



It seems no time since we were contacting you to inform you of Allie and Madge's proposed trip to Malawi. The main purpose of the trip was to get to know our manager, Tambu and her assistant, Ben. In addition, it was felt that we needed to assess the current situation and review the support we offer to the Malawian people.

It was a wonderful experience for us and all your prayers were answered in that the arrangements went according to plan and we travelled in safety, if not always in comfort...



Tambu and Ben

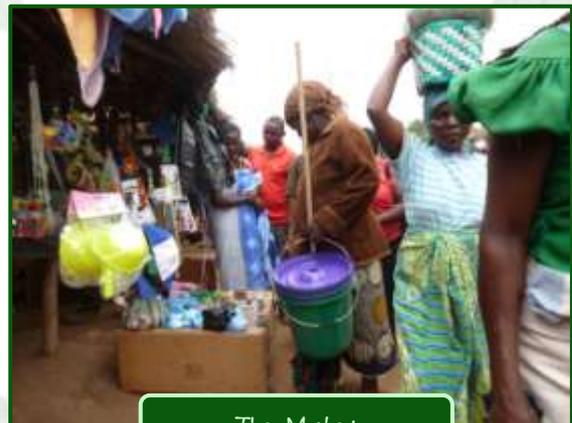
We were greeted at Blantyre Airport by Tambu and Ben, proudly bearing a placard showing the words ABBAS REST. They continued to look after us throughout our whole stay. A pastor, of their acquaintance, collected us and drove us to our hotel and onwards, the next day, to Chiringa. This was a very long drive, and with all our baggage, would have been impossible to do by public transport.

The countryside was very dry and there was little sign of roadside stalls selling local produce such as tomatoes and bananas etc. The visible dwellings were extremely humble and, for the most part, in poor states of repair, indicating that Abbas Rest is operating in an area of great need, even by Malawian standards.

It took over four hours to reach Chiringa on some tarmac and partly unmade roads. We were immediately made aware that one of the difficulties faced by our staff is that of getting around. The local transport is unreliable, unpredictable, uncomfortable and relatively expensive. Private transport is prohibitively expensive and we avoided that as much as possible.

Our first outing was a walk to the orphan centre in the village, which took about 30 minutes. It so happened that our visit coincided with a time when the Social Services officials had arranged for the children to visit their extended families. This gave us food for thought and also allowed us quality time to get to know the house mothers, Fanny and Doreen.

During these days we concentrated on forging relationships with the staff and also getting to know little Maureen, Tambu's six week old daughter.



The Market

A visit was made to the local market to help choose much needed kitchen equipment in the form of plates, cutlery, mops and pails. The market was chaotic and dirty and it was impossible for two white women to merge into the background. We had taken a decision to hand over all the funds for our expenses to

Tambu and Ben, so that we would not be seen as the 'white providers.' This obviously surprised people who were perhaps more used to seeing the whites pay for everything. I, Madge, found this experience a bit overwhelming; but God is good; He recognized my despondency and on the way home we bumped into a very personable young man in the form of Eric.



Eric

What an encouragement! His English was good, he was smart and presentable and Oh so pleased to see us! What a credit to Abbas Rest! He has completed his first certificate in accountancy and is hoping to continue for another year. What an achievement, and to meet him just when we were contemplating the challenges presented by the situation at Chiringa, was God's providence for us. Amusingly, Eric, despite willing his feet to grow so that they would fit a pair of football boots we had with us, simply adopted them as the Nasanga Team boots.

One of our tasks here was to meet with the Social Services Authority in Phalombe. The meeting began in a rather formal way and was a little strained as the authorities have not been happy with conditions at the centre. As we talked things through, however, they realized that we want to work with them and the atmosphere became much more cordial.

They have been impressed by the improvements already instituted by Tambu and this greatly eased the situation. It was agreed that our organization will move towards registration as a Community Based Organization (CBO). This will require changes over time, with a move away from the residential nature of some of the support we

offer. It will enable Abbas Rest to meet all the local legislative requirements and will involve us setting up local management groups. They will work with us in supporting the most vulnerable children in ways which cause the least possible disruption to their cultural and extended family roots. All this is in keeping with our intention of, wherever possible, avoiding the creation of a dependency culture.



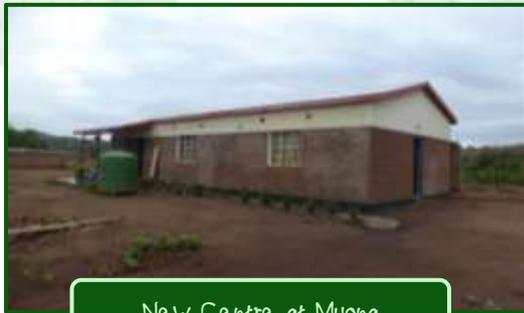
Giving out maize

There was a good turnout for the maize distribution and both Eric and Lytton, who will shortly be leaving our programme, assisted Ben with the heavy task of bagging up the maize. It was encouraging to see some strong, healthy young women and men coming forward to receive some soap in addition to their maize. There are very limited opportunities for these young adults in the Chiringa area -- motherhood for the girls and a hard life of subsistence farming for the boys; how we wish we could do more! However, by the grace of God and with your support through Abbas Rest, these children have reached adulthood and for the most part are strong and healthy and we commit them to God's care.



The Twins

While all this was taking place, it was brought to our notice that an elderly couple had come, asking for assistance. They were each holding a tiny baby. Twin boys!! Their father had died of AIDS while the mother passed away due to TB shortly after giving birth. They were vainly trying to feed them some goat's milk from a spoon. The boys had been born in February but were smaller than Tambu's six week old! We were impressed by the way in which Tambu gently took their details, having sent Ben scurrying to the village to try and obtain some feeding bottles and milk formula. These are both expensive and in short supply. Allie, by God's providence, had a supply of cozy baby clothes, hand knitted by her grandmother. A large bag of maize was also provided. The grandfather took hold of my hand and said simply, 'God bless you.' Thus he called upon God to bless you all. Words cannot express his or our gratitude to you for your generous provision. Tambu explained to the couple that Abbas Rest would supply them with milk formula and maize until the children were weaned, at which stage they might be more able to manage and will be reassessed.



New Centre at Muona

The lovely new centre at Muona was looking good when we arrived after a very early start and a long journey. Our weariness dissipated by the sight of the children and housemothers on the veranda. They sang out a welcome song.

Maize distribution here was harder work as there was no Eric or Lytton to assist. The weighing and bagging up cannot be prepared beforehand as each family supplies their own bag. Some grandmothers spoke to Tambu about their need for plastic sheeting to repair roofs damaged by recent storms. Once again she dealt kindly with their requests, spending

time with them and coming to a decision about helping them.

Zione was attending a Bible class at the nearby New Life church. When children showed that they could read Chichewa, they were given a Bible. Imagine our delight on discovering that Mphatso's Bible had been donated by our very own trustee, Jim Walsham. God's timing of these little encouragements is impeccable. Just when we are assailed by doubt, he gives us a sign that reminds us to trust his plan.



Zione

It was a very long walk to see the house we had built for a grandmother whose dwelling had been completely destroyed by recent flooding. On the way we observed where the water had surged through the villages, creating havoc with buildings and completely destroying the road. It is almost complete and has a traditional roof, in keeping with its neighbours.



The House

On the long trek home we encountered a lad whose polythene bag had burst and who was vainly trying to carry his sweet potatoes and ride his bike at the same time. I quickly transferred our goods to my cotton bag and

offered him the use of our own wee bag. Upon observing this, a local man rushed into his garden and, with his panga knife, slashed a large stalk of bananas which he insisted on giving us. He also wanted to give us maize cobs which we just could not carry. His act of spontaneous and extravagant generosity came on a day when many hands had been held out asking for help. This had set up many questions in our minds and God's immediate response to our questioning hearts was to introduce us to a hard working farmer who, taking note of our small act of kindness, responded by giving us a gift. Once again God was reminding us of his love and his care of the situation in which we found ourselves.



The Farmer and Bananas

The social services are very pleased with the conditions at the new centre. They have instructed us that a bore hole is required on the property. This must therefore be our first priority and it will not come cheaply. They also require us to erect some boundary fencing or a wall. That will need to be a project for the future and will be dependent upon God's provision.



The School Children in Uniform

Allie and I made a visit to Fatima School, which is attended by our youngsters. Despite it being the first day of term, and a very, very busy day, we were graciously received and our small gifts handed over. When we mentioned that we wished we could have brought more, he remarked that 'Half a loaf is better than none,' making us feel quite at home.

I hope that this newsletter will give you a true flavour of how things are with Abbas Rest. Our volunteer supporter, Lizzy Hamilton, remains in Chiringa and will be on hand to assist Tambu and Ben to begin acting on the plans we have worked out with them. We will therefore have much to report in our next communication with you.

The charity has had a hard time in recent years, with the death of its founder and various changes of personnel. At each of the gatherings of children and guardians, we were careful to emphasise that the support we provide does not come from us, but from God. Your support has enabled us to do great things for people who have little. Can we ask you to pray that the funds we require will continue and will increase. Although we have no direct plans to expand, a bore hole for the Muona Centre is urgently required. There is also much work to be done on the buildings at Chiringa. Sharing this newsletter with others would spread the word of these needs. We have a wonderful story to tell and will be very happy to come and talk to interested people. If you do hold any fundraising events, do send us details so that we can put them into the next newsletter.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

- To the wonderful supporters of St Johns Town of Dalry for over £600 raised at their recent coffee morning
- To the late Mrs Vincent for the legacy of £250
- To Raimo for his good wishes and the details of continued support in Finland
- To Gillian Aitken of The Ark in Ayr, who prepared copy for the printer

UK Office: 18 Bellesleyhill Road, Ayr, KA8 9BL

Tel: 01292 442963

Email: aromalawi@gmail.com

Facebook: Abbas Rest Orphans

Registered Scottish Charity (no: SC033166)