

KISIMA VISIT FEBRUARY 2018

Mark and Julie Dickins and John and Sue Newcomb have sponsored pupils at Kisima Mixed Secondary School, Nyahururu, Kenya for several years, and when it was suggested to them that they should visit the school, they leapt at the chance. They decided to try and raise some funds for the school before visiting, and did a 100km sponsored cycle ride in August 2017 which raised some £13,000. When asked what they could bring with them which might be of use to the pupils, the school asked for board games and sports equipment, which were duly begged or bought and taken along.

Julie Dickins recalls: "We flew to Nairobi on Thursday 8th February and the next morning, David Maina Kariuki, the School Director, kindly met us and brought us to Nyahururu. His wife Catherine, who is the School's sponsorship coordinator, and their children, James and Sarah, then joined us for a brief visit to the local 'hippo pool' and the waterfall near Thomson's Falls Lodge (our hotel), followed later by dinner with the Maina family and the School Principal, Daniel Amunga at the Lodge, when we together put the finishing touches to our four day schedule at the school."

On Saturday morning, John and Julie gave a presentation about their families, homes and the sponsored cycle ride, followed by a quiz on football stadia and famous athletes from around the world. The quiz proved to be very competitive and greatly enjoyed, with signed rugby and football shirts and balls being awarded as prizes to the winners of each section (the scoring system following the 'toss a coin' format but with arms crossed or raised, see the photo below).



The Presentation



The Quiz



One of the winners (a possible convert to Watford FC?!)

There then followed some fantastic cultural dances by the students, who also got the visitors up and dancing as well!



The morning was rounded off by opening the visitors' suitcases and bringing out the board games and sports equipment, without forgetting some Maths revision books kindly donated by St Clement Danes School....



Mark, Sue, John and Julie with the head boy and girl, and the games, equipment and books

After lunch, the visitors met with their sponsored students, both past and present: Mark and Julie's previous student, Pamela Lenariach, travelled from university near Mombasa and back in order to meet them, a journey which took 10-12 hours each way, which they really appreciated! Sue said she and John "loved meeting our past student, who had just completed her exams, and seeing how this had given her the chance to attend university, an opportunity which would not have been afforded to her without sponsorship. Our new student, who had only arrived 3 or 4 weeks before our trip, told me how she had prayed hard to be accepted into Kisima School and was very excited when she was given a place."



Julie & Mark with Pamela Lenariach, their former student



Julie with Abdi Sar Igu, the Dickins' current student



**John & Sue with Ezaura Leleruk, their previous student (above)
and with Mercy Achungu, their current student (below)**



Mark taught some students to play touch rugby; board games were played; and a football tournament in honour of the visitors (which ran for four afternoons) began. Julie taught a few choruses to the students attending the Christian Union, who in turn sang some of their own choruses in Kiswahili with the visitors (who were supplied with a helpful translation!) These choruses were then sung at the Sunday service the following morning.



The touch rugby



After the Sunday service

On Sunday afternoon, the visitors walked to the Equator (which is close by) with some of the students, watched the football tournament, and chatted with several other students. Sue commented: "It was a privilege to engage with the students, who showed a great interest in knowing about the UK and how our lives differed from their own."



Sue and Mark with Leah Njoki, Abbas Ibrahim, Mercy Achungo and Guyo Bonaya



Rose Chede, Abigael Mwende, Jane Akuam and Khadija Abdi

On Monday and Tuesday, the visitors helped Catherine to process the Maths and other books for the library, and observed lessons, including History, Biology, Chemistry, English, Maths, Agriculture, Geography, Business Studies and CRE (Christian Religious Education).



Processing the library books

John commented: "The class I found of most interest was Business Studies (perhaps not surprisingly, as a businessman with a Masters degree in the subject), where the students were being taught about overseas shipping and the pros and cons of using different modes of transport." Mark attended Maths, Chemistry, Agriculture and English classes, while Sue enjoyed attending Maths, Biology and CRE. She was pleasantly surprised when one of the students lent her an exercise book and a geometry set to enable her to join in with the Maths class. "Using a compass was more of a challenge than I remember!" she said. "I was very impressed at the level of concentration shown by all the students in every class I attended." Julie added: "The English lessons I attended were of a very good standard (I was grateful to Agnes for lending me her books!); and I found the CRE lesson, which compared the prophets of African tradition with those of the Old Testament, really fascinating."



The visitors also watched – and John helped referee – the continuing football tournament, which concluded on Tuesday afternoon, with Form 2 winning the girls' tournament and Form 4 winning the boys'. John presented two new Christ Church, Chorleywood trophies to the winning teams, and also congratulated the runners up (Form 3 girls and Form 1 boys). These presentations were followed by a short farewell ceremony, when mutual thanks were exchanged; the Principal, Dan, stressing the importance of sponsors to the school, and the visitors saying how welcome they had been made.



John refereeing the boys' final



Presentation of the girls' football trophy...



...and the boys'

As the visitors left, Mark summed up their thoughts on what had been, for them all, a great experience: "It was fantastic to come and see the school, to meet the students and staff, and to see at first hand the life-changing differences that sponsoring pupils makes, something that they are fully aware of and grateful for. It was also good to see that the money we raised with our bike ride had already been well spent on replacing the Chemistry lab floor. We'd like to thank everyone at the school for making us so welcome."



Mark, Julie, Catherine, James, Sarah, David, John and Sue saying farewell