



**FRIENDS OF
IBBA GIRLS SCHOOL
SOUTH SUDAN**

May 2016

John Benington (Chair of Trustees)
j.beningtonibbaschool@gmail.com
Tel: +44 (0)24 7671 5655
+44 (0)7557799648

Georgia Clancy (Press/Media)
ibbagirlsschoolcomms@gmail.com
Tel: +44 (0)1242 282000

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Gary Bandy (Honorary Treasurer)
gary.bandy@mac.com



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SPRING FORWARDS, FALL BACKWARDS

May 2016

Fire, First Aid, Fluency and Films

Simon, the school assistant, jumped around the floor with a grimace on his face, holding his arm, then thrust it into a bucket of cold water. This bravura performance formed part of the first aid course run for all the staff by Julia, FIGS Trustee and former head teacher, who visited Ibba in April with two other teachers Paul and Sue. James the groundsman who lay 'unconscious' in the centre of the room was competently moved into the recovery position by his friend Keffa, and a round of applause followed.

On the following day a fire prevention and fire-fighting course run by Paul broke all records for volume of sound as all the staff shouted in unison 'FIRE!' as his demonstration paper houses were being burnt down, and evacuation procedures demonstrated. Sue thought she had planned for all eventualities in her first English lesson for support staff - name badges, flash cards, visual aids, tables and chairs carefully arranged. As the twelve eager staff arrived the heavens opened, lightning flashed and thunder rolled. There was no chance of competing against the roar of the rain crashing down on the tin classroom roof; Sue had not planned the sign language needed for the first 15 minutes of her lesson!

Saturday night was film night; no popcorn, no ice cream but a packed audience of students, teachers and support staff. There are gasps of amazement as we watch larger than life dinosaurs; students hide under the seats when snakes and crocodiles appear, but funnily enough the UK visitors are the only ones to duck when an enormous bat flies round the room. We realise that the ranks of the audience watching through the windows has swelled as the night watchmen interrupt their patrol to catch five minutes of the main attraction, 'Mr Bean on Holiday'.



Dear Friends,

SPRING FORWARDS, FALL BACKWARDS

As the UK approaches its Spring Bank Holiday week, many people try to take a short break to celebrate the ending of the long dark days of winter, and the first reliable signs of summer light and new life and growth. But Brits are also cautious because we know that the climate can just as easily still fall back into wintery ice and cold.

In this Spring Newsletter we celebrate some cautious signs of progress and hope in South Sudan, but are also aware that the country could still fall backwards into the folly of continued internal conflict, instead of movement forwards to peaceful social and economic development.

This month we highlight 5 themes and memes:

1. The Struggle For Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

Read the latest about the still fragile prospects for peace and reconciliation; and the historic moment of opportunity to move forward with a positive programme of social and economic development of this new country – including a bold strategy for investment in education as part of the peace-building process.

2. Improving Teaching and Learning at IGBS

Share stories and photos from the recent trip to Ibbra by FIGS volunteer teachers Julia, Paul, and Sue – carrying out the next stage of our planned programme of capacity building work with staff from IGBS. This included working shoulder to shoulder alongside IGBS teachers in the classroom, facilitating workshops with teachers from other local schools – and a lot of laughter, singing and fun.

3. Innovative Building

Our ambitious building programme for next year includes a second 3- classroom block, an imaginative multi-purpose assembly/dining hall, and a 4th dormitory.

4. Charity in China, Ceilidh in Coventry, Couplets in Covent Garden

Wonderful news of FIGS fund-raising, including a big grant from friends in China, more student sponsorships, and lively events (e.g poetry reading in Covent Garden,

Ceilidhs in Coventry, sponsored mountaineering across the Alps, and birthdays and golden weddings, in support of FIGS.

5. Speed Dating!

Please book Saturday Nov 26 for FIGS annual meeting in Coventry – including our usual Skype call with staff and students at Ibba School, and opportunities to meet lots of other FIGS supporters, followed by a social evening.

1. Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

Cautious signs of hope: A peace agreement has been signed; the rebel leaders have declared an end to fighting and have returned to Juba; a Transitional Government of National Unity has been formed; and a technical committee has been established to resolve the contentious issue of the appropriate number of States (10 or 28 or ?).

However there are still outbreaks of crazy shootings (the latest being the tragic killing of Sister Veronika while driving an ambulance in Yei) which show that the Government has not yet managed to re-establish the rule of law throughout the country or even control over the army and the various militias. **Sign up to the excellent regular news briefings from John Ashworth (sudans-john-ashworth@googlegroups.com) and from Brother Bill (brbillf@yahoo.com.au) from Solidarity.**

Mercifully, Yambio, Maridi and Ibba have been largely restored to peace and this is partly due to the courageous public leadership exercised by the state governors, ministers and church leaders of all denominations within (the former) Western Equatoria State - not least by Nagomoro Bridget, Bp Wilson Kamani, Minister Pia Philip, Sister Margaret Scott and other Trustees of Ibba Girls School, who have called for peace and continued to get on with their jobs.

Church leaders of all denominations, and at all levels, nationally, regionally and locally, are taking the lead in speaking out about the evil of continued violence and the need for truth, justice and reconciliation as part of the pathway back to peace

and forward to development. There are strong rumours of a visit to South Sudan by the Pope to push this process along.

We in FIGS have been encouraged by **Gordon Brown (now UN special envoy for global education)** to try to make a contribution to this process. John Benington and four South Sudanese women from the UK diaspora, met with him in Coventry in November. Gordon argued strongly the need to invest in education (especially for girls and women) in South Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa. He saw investment in education as a key part of any strategy for restoring peace, and for political economic and social reconstruction, after lengthy conflict. He encouraged us to try to build a broad based coalition (involving actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors, in the UK, South Sudan and the international community) to make the case for serious investment in education in South Sudan, and for the development of a strategic plan.

Gordon Brown said that he would be pleased to help a high level campaign of this kind, and, when the time was right, to visit South Sudan, to help strengthen the argument. He has followed this meeting up with a letter and several text messages.

FIGS has established a small working group to develop this proposal, with help and advice from Sally Keeble (ex Minister for DfID) and from several from the South Sudan diaspora – Pamela Lomoro, Josephine Yanga, Nyakor Rian and Jacob Lagu. More in the next Newsletter.

2. Improving Teaching and Learning at IGBS

Snapshots from Julia, Paul and Sue Hunt's visit to Ibba

Two teachers rushed out of the room and the clock started ticking. They returned twenty seconds later and started to scribble a diagram. Another two teachers then dashed out of the room and returned twenty seconds later to add to the diagram created by first two. This was part of a series of practical activities demonstrating different ways of developing student understanding. The IGBS teachers were introduced to tasks where material is reduced, transformed or sequenced to enhance understanding. The liberal use of thumbs up, thumbs down or thumbs sideways to indicate a level of understanding by learners was subsequently seen being used in lessons.



Earlier in the training session the focus was on the central active phase of a lesson, giving students time to fully explore and make sense of the content of the lesson. It was suggested that students think teachers talk too much and the teachers agreed that they probably do talk too much! It was therefore concluded that the majority of lesson time should be spent on activities that enable learners to actively investigate, in order to fully understand information.

The idea that students remember more from the beginning and end of a lesson was also considered, so ideally lessons should have lots of 'beginnings and ends'. The teachers were asked to consider that students have different learning styles, so activities that involve looking, listening and doing should be planned.

In a later session the teachers from IGBS were joined by teachers from local primary schools and the purpose of the start and review phase of a lesson was introduced. Teachers could be seen holding up mini-white boards or slapping words on the wall as their knowledge about what had been covered was reviewed.

During the following week the teachers from IGBS worked with the UK teachers to plan and deliver lessons using some of the learning activities offered in these training sessions.



Sue's first impressions on her visit to IGBS

As we boarded the MAF Flight from Kajjansi to Ibba I had great feelings of excitement but also tinged with much apprehension... I had never done anything like this before...and strange thoughts of madness came into my head...was I finally 'losing it' I asked myself as I am usually airsick on little planes and boats...everyone had said this was a very risky thing to do and the official advice is not to go to South Sudan at all...!?! However, with a trusty Kwell inside me and a 'to the hell of it' attitude I took a deep breath and braced myself for this flight and whatever was to happen next...After all I was in good company with trusted people and folks who had been before and lived to tell the tale! This was going to be one great adventure and also, hopefully doing something useful...

It didn't take long to settle into the MAF flight... we had great seats near the front of the Cessna and had an experienced Dutch pilot who was clearly very cool about it all. It wasn't long before I couldn't take in enough of the views...they were magnificent. Miles and miles of greenness, a few small hills, great rivers meandering across the landscape below us and the site of massive Lakes - Victoria and Albert. Everything below was just fascinating to see. I then realised as we went further on into Northern Uganda and to South Sudan that there was nothing below that resembled a road or buildings as I know them, in the settlements below... This reinforced my realisation of how different a context and culture I was travelling to now...



Our arrival into Ibba began with a circle over the school...there I could see recognisable single story long buildings and even see the solar panels and water containers....I was somewhat reassured...But all around Ibba village were circles of tukuls in family compounds of cool thatch- roofed homes for the people of Ibba.

We soon landed on the red earth airstrip of 'Ibba International' as it is called and there greeted by local children fascinated by the arrival of this tiny plane. We emerged from the plane to the baking heat and within seconds the school's Toyota Land Cruiser swerved onto the runway to meet and greet us. What a great welcome it was from Head Teacher Richard Aluma and Honourable Nagomoro Bridget the founder of the school...lots of hugging and handshaking and then we were packed into the vehicle ... with all the boxes of school resources we had been asked to bring ...and then a swift drive back to the school ten minutes away.



Our next surprise was a corridor of girls singing and smiling as we drove from the gated entrance into the school compound. There they were organised into two lines and singing welcoming songs. There was much hand shaking and tears as we walked down the aisle they had created for us... What a great first impression of this school.... The staff and the girls were all so pleased to see us. Their welcome was tremendous and I knew from that moment that things here would be good for our fortnight at Ibba Girls Boarding School. I was already feeling 'at home'!

3. Innovative Building at Ibba Girls School

The innovative approaches being developed by FIGS and IGBS include building and sustaining the school in an environmentally-friendly way. This includes the use of locally fired mud bricks, indigenous wood, solar power to provide electricity and solar pumped water (remember fresh running water is important for health, and a first for Ibba). The site development plan and buildings are designed by our experienced architect Malcolm Worby who has extensive experience in 'green' African projects.

Following careful consultation with the governors, staff and students in Ibba, we are now seeking funding for the building of a multi-purpose 'Assembly Hall' in vernacular style (using a traditional pole and thatch design, and adobe half walls), which can be used for school dining hall, assemblies, debates, dance, drama, Sunday worship, English language training, and community meetings.

It has been designed to accommodate 400 people – large enough for the whole school, staff and visitors to congregate, and also to serve as a hub for in-service teacher training, adult education and community development during school vacations. We are now seeking funding for the assembly hall from a range of Trusts.

We hope that the innovative approaches we are taking to building design and community use can act as an inspiration to other enterprises in the region (Western Equatoria State), and that the assembly hall will become an important part of the school's capacity to act as a 'Hub' and a catalyst for community development in the area.



Catalyst for Community Development

We aim for the teaching, learning and environmental approaches developed at Ibba to be exemplary, and for the school to act as a beacon for other schools and institutions in Western Equatorial State. This is possible due to the way the school is embedded in the local community and political context – with close links to other schools and educational establishments in the region, and supported by local Trustees and a Board of Governors who are influential community leaders in the region, and in South Sudan as a whole. We hope that the new assembly hall, along with upgraded teaching resources, will add to the school's capacity to operate as a Hub, acting as a model of good practice and teaching development across (the former) Western Equatoria State, and as a resource for the whole of the local community, during the vacations as well as term time.

4. Wonder-ful and Enjoyable Fund-raising!

Zhejiang Wonder Foundation funds this year's Ibba dormitory!

Some months ago, our fundraising co-ordinator Chernise's parents were chatting with some friends over dinner while on holiday in China, when the subject of what their children do for a living came up. Ever supportive, they described her work for FIGS and the school in Ibba, only to discover that their friends had recently set up a charitable foundation, and were looking for prospective recipients of its funding.

Several transcontinental conversations, emails and WhatsApp messages later, we are delighted to announce that the Zhejiang Wonder Public Foundation in China has made a grant of USD135,000 towards constructing the dormitory and washroom block for this year's cohort of girl students.

We are extremely grateful for the Foundation's generous support, and thrilled to know and work with them, especially Kelly Zheng who has been very helpful. So to Kelly and others at the Foundation, we would like to say thank you for your truly wonderful donation, which is making a lasting contribution to life at Ibba Girls Boarding School.



This year's new dormitory is rapidly nearing completion

Other Foundations and Trusts

We are also warmly grateful for generous annual support and big gifts from a

number of family trusts, foundations, individuals and churches, including :

- The Bonavero family A B Charitable Trust
- Christ the King RC Church, Coventry
- Margaret Eddershaw and Keith Sturgess
- Jean Hartley
- Deus Laudamus Trust
- Joyce Carr Doughty Trust
- Horne Family Charitable Foundation
- Patrick McKenna Charitable Trust
- St Nics Church Nottingham
- The Paget family
- The Shepley family
- West Orchard URC Church, Coventry

Student Sponsorships

We aim to subsidise the costs of schooling and boarding for all pupils at IGBS. We currently have 43 student sponsors, all of whom give at least £27 per month. We therefore want to find another 77 sponsors so that all 120 students receive this subsidy. A big thank-you to five of you – including Adrian Rutter, Anne Stafford and John Scouller – who pledged or signed up to become Student Sponsors following our call in March this year, as a new cohort of 40 girl students was just starting out in Primary Level 4.

We equally appreciate the continued support of existing Student Sponsors such as Annette Stansfield, Margaret Robinson and Serena Lancaster, who have renewed their sponsorships for our first two cohorts of girl students, now in Primary Levels 5 and 6. Thank you for your commitment to supporting the girls in Ibba.



John Benington's 75th Birthday Appeal for the Next 3-Classroom Block

John has launched a typically eccentric appeal for funding for a new 3-classroom block needed by next February. He is trying to find 500 friends and colleagues who will each donate £75 towards the costs of this building, and he has pledged to match fund whatever is donated (with Gift Aid) in this way. (Read his full letter of invitation [here](#) if you have not yet received yours. And ask to come to one of his 7½ informal parties)

John would like to express his warm thanks to all those who have given so far towards the next block of 3- classrooms – over £2000 received already, plus gift aid, and lots more on its way. Join the roll call of benefactors for this second classroom block:

- Fiona and David Atwood
- Paul and Sarah Bennett & family
- Mark and Wendy Dancer
- Jean and Paul Fisher
- Jo Hallett
- Erica and Peter Higgins
- Serena Lancaster
- Pamela Lomoro
- Vanda and Cally Palmer
- Stewart Ranson
- Eric and Joanne Shepley
- Mark Simmons

- Steve and Ros Watson
- And £75 from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous

John is writing to thank you all personally, but also wanted to publicly acknowledge and appreciate your commitment to the school.

Walking for Ibba



Jean Hartley is walking across the Alps, from Germany through Austria into Italy, with two friends this summer, and is aiming to raise funds for Friends of Ibba Girls School in doing so. Starting in Obersdorf in Germany and ending in Merano in Italy, the walk is one of the most dramatic and challenging Alpine walking long-distance paths. It involves a route of 126 km over 7 days, staying in mountain huts and involving a total of 5,100 metres of ascent.

[Click here](#) to make a donation, and leave Jean a personal message of support.

Churches and Gardens!

We would also like to thank the West Orchard United Reformed Church for their further generous gift of £3,000, and the congregation at St Barbara's Earlsdon for the £173.11 contributed from the sale of teas and coffees at their services. Regular giving and tithing by churches like these has become a bed-rock of support for Ibba Girls School.

And special thanks to Julia and David Russell for £300 raised from visitors to their lovely hidden Mill Garden, beautifully nestled in the shadows of Warwick Castle.

Rhyming Couplets in Covent Garden!

Warmest thanks also, yet again, to Margaret Eddershaw for the amazing poetry evening, For the Meanest Flower, which she organised at the Poetry Café in Covent Garden, in aid of Ibba Girls Boarding School, on the 18th of May. This raised £330 and widened awareness of girls education in South Sudan. Margaret had lined up a stellar team of ward winning women poets to read from their own witty, warm and often very challenging poems – Gill McEvoy, Kathleen M Quinlan, Katherine Gallagher and Margaret Eddershaw herself, reading from her book Riding the Rainbow – Images of Africa. [Order it here](#) if you have not already done so. A bargain at £5 and all proceeds have been donated to IGBS.

Gifts of other kinds

This is all in addition to the many gifts in kind that Margaret has sent to Ibba, including most recently pencil cases and sewing kits for the girl students, as well as a microscope so that school nurse Jovia can be trained to identify parasites in blood, particularly malaria, as part of maintaining healthcare provision at the school.



The girls receiving their new pencil cases and sewing kits; school nurse Jovia learning to use microscope

Sue Hunt, who accompanied Paul and Julia Sanders on their recent Ibba school visit, also donated mini-whiteboards which will come in very handy for classroom exercises.

In addition we thank the Sudan Church Association, via the editors John and Mary Twidell, for kindly featuring the school once again, and our Student Sponsorship programme in their recent newsletter.

Thank you!

With our best wishes and warm thanks,

John Benington Chair, on behalf of the Trustees and Friends of Ibba Girls School

John Benington (Chair of Trustees)
j.beningtonibbaschool@gmail.com
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