

Sunday, 26 June 2016

What a Send Off



Wow - what a weekend. We had a fantastic farewell celebration on Friday evening with all the boys and their parents and the atmosphere was brilliant. I think it's fair to say that the team are now buzzing and ready to get on that plane.

We plan to get the boys to update this blog as often as possible when we are out there so that you are kept up to date with our adventure.

Right - back to the suitcases

Tuesday 28th June 2016

Boarding Passes, Toasties and Hand Luggage

by Callum and Gavin

On arrival to Edinburgh airport we were all in high spirits. None of us were tired, cold, hot or missing a boarding pass - yet. We handed in all luggage with no problems and said our final goodbyes to all family members who came to say goodbye. After checking in, we got food and drink and sat down for (sorta) lunch. After our flight was ready for boarding we made our way to the gate, with only one problem. GAVIN lost his boarding pass! (Definitely did not become an inside joke) Thanks to the nice lady at check in he still got on. Some say the boarding pass still haunts those stupid enough to lose their own.

Landing at London Heathrow we collected all our baggage and took two escalators and a train just to get to baggage check-in for the second time. Taking surprisingly less time than expected we got through and into the terminal where we all were hungry and getting tired. All was going so well until after eating out Callum went on the hunt for a cheese and ham toastie (which most certainly did not end up making us run to make up for a 15 min delay)

Sitting in the large South African Airways flight we got comfy and set in for the long long flight. The whole back of the plane was full of Classroom for Malawi volunteers and us. We had two meals and complimentary drinks. We also had a personal screen where we could watch films, play games and track our flight and got a great view of the sun rise.

Finally, we made our way off the plane all tired but fine in Johannesburg. Before we got through to the next terminal, Callum realized he still had the toastie in his bag. We made him eat it in the line before going through security. Before we got on the next flight we met up with the 3rd Kilsyth BB who were also going to Malawi with Classroom for Malawi. On our last flight we got our second breakfast. When we landed in Malawi we felt the warmth of the sun despite it being winter over here.



Getting our visa took a while, made worse by the hot room and only one token fan but all our luggage had arrived or so we thought. Mr Anderson was last through customs and couldn't find his hand luggage but it ended up being in the trailer all the time.

We got into the buses and picked up some snacks in Blantyre before heading down south to Likhubula. Mount Mulange is massive and very beautiful. Our lodge is right at the foot of the mountain and is great. We have 2 dorms and there is another group of folk here from Belfast. The food is brilliant. We had chicken and rice before heading to bed after a long day of travelling.



Thursday 30th June 2016

A Thousand Welcomes (and probably more)

by Euan, Ben and Connor

We woke up at 7 and went to breakfast at 8 for sausage and eggs, we then put on our kilts and got on the buses to go to introduce ourselves to both of the schools.



When we arrived at Nansato we were shocked at the number of children there and how happy they were. I don't know how the minibus driver managed to drive through the crowds of children who were all there to welcome us. When we got out of the buses, all the children wanted to touch us and shake our hands. I think they were a bit confused by our kilts and there were definitely a few sniggers. We met all the staff and then they all sang for us and gave us a big welcome. We sang to them and presented them with the flamingo and the Lego bricks. Then we went around the classes and introduced ourselves to the children. There were absolutely loads of them all sitting on the floor. The teachers were able to get them to be quiet as they all wanted to Hi Five us and shake our hand. We then had a look at the classrooms that the builders have been working on. There has been

a huge amount of work done to the floors, walls and windows and there are a number of classrooms ready for us to paint.



We got back in the buses and went to Pasani school. At this school there was almost 2000 pupils who were all really excited to see us and ran along-side the minibus. Some of them were jumping on to the back of the mini bus and opening the back door. We got out and shook hands with hundreds of them as we walked over to where they had prepared a welcome for us. They had prepared a whole assembly just for us. We had a traditional game of tug-o'-war which we lost against primary 1. There was then a number of poems read out by some of the learners talking about their school. They even prepared a special song and dance all about the classroom renovations and showed us an exercise routine with wooden dumbbells that was brilliant. Mr Anderson said a speech and then we sang for "If You're Happy and You Know it". They loved it and shouted out "We Are!" There are 10 classrooms being renovated at Pasani which is just about the whole school. They are hugely grateful for our project. They then gave us some sweet potato which tasted great. It's hard to describe the welcome we got. We have never experienced anything like it. All we can say is "Wow".



We then came back to Likhubula House and had lunch which was beef and chips, we walked down the road to the woodcarvers and looked at the different handmade gifts they had there and went to the river to see the rock pools. We sat and chilled out for a while as we got the equipment all ready to start painting tomorrow morning. We are all desperate to start work now that we know they huge difference it is going to make to hundreds of smiling young kids.

Friday, 1 July 2016

Day 3 – The Painting Begins

Today we finally started painting, We split up into two teams so that we could work on both schools at the same time. Here are the stories from both teams.

Nansato – Iain

After an early start the A Team drove out to Nansato school and set up the equipment that we would need for the day. Mr A made a plan with the builders and soon we were at work with the whitewash to begin with. In the morning we focused on three classrooms including one where the whole room needed to be whitewashed. This was hard work as the lime was not very easy to work with. The state of the classrooms was shocking as they lay bare and crumbling. It was clear how much hard work had been done to the windows and floors before we arrived. The classroom was nice and cool and well ventilated with the new windows. We could see the scale of the task in front of us. The painting was actually quite enjoyable and we had a chat as we worked. This included some interactions with the local school kids who crowded the windows to watch us curiously until the Head teacher arrived at which point they all scarpereed (for a minute). They were good at asking what our names and ages were.

We had made packed lunches before leaving the house which consisted of mainly peanut butter sandwiches although there were boiled eggs on offer too. Eating these packed lunches discretely was possibly the most difficult part of the day as we knew the children had nothing. We sat in a classroom and had a chat before getting to work again.

In total today we started work on 5 classrooms: one of them is still getting windows fitted. The work was tough but we feel we achieved a lot on the first day. We headed back up to the lodge to clean up the large quantity of paint we were wearing. I decided to go for another run with a staff member called Moses. Unfortunately, as I was jogging around waiting for Moses to arrive, I tripped and decked it onto a big rock scraping my hands and knees. Fortunately, our bus driver is trained in First Aid and one of the Belfast ladies is a doctor and I was diagnosed with a sore wrist. I will be thinking twice before running on the paths again.

Apart from this painful adventure, the day has been an extremely worthwhile start to our project and it is now clear the great amount of benefit we are bringing to the children of Likhubula.

Pasani – Ross

The actual work involved with the first day of painting was not the highlight of my day. The real enjoyment came from talking with the children and staff in Pasani. After lunch Euan and I went to sit on a step to enjoy some of the African heat. As we expected, we were joined by many enthusiastic children. All of them were so good at speaking English which made us think that we should try and pick up some Chichewa. A member of staff started to help us by teaching us basic speech like “How are you?” and “Thank you”. Not long after that we had more than a dozen children gathered around us trying to teach us to speak like them! They seemed to find it very amusing that we struggled to pronounce everything! Although we did forget most of the words that they taught us, I’m certain the feeling of being made to feel a part of the community will remain with us forever. Today was such an important day because it was the first day that I really felt a connection with the people in Likhubula. I hope every day shares the same positivity as today.

Saturday, 2 July 2016

Shock News – Mr C spotted with a paintbrush in his hand

by Liam and Liam

Today we had breakfast. We all then went to Pasani. There was still a surprising number of kids despite it being Saturday. We started doing the PVA on the classrooms. It was hard work as the walls kept soaking it all up. Mr Christmas kept telling us to lather it on and called me “Lather-on Liam.”

The kids were all still chanting “We are!” everytime they walked past the window from when we taught them “if you’re happy and you know it clap your hands”. We saw Mr Anderson running for the first time (unfortunately to attend another medical crisis) and Mr Christmas even did some work (eventually!). Don’t worry about the medical crisis though – Ross (for some unknown reason) fainted. He was sitting down and plonked his face into a pile of red dust. When he came round it looked like he had a really bad fake tan. He thinks it was because of the paint fumes – we think he was just looking to get out of painting. It was good having everyone on the same site today and we got through a tonne of work.

At lunchtime we met with the Dunblane Likhubula Bursars from Chambe secondary school – one of them would be very useful know as he wanted to be a journalist! We had lunch together and all chatted together about school, exams and each other’s lives. It was quite humbling to hear about how different their lives are from ours and what their hopes are. Some want to be doctors, lawyers, teachers and work in the armed forces. However, they also had a lot of similarities to us. Some mentioned that they preferred some subjects more than others. We also talked a lot about football and what Scotland was like.

We then headed into Chitikale to find a shop that sold snacks (it took three attempts) and we also went into the market. There were loads of different things for sale including empty bottles, loads of different types of food and piles of tiny smoked fish. We were the only tourists in the market and I think we caused quite a stir (especially Matthew with his hair). Vanda bought some fancy looking cloth and Mr A bought some more paint brushes to get us working even harder.

On the way home we stopped at the local carving place and picked up some gifts that we had ordered. Mr Christmas and Vanda took ages to order a carving. When we got home, Mr Boyd had arrived (unfortunately without his luggage) and we had a great dinner of pasta. We then had another chat (we have had these each night) and we talked a lot about the stories we had heard from the bursars. Some of them have gone through so much in their lives and have so many challenges. However, they are just kids like us. We all talked about how good it is that the partnership link sponsors these bursars and we all had quite a few opinions about what other things the partnership could think about. After our chat, we prepared for the Church service tomorrow. We will be performing some songs and we also have formed our mini band which sounded great (they drowned out our singing which is probably a good thing)

Sunday, 3 July 2016

Sunday – and there is a time to dance.....

by Calum, Gavin, Bjorn and Matthew

After a well needed lie-in with breakfast at 8, the group set off down the hill towards the church in full gear, kilts and all loud and proud. Having arrived first at the church, there was enough time to show the other groups our progress with the painting in the classrooms at Nansato school. The church service started with a quick prayer followed by praising the lord through song and dance. There were many different groups that performed, with the Dunblane BB joining in with each groups attempting to follow their dance, much to the amusement of the locals especially Gavin's lack of rhythm and Bjorn going too far in a dance involving high knees ending in a flash of underwear. Some took videos and photos while we danced due to our "skirts" you will see this in a video coming soon. Soon it was the Dunblane BB's turn to get up and sing some songs, at first the band impressed the congregation with two pieces of Scottish music before the rest of the boys got up and sang an impressive cover of 'Loch Lomond' and 'Will Your Anchor Hold'. After all the dances and songs had finished there was a few readings from various locals and also a section of the service being taken by Mr. Christmas giving a sermon. On the walk back we stopped off at the carvers for some of us to pick up personalised woodwork which maybe you'll be seeing soon.

Once we got back it was a quick change into suitable clothes for hiking where we had a guide who took us to a waterfall an hour up Mt. Mulanjie, with amazing views. We all had our packed lunch with us to eat when we got there, other than a very hungry Alex Gunn who had an empty lunch box. We set off from the house and started walking towards the mountain. It wasn't very hot but some of the older members of the group were sweating like mad. One particular captain of the BB's was extremely sweaty and was lagging behind. The hill was quite a tough walk as it was constantly uphill in rough terrain. Despite this we all enjoyed ourselves on the hike up. Mr. Christmas' hat changed from a grey hat to a grey camo hat with all the sweat. We passed by a pair of men cutting up logs using a very large saw and we all were extremely nervous as the saw was dangerously close to his foot. We finally reached the waterfall which was like nothing you'd see in Scotland. We all sat down and ended up swapping half our food with each other. We then were shown the way up to the beginners jumping spot which some of us used despite Mr. Andersons disapproval and nervousness. We then moved on to the higher jumping spot and did not appreciate the lack of sun (for the first time). Then to the great approval of all the boys and officers, Mr. Christmas stepped up and impressed us all with his climbing skills before jumping off. We then all made our way down the hill now dry and still happy. Just missing the first rain of the whole trip we all arrived back, however the Likhubula representatives were not so lucky so we hear.

So that is all our days off now – we now need to knuckle down and get painting. The next few blogs might be a bit more boring (unless we get Gavin to dance while he is painting)

Monday, 4 July 2016

Avatar Day

Today was another hard day painting and the blue paint appeared to give a bit of colour to the classrooms and to the boys.

Pasani by Alex and Connor

Today we started on blue glossing which was easy compared to PVA. With the blue gloss we had to paint the windows which was the most challenging and time consuming task. It was challenging to paint all the gaps as they some were high up. Our break soon came and we did not sing as during today there were less children to entertain and we were tired. After many hours working with the blue glossy paint we had a pack lunch which contained of 2 sandwiches an orange, egg and crisps. This would be a hard time as many children were looking through the windows, opening doors and knocking on them. But soon an older child came and ushered the younger children away. When we had completed our lunch we continued working on the windows which needed to be cleaned class by class. Overall we had a successful day and we were all happy. We did, however, all ended up coming home looking like a bunch of smurfs. Most of us tried to scrape it off but gave us as we know we will be getting more paint on us tomorrow.

Nansato by Iain and Neils

Today was a hard day's slog preparing the first 5 classrooms for the nice gloss finish tomorrow. In the morning the walls were still patchy and grey, and we knew we had a lot of work to do make them a proper shade of white for the kids. Lots of PVA was thrown on the walls and on our clothes in an attempt to achieve this, but there were many issues with the thickness of the paint. It seems the Malawian builders are used to saving resources and make the best of thin paint, but as we lack any previous painting experience whatsoever we were not so effective at doing this! Mr Anderson was visibly crabbit and the most worrying moment of the day came when he had a slightly heated conversation with the head builder explaining the issue and the lack of time we had to make these classrooms photogenic. He did make the point that if we don't make an impressively large visual difference in the state of the classrooms it would be impossible to drum up the same support for a future venture, and it was clear there was even more at stake than just the kids at Nansato and Pasani that we were helping this time around. However, the head builder took the message and gave us notably thicker paint to finish the day and by 3 o'clock Mr Anderson was notably chirpier. The walls seem very white and whilst a couple more splodges might be needed, the classrooms are ready for gloss! We also had the great pleasure of undercoating the windows with blue paint. The weather was pretty Scottish and the cold wind that blew through the new windows that gives great ventilation also blew the blue undercoat into our faces. Blue freckles became the new trend at Nansato especially with Louise who did well to keep on with the painting until about 2.00pm at which time the local group of observers come along after school. Louise had great fun playing loads of different games with them.

We also enjoyed a taste of home when we returned, as we went out to Mulanje Pepper restaurant for plenty of pizza. Thin, crispy and loaded with cheese, these pizzas were as good as any in a high street Italian restaurant, and satisfied the fast food craving that many of us had developed this far into our trip. They were also remarkably cheap, with the meal averaging out to less than £8 pounds a head.

Overall it was a very productive and fulfilling day, which will hopefully be a springboard for our completion of these classrooms that so need a refurbishment.



Tuesday, 5 July 2016

No need for suntan lotion today

The weather has remained decidedly Scottish today as we embarked on another painting day. We did, however, travel down to see Mary's Meals before painting and Calum had to take a wee trip into Blantyre.

Blantyre by Calum

Today I travelled through to Blantyre with Mr Boyd to go to the hospital for a check-up. We left after seeing Mary's Meals at Nansato and dropping everyone one else of at the other school. The Mary's Meals was a bit strange. It was raining and cold so there was not a huge amount of kids when we arrived around 6.20. It was awkward watching the kids line up to get, what could be, their only meal of the day. Everyone was a bit muted either because it was so cold and rainy or because they were so hungry. We all took a turn stirring the big pots which seemed a bit touristy. We then got a taste of the likuni phala which is fortified with vitamins. It was quite sweet and a wee bit sandy in texture. The trip to Blantyre was very interesting. After the bad rain that we have been having over the past few days it made the first bit of the journey very interesting as to get to the road we have to travel down a mud road for about half an hour. The road was now hard to pass as there was now lots of potholes and the ground was wet and very slippery. Andrew had a very tough job avoiding all the cyclists, people walking on the massive potholes and even ditches before we made it to the tarmac. It felt like I was on a rollercoaster. The tarmac turned out to be not much better with the drivers here being crazy with them almost hitting each other. Also one thing that we have noticed since being here is the crazy things that they have on their bikes. Today we noticed someone carrying a goat and someone with a huge stack of chairs. When we got to the hospital in Blantyre it wasn't what I expected as it was very nice and not too much different from home. Some of the methods like taking my temperature was different as they don't have the technology that we have but all went well and got some lunch before heading back along the road to go back and help with the last bit of painting the schools today.

Pasani by Cameron and Ben

Today at Pasani we arrived in the rain and started doing a second coat of light blue gloss on the doors and windows. We were waiting for PVA to paint on the walls of the last classroom before we could paint it. While we were doing the doors and windows Mr Christmas, Connor and Alex started drawing the alphabet and numbers on the walls in the classrooms. We had a great lunch of sausages and sandwiches in an empty classroom, then went straight back to work. We cut empty water bottles in half and filled them up with the acrylic paint diluted with water, half of us using the acrylic to paint the murals on the walls while the others finished off the windows and door of the last classroom. At half past two Jacko arrived to give us a lift home and we stopped at the woodcarvers on the way. The toilets were especially smelly today but the classrooms are starting to look great.

Nansato By Bjorn and Alex G

Today at Nansato we were glossing 5 classrooms with blue paint and also lime washing the last classroom. With two members of our team away on a hospital run we were short of members but as we got there we got a nice surprise as one of the bursars called Gift showed up to help us paint. Once we had glossed the 5 classrooms before lunch and had a much needed break consisting of bread and sausages delivered to us by our amazing guide Jacko, we went and started to undercoat the windows while Mr Anderson and Niels started on the murals with the help of Luscious, a sign

painter by trade, helping make a visually stunning alphabet above one of the near completed classrooms. After the dreaded undercoating of windows we moved on to the much hated lime-wash. Half way through Calum and Mr. Boyd returned from the hospital and started to help on the last classroom. With Mr. Boyd providing detail on information of what's happening in the UK (such as Teresa May's potentially becoming PM and making us think twice about returning home) and to help lighten the mood from our tedious task that was the dreaded lime wash by telling stories of Bjorn's Mum repeating in every photo of Project Malawi's blog: "Where's Bjorn" and "I don't see Bjorn". At this point, Mr A decided that I (Bjorn) was going to be writing the blog tonight and also reminded me to tell the parents that photos are very difficult to upload and that all boys are all still alive and very much being photographed for future sharing. Overall it was impressive to see how a fresh coat of paint can make such an improvement to an otherwise dull and dreary building. At the end of the day we had a lot of fun with the local gang. We played games with them, made funny faces and also taught them how to chant the theme tune of John Cena. It was George's last evening with us tonight so we gave him one of our much sought after tea towels and a thank you for putting up with us. I'm sure he will enjoy his long journey home tomorrow in peace and quiet.





Wednesday, 6 July 2016

I have a dream...

Nansato by Niels

Today was our last full day of work on the classrooms and there was a lot to do. We needed to paint all the windows. We think that the guys managed to paint around 36 of them today – that is a lot of circles. We also had to paint the last classroom with PVA. Mr A ignored his risk assessment by climbing up a very dodgy looking Malawian ladder that was probably not build for a man of his 'stature'. We also had to paint the blackboards which was hugely satisfying. Everyone got a shot which was a welcomed relief from the dreaded windows. I had to write up the alphabet and numbers one to ten in two classrooms. While I was blissfully getting into a routine of marking up the alphabet the rest of the group were struggling ahead with the windows, especially with the yellow going on the blue, that was particularly annoying. Luckily for me I had a secret weapon for the murals, Lucias, he was one of the workers who happened to be a sign painter so he painted the alphabet and corrected any mistakes I made. The murals are very simple but very colourful and finish the room off nicely.

Pasani by Connor

Today was also my last full day at the school that I was working at. At Pasani we had glossed all the classrooms except one so some of us got to work on that while I continued work on colouring in the alphabet and number murals which was quite easy and relaxing. By the time we had lunch we had finished glossing the fourth and last room and had completed two sets of murals. Lunch was pre-packed and was two sandwiches, fruit and egg. After lunch we went around touching up the gloss and white paint and finished the murals.

Dinner at Nancy's

We arrived at the restaurant expecting something quite fancy but were surprised to find one large room with basic seating and tables. Nancy then came and introduced her staff and gave us a very powerful speech about how and why she started her restaurant. She is married to a pastor and is very keen to help vulnerable women who may suffer from any discrimination based on their gender. She had a dream to create a restaurant about 20 years ago and always held on to that dream despite the challenges of starting a business being a woman. The food was quite basic but very nice and we

got to try nsima which is a dumpling like thing. When I first saw it I thought it was raw dough but on eating discovered it was plain in taste and had a dumpling like texture. We all ate it with our hands by breaking off a bit and mixing it with some vegetables or beans. We were also served chicken, rice and lovely pizza. We then finished the meal with a very nice cake which had a green inside which we all theorised about which ended up just being food colouring.



Thursday 7th July 2016

The Final Big Push

Nansato by Iain

Today was the final day that we would have to make a direct difference to the children of Malawi. Pasani School was almost complete so a few happy volunteers offered to come to Nansato to finish the job. They did not know what they were in for! The three hours were a whirlwind of undercoat, gloss, painting the wee spots we had missed, and sweeping the rubble from the classroom floors. Naturally we gave the Pasani boys the hardest job, the notorious yellow gloss on dark blue undercoat. This was a nightmare that I had encountered the previous day, when I had battled for two and half hours with one window and never-ending blue spots. Still, they rose admirably to the challenge, and even taught us a neat trick that they had discovered at Pasani involving replacing brushes with rollers, something that took down the time considerably.



Their help was a godsend, and let us complete more work than we could have imagined in the space of one morning. Our aim was to totally finish five classrooms, with anything done to the sixth being counted as gravy, but in fact we managed to transform the blank walls and windows of the sixth into vibrant colour. At eleven o'clock, half an hour before we were shipping out for the final time, it suddenly hit me that this was about to be it. All the months spent fundraising, all the Sundays spent mentally preparing, all the hours spent attempting the impossible with yellow paint and a blue window, they were all about to come to an abrupt halt without me even realizing where the time had gone. This minor epiphany took my breath away for a moment, before charging my efforts with renewed vigour while I watched the final few minutes slip away.



And yet the time came around eventually, as it always does, and we stepped back to review our work. Six classrooms given a totally new lease of life, and crucially given some colour instead of the unyielding grey interiors that surely would have made Nansato a head-splittingly dull place to learn in the past. Yes, there is still a bit of work to do that will be completed by the crew of builders always there to assist us. However, considering the classrooms that we arrived to, and the fact that we have exceeded our hopes of what we could achieve just before leaving Scotland let alone from when this project was first conceived, I think I can speak on behalf of all the boys in saying we are immensely proud, awed and moved by what we have done and seen in this beautiful, wonderful and so worthy country.



Pasani by Ross

Rather than give any details about my day of sweeping and mopping, I am choosing to focus on my day from lunch onwards. The Nansato group arrived at lunchtime to the usual flock of overly excited young children. Sadly, this warm welcome would be the last of our journey. After an embarrassing attempt at a team training session fell through we were directed into one of the older classrooms. The kind staff at Pasani prepared a huge amount of food for us and some other special guests which we gladly tucked into.



The environment of the meal was very welcoming and we all felt right at home with our hosts. After the meal we settled down to begin the speeches, coming from numerous chiefs, teachers, representatives and Mr Anderson. The chiefs were introduced to us one by one through a completely new method of applause. Instead of a fast-paced random clap, the locals used a synchronized slow-paced cupping clap. This was clearly a way of showing the utmost respect for the chiefs of the different villages which we enjoyed taking part in. The speeches themselves were quite moving, one in particular sticking out in our minds was Mr Anderson's. His promise to return back to Pasani if the builders did not complete the work in time for the new term revealed the true passion behind Mr Anderson's past year of fundraising. On a less serious note, he also mentioned the fact that we would not be coming home the colour of bronze but the colour of blue paint! After several other speeches giving thanks we headed outside to get one last photo with the staff next to the classrooms.





Next on the program was our sporting event which we were destined to win. First of all, we played the staff which included three of the village chiefs. Secondly, we played an U21 team named Kingsley's All-Stars. We drew 1-1 with the staff after a cheeky tap-in from Bjorn and we lost 0-1 to the U21 team due to a strike seeping through our usually rock-solid defence. Our final day was one that I am sure our whole team will remember for the rest of our lives.





Friday 8th July 2016

Hot Water Trumps Wi Fi

by Calum and Euan



Today we left the Likhubula area after a wonderful and inspiring time working on the classrooms in both Nansato and Pasani. We started off by getting the rest of our luggage on the buses and sitting down for our last breakfast at Likhubula house, but before that happened couple of us made a final trip down to the carvers to get some cracking deals and the trek back up was an absolute mission especially at half past six in the morning still in our pajamas. It was a mad rush to get all the beds striped and getting breakfast before leaving at half past seven. It was our last time having to put up with that bumpy road to Pasani which some of us will probably not remember because they were half asleep.



We got to Pasani and the kids were still as excited to see us as the first day we arrived at the school a week and a half ago. It was amazing when we saw some of the kids using the classrooms so we decide to go sit down with them and do one last 'If your happy and you know it'. We still got the same response after doing it several times. All the people that worked at Pasani got a photo with the head builder and his wife and then we gave him some of our clothes for the builders to share between them. It was a very sad and emotional goodbye for most of us especially when we made connections with some individuals. It felt like we were leaving good friends behind to fend for themselves.

Then we headed back towards Blantyre to begin our journey to Mvuu camp with a few stops along the way. With music playing and many falling asleep after the tough week or so we made our way through the many villages buzzing with people going about their daily business in the markets or working in the fields with many carrying crazy things either on their heads or the back of their bikes. We got to the hostel in Blantyre that we are staying in on the last night to drop of the two trailers filled with our big luggage so that we could drive that wee bit faster and also make it easier to travel along some of the bumper roads later on.



After the quick stop we again got on the road and headed to another school where the Andersons knows the headmaster. Here we had a nice lunch in the headteacher's front

room (24 of us crammed into a wee space) before seeing what their school looked like and the state that it was in. It felt weird to go there and have lunch and also to play another game of football but not to help out with the classrooms. There were a lot of classrooms where the floors were full of potholes and the windows were all the rubbish concrete ones that make the classroom dark. It made us remember how horrible our classrooms were and reminded us of what a difference we made to Nansato and Pasani. During lunch, we were asking the Headteacher about the Play Pump that was at the entrance to the school. He said that the pump has been broken for a long time so all the water that the school uses has to be carried in from a fair distance. This includes all the water required for the Mary's Meals kitchen. The Headteacher said that it was only going to cost £135 to fix so it was a no-brainer for us all to have a whip round so they could get the pump fixed. Mr Anderson presented the Headteacher with the money later on so that everyone knew what the money was for.



We then had our third and final game of football. The game today was very difficult as we were all tired and the pitch was on a slope so we had to run up hill half the time. Again we played well but suffered a two nil defeat making our playing record Won 0, Drew 1, Lost 2. We then headed back to the buses and headed along the road to Mvuu camp.



Again we were going through many villages and even past a train track before we seen the sign for Mvoo camp with only 16km to go but this is when we experienced the worst road all trip as it was a dirt track that was so bumpy that most of the times we were not even on our seat and trying to hold onto some of wood carvings and luggage was also very challenging.



We opened the windows so we were able to say hello to locals and all they said was 'bottle' it was like they had been taught to say that instead of hello. We got to the gates of Mvuu camp and when we got through we saw our first animal which was a baboon it was so cool!!! We got to the end of the road and had to get out the mini buses, we also had to say goodbye to Chako and Andrew who were buzzing to get away from us for a couple of nights and we were all emotional. Calum was absolutely crapping it coming across on the boat as we were just informed that the water we were crossing was full of crocodiles and if you fell in you had 15 seconds before you were a meal.



We got a very warm welcome while we decided on are chalet rooms. We headed to the chalets to drop our luggage off and the chalets were out of this world luxury and they even had hot showers and one of the comfiest beds. It was just something else!! We headed back for our taster safari drive and some people were surprised that we weren't getting anything to eat. We got into the jeeps and headed out for a taster. We saw some elephants, kudu, impala, hippos and baboons. It was so surreal. It started to get dark and we all thought we were all heading back to get some food but it turned out we were getting out the trucks to have a drink and some popcorn. We then headed back looking for nocturnal animals with a big spotlight before having a great 3 course meal. It felt amazing to be so relaxed after the hard week and a half we had just had....

Saturday 9th July 2016

All Creatures Great and Small

by Louise



There was great excitement for most of us at 3.30 as a bunch of elephants decided to come down by our chalets to eat the leaves of the trees down there. It was quite scary but really interesting.

At 5:45 a group of our team went out on a walking safari, they learned all about different bird's plants footprints and POO! We all came together for breakfast at 7:00. We got to choose between a fried or scrambled egg or an omelet with cheese, tomato and onion alongside sausage and bacon – it was yummy. We also had a muffin although some of Mr. Boyd's muffin was pinched by a cheeky monkey who quickly ran away to eat it.

After breakfast we got into two jeeps and our guides took us on a safari. We went down a little hill and we asked if we would see any rhinos today. The men said that they were in a special enclosure and that it would cost an extra \$5 to go and see them although there was no guarantee that we would actually see them as the enclosure was 10 square kilometers and there were only 10 rhinos. We all decided to go into the enclosure but although we didn't see any rhinos, it was a brilliant experience.



We saw a lot of different animals including warthogs and impalas. We also had a seat on the bonnet on the jeep and one person got to sit on it so Callum Murray, Calum Couper, Bjorn and Gavin got to go on the front of my jeep. We were driving for a wee bit and we saw 3 baboons - they were great. Then we kept driving and saw 2 zebras but they were hiding behind a really twiggy bush so they were hard to see. After that we were driving for a good 20 minutes when we saw nothing. It was pretty boring but then we went round a corner and saw a watering hole. We saw an elephant walking down the road. Then another one came out then another one and another one until there was 15 elephants of all shapes and sizes drinking around this watering hole only a few meters away from our jeep. It was very satisfying to watch the mummy elephant's soak up the water and then pour it on their babies. After a wee drink, they were all marching out in time with one another in single file it was amazing how in time they were. After seeing the elephants, we finished the safari.



When we got back to mvuu camp we had lunch it was quiche and other bits and bobs it was very nice. The monkeys actually stayed back for this meal. After lunch we had a bit of chill time - some of us were sunbathing some were chilling inside and some were reading. Next on our timetable was a boat safari we got into 2 boats but we went in the same direction we saw this really pretty bird called a malicate kingfisher it was luminous orange and blue I loved it then we saw a MASSIVE crocodile just sunbathing and we saw a lot of hippos and we learned that hippos can't swim they just float. We saw more crocs, loads of crocodiles and loads of different birds. We had to head back as Ben was desperate for a wee and didn't fancy stopping on a bank in case the crocs got him. Obviously we were very sympathetic as it was clear he was suffering a bit. Just to help him, we started singing "Let It Go".



Before dinner we were escorted down to the bonfire and we were treated to some traditional dancing and drumming. It was really interesting and a bit weird. Dinner was traditional Malawi fayre – rice and chicken with more nseema and loads of other stuff. For circle time tonight we all lit a candle and said how Malawi had changed us. We placed all the candles in a saltire – it was really nice. Then it was time to be escorted to our chalets for bed.

Sunday, 10 July 2016

All Good Things Must Come to an End

By Alex C

The last day at Mvuu camp was started with a full group drive around the park. The main part of our trip was occupied by a crocodile being intimidated by 4 hippos and many more hippos in the water. We spent around 15 mins watching our encounter and we were all eager to see the next stages. It was a great experience that many of us will not see again.

This amazing experience was later followed by lunch which consisted of hake and spinach and lemon pasta. It was a great morning and we were all looking forward to meeting up with Chacko and Andrew. The boat journey was short lived as Chacko and Andrew were waving us over. We soon made it to the other side which was a sad moment this was because we were leaving all the animals and hot showers behind. The start was soon delayed as Neils forgot his headphones but this was not an issue as we had loads of things to talk about to Andrew and Chacko.



During the drive we stopped off at a larger more intimidating carvers. Here it was larger, louder, more intimidating but thankfully cheaper. It found many new items that may be one of your presents soon. Euan bought a large photo of an elephant, it was very similar to the one that chased the bus near the watering hole. We got to the Grace Bandawe centre where we were staying our last night and quickly turned around to go to dinner.

Mr Boyd had hooked up with a BB company in Blantyre and we got a chance to speak with the boys. It was great to see how different and how similar their BB company was. They have only been going for just over a year so were looking for loads of ideas. They came in wearing BB hats that they had actually made. We are hoping that we will be able to send over some resources to them so that they can have some more parts of their uniform. We got into the restaurant just as Andy Murray played his last point at Wimbledon. The rest of the guests of the restaurant must have wondered what was going on with all the commotion. Some of us stayed in the restaurant and some went home to get bags packed for departure day.



The next day we had a good breakfast and then got our bags all packing into the trailer. We then presented Andrew and Chacko with some gifts including kilts and Project Malawi T Shirts. They were brilliant and really looked after us.



We then stopped off at shop rite to buy some goodies for the flight and spend our last Kwacha. When we arrived at the airport we waved Chacko and Andrew off and then went to security was just inside the small room. Once everyone passed security we had to check in which was a lot harder than it seemed. It took us around 1hrs and 30 mins which was only 30 mins before our plane took off. Most of us got patted down in the airport but we were all clear. The Malawi to Jo'burg flight was only 2 hrs long which was very short compared to our flight to Heathrow. Now we are all in Heathrow airport sitting, waiting to board or flight hoping that we will see all the mums and dads very soon. It's been a great adventure.



Monday, 11 July 2016

Final Thoughts and Reflections

by Colin



It's with mixed emotions that I write this final blog. In one respect I am so happy that the project has been successful but I was also sad to leave such a wonderful country and leave so many new but dear friends.

One thing I am sure of - I cannot be more proud of the team. Words cannot express or give justice to how the team behaved during the past two weeks. It would be easy to say that they went to Malawi as boys and came back men but that doesn't really give justice to the maturity, pro-activeness, compassion and sheer guts that the team displayed. What they achieved was remarkable and was without protest. We completed 10 classrooms in 5 days. We completely transformed these classrooms that will, in turn, be used to transform lives. We ensured that the other 6 classrooms (and 2 storerooms) will be completed to the same high standard before the start of next term. But all these things were just one facet to the project.



The boys transformed themselves in front of our eyes and required little direction or guidance to do so. They took everything in their stride which included absolute poverty and unfamiliar and difficult environments. There were two main highlights to my days that I would like to mention. The first is the interactions that the team would have with the boys and girls who were brave enough to come up to us and ask questions (mainly "What is your name?"). They made connections in their own inimitable way that included songs, chants, thumbs-up and dancing. It was delightful to listen to and definitely made the monotony of the relentless painting far more bearable.



The second highlight was our 'circle time' chats in the evening. I have never before heard such mature opinions and contributions made by a group of teenage boys. We designed these meetings to check-in on their emotional state but we ended up learning so much from the boys.

So I am a very proud man to have been part of this team. I am honoured to have worked with all of these boys and I know that these boys will take these experiences and use them to advance their true Christian manliness.



Time will tell what the legacy of Project Malawi will be. We can easily jump on a plane and fly home to our comfortable homes, well-stocked fridges, wifi and hot showers. We now have connections with friends who cannot do that. So I hope we, in Dunblane BB, continue down the route that Project Malawi has started: not just for the benefit of the hundreds of kids who will benefit from the renovated classrooms but also for our boys who gain so much from the

experience. If you haven't had a chance to view the opinions of the boys then please click on this link and listen to what they have to say - <https://youtu.be/vqOQOGvALiA>



Some thanks - thanks to all who have supported and sponsored us over the past year. Thanks to all who have followed our blogs and have shared our stories. Finally, huge thanks to my fellow leaders - Paul, Vanda, Fraser, Ian and Fiona. It was a voyage into the unknown that involved a huge responsibility and a lot of 'going with the flow' but we did it so well. It was a great team effort and without your help it would not have been possible.



Look out for details of presentations that the boys will be doing - I can assure you that they will be fascinating - and also look out on facebook for final photographs of all 16 classrooms.

Thanks - Colin



