

Visit to Maramba – 2014 (Extract from Parish magazine)

During the May half term I was very privileged to participate in my fourth visit to Tanzania and was delighted to meet up with old friends and new.

Only a short while ago we were concerned at Tenbury Primary School that our grant money from the British Council had come to an end as we had not been successful with our 'Connecting Classrooms' application. Apart from wondering how we could continue developing our partnership with Maramba 'A' Primary School, I was further dismayed as we had been trying to extend the partnership network to include other local schools – Cleehill with Churwa school and Leominster Infants with Lugongo school.

Much to my delight, I opened an unexpected email back in February from the British Council, telling me that our application had been re-considered and all six schools were being awarded the grant. After the initial excitement, a little panic set in as I realized that we had only been given a very short space of time to organize our projects including all our visits, both to and from Tanzania. Luckily, being a hardened visitor to Maramba and familiar with the expectations, I got to work straight away on our plans and a group of seven of us set off on 24th May.

We had a fantastic week working in the schools and everyone in Maramba was so friendly and welcoming, we very quickly felt at home and were certainly amongst many friends.

Our first day at Maramba 'A' was quite emotional as we were shown the 'Rainforest' and garden that had been planted following some of the teachers' visits to Tenbury back in 2012. A large plaque hung from a tree saying :

'Maramba A & Tenbury Primary Schools. The real model of rain forest conservation. "LONG LIVE OUR LINK"'

I was asked to plant a banana tree in the forest to 'launch' the project and felt very proud and honoured – their visit to Tenbury had certainly had a lot more impact than we had ever imagined and the new school garden will soon be providing a large variety of fruit to all the pupils – a real achievement.

During the week we taught some English and Maths lessons to the pupils using materials we had taken out from England, and shared lots of information with the staff, learning from each other about our different cultures, education systems and ways of life.

As well as spending time in our three 'grant funded' schools, we also visited Mhinduro Primary to launch yet another partnership between them and Farlow Primary. Their welcome was amazing and they were all so excited about beginning their links and looking forward to future projects.

Our partnerships are certainly growing, and moving from strength to strength. We started with just two link schools five years ago, and now have a total of eight schools involved, all very keen and eager to work together. We have lots to offer each other and our visits certainly provide us with valuable experiences to share with all our pupils – first-hand information and pictures are always so much more meaningful than just learning from books and websites. The friendships formed are equally, if not more important, and we are all anxiously waiting for the Tanzanian teachers' return visit, hopefully towards the end of September, when they will work in our schools, contributing to and enriching our pupils' education, global understanding and awareness of the world around them.

Jill Grant – Headteacher Tenbury Primary School