

## Trip Report - Malawi: 25.10.13 - 02.11.13

Tim De Marco - St John's Meads C of E Primary School, Eastbourne, UK.

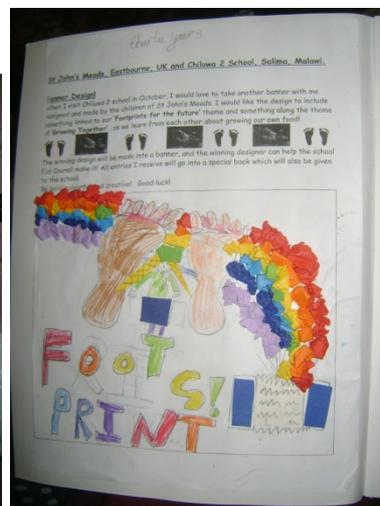
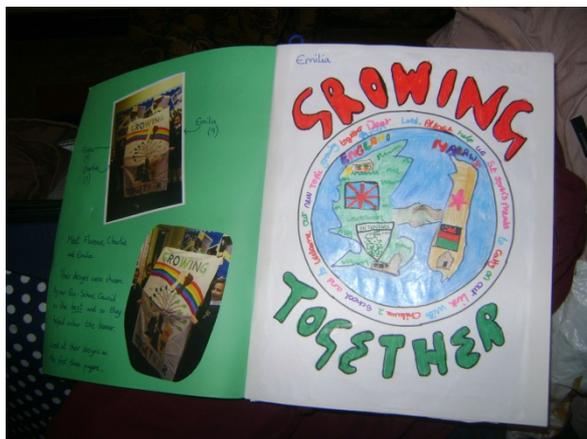
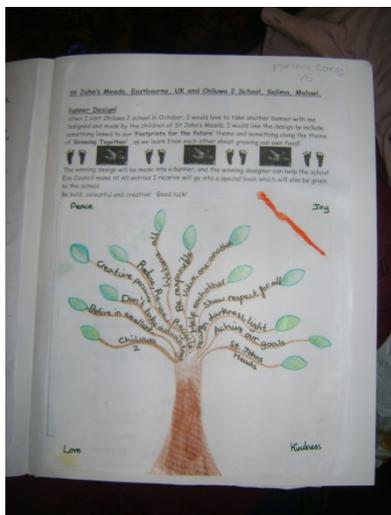
In October 2013, I visited Chilwa 2 School in Malawi for my second successive year, having first visited a year earlier. An ex-colleague, Louise Bateman also visited in 2011 and 2010, so it was our fourth visit in a row for our link, which I have found out is quite unusual. It has been wonderful to receive the British Council's support and affirmation that our link is moving in the right direction!

In June 2013, the link co-ordinator for Chilwa 2 School, Moses Mhango, visited the UK as part of the British Council grant funding. Getting to know Moses during this time was a pleasure and our friendship, and the link were greatly strengthened. One thing I realised was that Moses had a passion for growing crops and farming, and he was very interested in our recently developed school allotment. From here, we decided to take 'Growing Together' as our joint curriculum project title for the year. This would incorporate the following mini-projects:

- Growing Together - a look at how crops are grown in UK and Malawi and working together to improve methods in both schools, learning ideas from each other.
- 'Needs and Wants' - learners thinking about the differences between these concepts and comparing how they are similar and different in UK and Malawi.
- 'Is it fair?' - Looking at fairness globally, how are resources distributed?
- Environment - carrying on links with our previous 'Eco Schools' projects and the excellent learning that took place.

At St John's Meads this year, our school theme for the year is 'Footprints for the Future', incorporating pupil's dreams and aspirations for the future, their 'footprint' in the world - how are they treating each other, what values do they show? Also, it incorporates our carbon footprint, and what effect we are having on the environment.

Before the visit, I taught a lesson on 'Needs and Wants' to my Year 3 class, and they came up with some interesting ideas. I asked pupils across the school to design a banner that we could create and I could take over to Malawi. I had dozens of entries and the school eco-council picked these three designs as their favourites:



These were incorporated to make this banner, which here is being presented to Chilwa 2 school's staff and school council.



When I arrived at Chilwa 2 school on Monday morning, I immediately noticed something had changed!

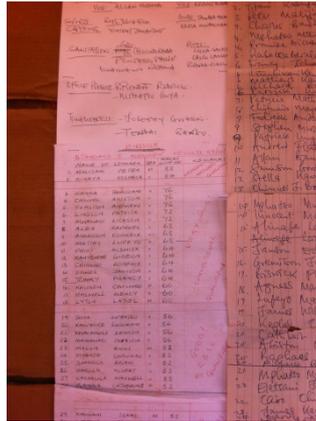


They had a new building! It incorporated 2 new large classrooms for Standard 7 and 8, as well as an indoor Headteacher's office and a school library!



As well as these books, largely donated by parents at St John's Meads, they also had 'reading scheme' books in Chichiwe (local dialect), that were starting to be organised (second picture).

It is so encouraging to see resources being used well, whether they are from government (such as the building), or donated from abroad, and it is having a positive effect on the education of learners.



It was also encouraging to see detailed assessment being taken, particularly in Standard 8, as shown here. The teachers are showing evidence of individual student care; looking after the progress of every learner, praising those doing well and meeting individually with students who are falling below expectations to help them.

On Tuesday, I observed a lesson taught by Moses Mhango in his Standard 8 class. There were over 100 learners in the classroom, all seated, albeit some were 2 to a desk, but such progress!



Two things particularly struck me about his excellent lesson:

- 1) He made it seem like he was teaching far fewer than 100+. Every learner was included and involved and made progress in his lesson.
- 2) Mr Mhango had created a positive learning environment in his classroom, where learners felt valued, and he had an excellent rapport with his students, knowing them as individuals.

After this, it was my turn! I taught a lesson about 'The footprint of our food', again a lesson that had been taught by a teacher at St John's to a Year 4 class before I left.

We considered the stages food goes through to get to people in Malawi and UK, and the learners were amazed at the stages needed to get to UK!



I also shared the poem 'Footprint of our food', which I wrote with Y 3 and 4 at St John's, and we performed at our school Harvest Festival. This poem has been submitted to the Starfishers website. Using the laptop donated to Chilwa 2 on this visit, I showed Standard 8 a video of St John's pupils performing the poem.

The chorus which goes:

*It tastes so good*

*It tastes so good*

*But what's the footprint of our food?*

was taught to Standard 8, and they loved performing it with the actions. This was filmed and shared with St John's Meads pupils when I returned.

### **Raising awareness with Staff**

In the Head Teacher's office/Staff Room, there were lots of opportunities to talk to the staff, share what is happening with the link, and show pictures from St John's Meads. The laptop was particularly useful for this. Here I am talking about the school allotment, using the laptop to help:



I was given the opportunity to talk to all staff about the link's history, and where we are going in the future. I have done the same at St John's Meads. Both schools have had 3 new teachers this year, who didn't know about the link. Both schools have also had visits from Starfish in the Autumn term, and staff have been trained. In the UK, staff were shown the resources available on the Starfishers website by Nich Cunliffe.

On Wednesday, I observed another lesson in Standard 7, and then taught them about 'Needs and Wants'.



In this lesson, I modelled using clear 'success criteria' or 'steps to success', and the learners self-evaluated at the end.

Using the responses from both schools, I created this table on the blackboard:

	<b>Needs</b>	<b>Wants</b>
<b>UK</b>	Food Water A roof over our heads A family Love	A chocolate factory A self-writing pencil The ability to fly
<b>Malawi</b>	Food Rainfall Crops Loving family Education	Money To be a pilot To be president

The similarities in the needs box is striking, and the differences in aspirations is also interesting, with UK learners thinking a bit more imaginatively, but this shows the difference in cultural exposure as well.

I also asked the learners to think about themselves and their talents, and I took their work back to share with learners in the UK. I will send back equivalent work from the UK in 2014. When I said I enjoy creating music, I was asked to perform, so with my wonderful translator, Sam, we taught the class 'Jesus in a Boat' with actions, which they really enjoyed.

## Starfish Training Day.

On Thursday, 1 teacher from each link school was invited to Kuti Wildlife Reserve where we were staying, where we received training from Kuti staff, Starfish representatives and had the opportunity to discuss links and ideas with each other. It was a valuable and memorable day.



## Farewell Day

On Friday, it was a time to say goodbye. We arrived at school as early as possible, and they waited to show us their morning assembly! This included a rousing rendition of the Malawi National Anthem.

Once again, it had gone far too quickly, and saying goodbye was hard, but it had been a positive and encouraging trip. During the morning, I asked to spend a few minutes in every class, which I did, moving from Standard 1 through to Standard 8, and seeing how the learning progresses.

### Standard 1a

### Standard 1b



### Standard 5

### Standard 8



A variety of teaching methods and learning styles were evident!

After this, I got to see some PE...



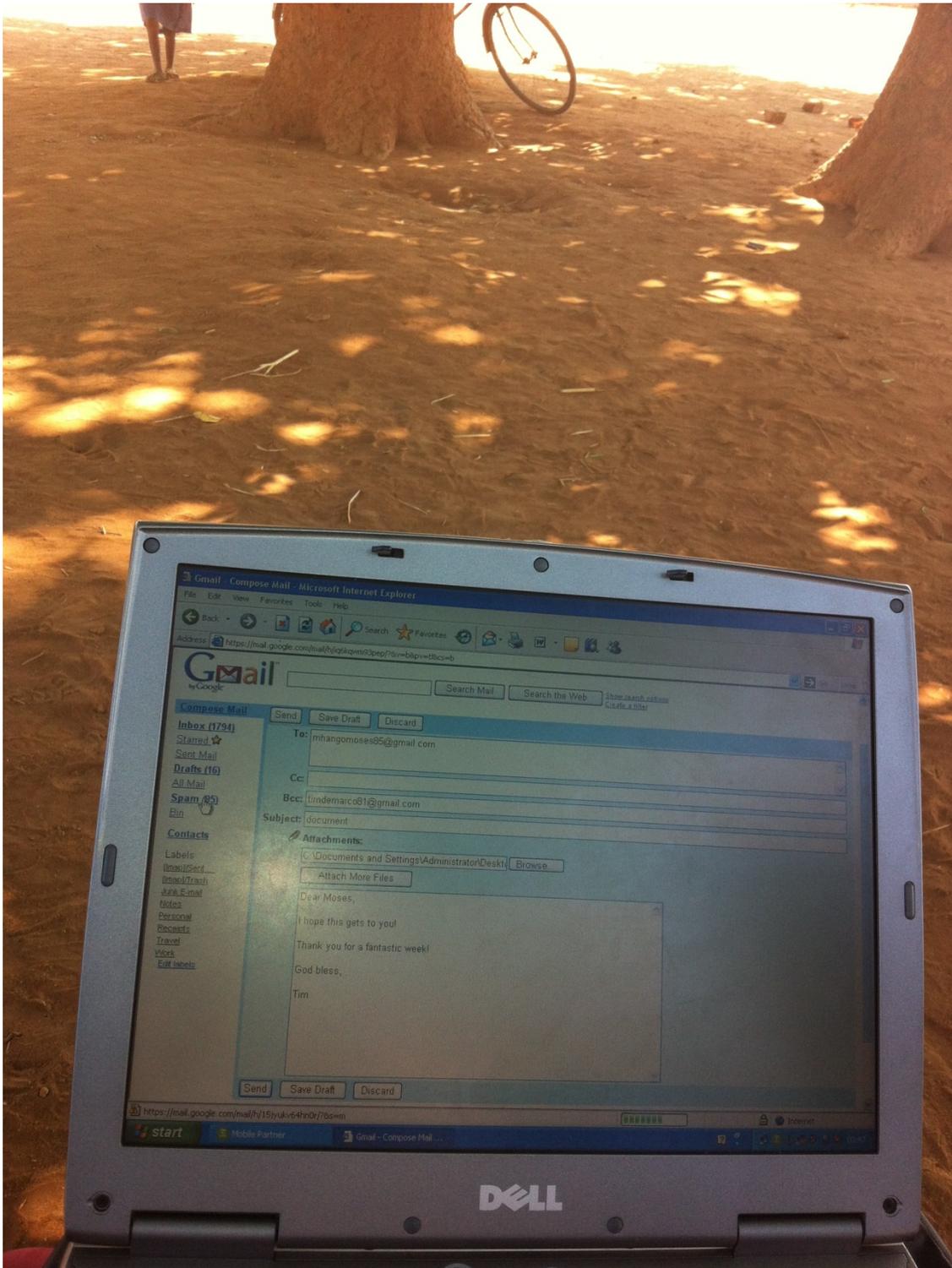
They love posing for photographs, and the netball skirts donated by St John's were very much in action!



We ended by exchanging gifts at a whole school gathering.



Just before I left, we used a borrowed 'dongle' to access the internet through the laptop. The signal wasn't very strong, but with the right technology, this can be achieved.



I also hope to send at least one more laptop back to Malawi next year.

The trip was very encouraging. I can see clear progress in a year, with teachers embracing a variety of teaching and learning methods, rigorous assessment procedures and more evidence of personal learning, amidst the huge challenges that large numbers and scant resources brings. I look forward to developing the link further in the future.