporting access to the internet for ROLASS and looking forward to a group of 4 staff and 6 students from ROLASS visiting Balfron in June 2008. We can only hope that they will feel half as welcome as the staff and pupils from Balfron felt in Malawi.



One of the visiting pupils summarised the experience thus: *"It is very difficult to sum up my experience in Malawi in just a few paragraphs ... my most memorable experience in Malawi was when we were first introduced to the school in assembly. I remember walking from the guest house to the main hall and hearing the pupils singing. At this point my heart was in my throat and my whole body was shaking. As we entered the hall the singing stopped and every pupil turned their heads to look at us. We began to walk up the aisle towards the stage and as we got halfway along the whispering and giggling turned into singing once again. To be in the centre of such an occurrence was incredibly overwhelming and I was very close to tears. At this point I took Miss Jones' advice and looked up to stop myself from breaking down. To think that the pupils were so happy about our arrival that they felt the urge to erupt into song was incredibly emotional and this thought stayed with me throughout the trip For me being at home is feeling comfortable,*

at ease and loved and Malawi most certainly gave me that."



Latest News from the Schools in Northern Malawi

In July 2007, Nicola Jones, Mamie Martin Fund Committee Member, undertook a governance visit of the schools we work with in Malawi and also met our partners in the Education Department at the CCAP Livingstonia. Her overall impression was one of utter dedication and commitment on the part of the Synod and the schools. Everywhere she went, people expressed their thanks to MMF and all its donors and supporters for the direct help given to the girls to complete their education, as well as for the help in developing the infrastructure of each school. In each school, Nicola met the girls supported directly by MMF and heard from them about their schools, their needs and their hopes for the future (most aspire to become nurses or accountants, teachers or journalists and hope they will find some support to continue their schooling beyond secondary level.)

News from Karonga Girls Secondary School (KAGSS)

Nicola arrived at KAGSS in time to greet the girls for an assembly before exams began. The Head Teacher, Mr Phiri, and his epute led a tour of the school. There was a fantastic lunch and then much discussion with Mr Phiri; the day was concluded with a meal with staff in the school library.

KAGSS is still in need of more teachers, whom they find hard to attract or retain due to the lack of teachers houses at the school. That is why MMF—with funding from the Scottish Government and other donations—is helping build 2 new houses at KAGSS in 2007 (*pictured below*).



The girls continue to do well at netball and football, there is also a wildlife club, and AIDS awareness club, and a drama club at the

school. When they met Nicola, the girls had a list of things that MMF could help them with and they began with items for the school rather than for themselves. They had a good understanding of what the school required: a Home Economics lab, classrooms, a photocopier (as the duplicator is no longer working) amongst other things.

The girls were aware that there was no partnership yet set up between their school and a Scottish school, but were keen to be involved once a suitable and enthusiastic partner would be identified. They wanted to write letters, participate in exchange visits, have phone conversations, and exchange photos and gifts.

News from Ekwendeni Girls Secondary School (EGSS)

Nicola was welcomed to EGSS with a meal at Mrs Chibaka- the Head Teacher's-house . The following day she attended assembly , toured the school with Mrs Chibaka, met the staff for tea and met with some of the MMF girls (as some were still in exams or reading for them). There was a lunch at Helen Scott's house with some of the teachers and Rev Mvula , the Head of Station.

At EGSS, Nicola saw first-hand that the school was making good progress with its maintenance , and that the new pit latrines (*see below*), had been dug both for the classroom area and the hostels.



The school's extra curricular activities continue to include FAWEMA (Forum for African Women Educators in Malawi) as well as SCOM (student Christian organisation of Malawi), CIVITAS and science and drama clubs. The CIVITAS group which is a group that promotes civic education indeed recently won a national competition called "*Project Citizen Malawi*".

Mrs Chibaka explained that she and her staff looked forward to the school partnership with Williamwood High School (East Renfrewshire) allowing teachers to compare the education systems in Scotland and Malawi. Mr Chawinga -teacher of Biology at EGSS- had visited Scotland as part of a presbytery visit due to his connections at the church. He spent a day at Williamwood High School and did share his experiences with the staff at EKGSS. Mrs Chibaka had been invited to attend an assessment discussion of the twining of the presbyteries in Ekwenedni and felt that the school was being included in the wider partnership.

When asked about the school partnership, the MMF-supported girls said they were keen to have exchange visits of teachers and students, exchange photographs of daily life and learn about the culture in particular the kinds of food eaten in Scotland and the kinds of sports played.

Williamwood High themselves are building on the links that Williamwood Parish Church and the people of Clarkston already have with Malawi, and with Ekwendeni church, hospital and schools in particular. The spectacular new High School (at Eaglesham Road, Clarkston) is still in the early stages of the linking process with EGSS. We, at MMF, are delighted they have agreed to become involved and expect this relationship to flourish. So stay put for our next newsletter...

News from Robert Laws Secondary School (ROLASS)- also read p.4 about the visit!

As described on p.4, Nicola and the pupils and the teachers from Balfron High spent much time at the school. The MMF-supported girls were keen to visit Scotland and had clearly been enjoying the company of the students from Balfron!

But Nicola had also had some dedicated time with Mr Chirambo, the Head Teacher touring the school and chatting about life there.

ROLASS has a small maize mill and rears some pigs for income generation. The school garden has also much improved lately, the small stream has been partly dammed and irrigation channels dug through the school

garden (see below). The fish pond is also being cleared, there are already some small fish there, which Mr Chirambo hopes will make a nice addition to the school menu in the future!



As staff and pupils expressed, some of ROLASS' most pressing needs are for a functioning vehicle and for an extra hostel for the girls, whose dwellings are currently overcrowded.

News from Livingstonia Secondary School (LIVSS)- also read p.3 about the visit!

Upon her visit, Nicola attended assembly, undertook a tour of the school and met with staff over tea and a lunch. Mr Mzumara, the Head Teacher, with whom she spoke at length, expressed his intention to extend the school gardens for income generating activities as well as to plant a maize garden and buy more cattle to produce milk.

The foundations of the study room funded by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland had been built and Mr Mzumara was happy with the progress of the work. The space will be a flexible space (with desks and chairs), to allow, for example, the matron to address the girls (see below).



The MMF-supported girls had greatly enjoyed the visit by the group from Kinross and learnt many things

from them. Mr Mzumara hopes to start a project group for them, where they could learn skills for income generation and allow them to also help local orphan projects [e.g. knitting, crochet and making clothes]. The rationale being that not all of the girls will access further education and that it is crucial to give them skills to support themselves, meanwhile also giving them the experience of helping other rather than being helped themselves. A philosophy MMF wholeheartedly shares in.

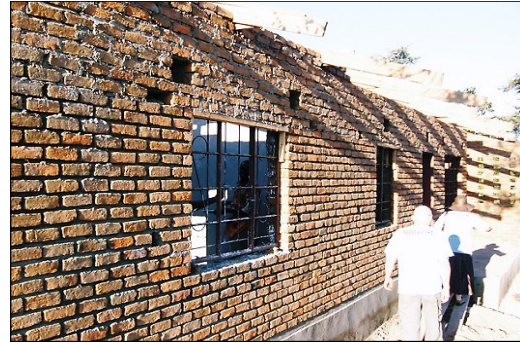
News from Bandawe Girls Secondary School (BAGSS)- also read p.2 about the visit!

Nicola joined the visiting group from Falkirk High to be introduced in assembly. She and Mrs Msowoya, the Head Teacher chatted in the library. Following a tour of the school with the Falkirk group lunch was taken with the staff.

At BAGSS, Mrs Msowoya is empowering the girls through activities in clubs like FAWEMA, and through drama and dance. She also hopes to invite an ex-MMF supported pupil, now trained as a teacher, to come and at teach at the school as a role model for the girls.

Also discussed were the school's important needs, primarily for a new hostel, a kitchen/ dining room, furniture and equipment for the new lab, and a photocopier. MMF -with funding from the Scottish Government and other donations-is already

helping build 2 teacher's houses at BAGSS



where they are so needed (pictured below).

A two-classrooms block is being built also with funds from local BAGSS initiatives. One classroom will be used for the second new form 3 class and the other as a temporary hostel to accommodate the increased intake, until a more permanent solution can be found.

If you would like to support any of the schools please call us on 01786 448195 or email: admin@mamiemartin.org - Thanks!

MMF wholeheartedly thanks the staff and pupils of all the schools for making themselves available to talk to Nicola, especially during this busy exams time!

Letter from the Head Girl at Bandawe Girls Secondary School ...

Dear Mummy Martin,

As the Headgirl of this school, I would like to thank you for the great things you are doing for us, on behalf of my fellow students.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the school fees you are paying for some of my fellow students. I understand it is a big task for you to fulfill but I appreciate because you are always doing your best.

Secondly, thank you for the Home Economics Laboratory that we are enjoying. Indeed it is bringing us a lot of skills and development which will always help us academically. On addition, let me also thank you for all the infrastructures that are there because of you.

Lastly, I am speechless to appreciate everything you have done for us because they are too numerous to mention, but I do hope you are going to do more for us. We always appreciate your efforts and may God bless you for everything.

*Yours faithfully,
Monica M. (Headgirl)*

In Appreciation of the late Macmin Mulaga, MMF Administrator, Malawi

Prior to my first visit to Malawi in October 2005 Mr Macmin Mulaga was the name attached to correspondence from Livingstonia Synod CCAP.

His was the friendly face of welcome at Mzuzu when our plane landed and his was the firm but gentle guiding hand on the tiller of our unplanned itinerary. This man, we found, was not just an administrator, the Deputy Education Secretary of the Synod, but also a man held in high regard by his colleagues and by the teachers at the schools when we visited. He had been a teacher himself and worked for the National Exam Board of Malawi; he knew what the problems were; he knew how to motivate a room full of pupils; he obviously enjoyed the fact that they responded.

In a schoolroom; under a mango tree; at lunch with the Session at Bandawe; in Church; at the Bank; showing us the waterfall at Livingstonia where the first Hydro-Electric power was generated; explaining how senior pupils at the school had been annually drafted in to help clear the reservoir of weeds and silt; sitting watching the sun rise over the Lake at Sambani Lodge; discussing the parentage and pedigree of the chambo we were about to eat; apologising for the lack of space in his "compact" office; bargaining with roadside mango-sellers; advising on how to safely eat the mangoes...I am no analyst of motive or personality but what we saw convinced us that Macmin would be the ideal person to be the Mamie Martin Fund's administrator when he retired from his post as Deputy Education Secretary in late 2005.

Our working relationship was hampered by the onset of ill-health which kept him away from Mzuzu and in and out of hospitals. However, during the periods when he was fit he proved to be an asset, a more than capable administrator, and an effective catalyst for action. Macmin unfortunately resigned in April 2007, offering to guide his replacement through the intricacies of international relations that MMF has become. But sadly the disease that he was fighting took him in July 07.

Malawi and MMF have lost a great advocate for the positive effect of support for girls in secondary education. He was buried in his home village Chitipa, north and west of Karonga, and several of the Head Teachers of the CCAP Livingstonia schools attended, carrying all our thoughts and condolences to his family.

Willie Sinclair (Convenor of the Mamie Martin Fund)

MAMIE MARTIN FUND AGM, 10/11/07 (STIRLING)

The AGM of the Mamie Martin Fund will take place on the 10th November at Ladywell Church Hall in Stirling, from 12:30pm onwards.

As every year there will be soup and socialising from 12:30pm, the perfect time for all our donors and supporters to meet, whilst watching a video from the Falkirk High School visit in Malawi and browse through a small exhibition & gifts table.

After the AGM formal business at 2:15pm, there will be presentations from Balfron High School and from Kinross High school -teachers and pupils- about their summer visits to Malawi. There will be pictures, testimonials and a real

chance to see Malawi-Scotland school partnerships in action! I hope you will come and join us in celebrating best practice in school partnership building and true Scotland-Malawi friendship.

**TO ALL OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS,, A
WARM THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT!**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE , SUPPORT
US, OR SIMPLY NEED MORE INFORMATION ,
PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT:
69 Newpark Road, Stirling FK7 0QF
Phone: 01786 448195
E-mail: admin@mamiemartin.org
Web: www.mamiemartin.org**