

Tom Errington – A report on my 5 months skiving from work

June

Work Progress

Signed partnership agreement with local community. Initially for two blocks of three classrooms and two offices (i.e. total classrooms 6, total offices 4)

Began collecting materials.

Dug trenches and poured foundations for both blocks.

Reached floor slab level with brickwork on blocks 1 and 2.

Completed half of block 1 slab. Began filling to underside of slab level on block 2.

The total number of local volunteers was at least 1,000. For some reason even some people who lived 6km away without any connection to the school turned up to help.

Other Points of Interest

Living in local town (Mubende) and commuting to site everyday.

No matter how much sun cream was applied I still continued to burn.

Expressed interest in coaching some youngsters at football. Heard nothing for a week.

Copy of letter to mayor (already sent) appears stating that "Premiership football player would like to coach the county team".

Went to watch team play in a match, realized they were very, very good. They were 1-0 down at half time and I was called into the middle of the group of players and supporters on the pitch to tell them what they were doing wrong.

I later took charge of a couple of pretty confusing coaching sessions and people realized my ability. The team continued to play matches and won a difficult away fixture where I had not even been to watch. Local radio put the victory down to a new white coach who had been coaching in Mubende. Strange



Local volunteers quarrying stone foundations



Local volunteers digging trench for foundations



Laying bricks from foundations to slab level

July

Work Progress

Concrete floor slabs completed on both blocks.
Brickwork completed to window sill level on Block 1.
Progress was seriously hampered by adverse weather.

Other Points of Interest

20 UK, Kenyan and Ugandan volunteers arrived (and later departed) to supplement the local volunteers.

Began living in the village next to the site. No running water or electricity but camp fires, premium beer at 40p and 20 litres of local spirits (60 – 80% - no one quite seemed to know) for £10.

New Build Uganda football team played against the local sub-county team and lost 5-1. Match watched by about 2000 fans including about 200 from our local village who were absolutely crazy.

Went rafting on the Nile. Free beer and a barbecue was provided after the rafting. We understood that there was only two crates of beer. We got back about 2 hours before the other group of rafters. My brother insisted that we eat all the food from the barbecue and drink all the beer before the Americans in the other group returned. After epic drinking we succeed (and we fed the rest of the meat we couldn't eat to a dog) but just as the Americans returned the staff brought out another crate. Gutted

Agree with player from Mubende County Team to do training sessions for a new youth football team (apart from school teams there was no provision for youth football in the whole county.)



UK, Kenyan and other Ugandan volunteers



Completed floor slab

August

Work Progress

Block 1 completed to wall plate level. Block 2 to window sill level.

Local volunteer numbers were dwindling restricting amount of materials that could be brought to site. We therefore had a meeting with the local community to motivate them to continue. During the meeting two it became apparent that the head teachers of other schools had told the community that:-

We were all Protestants who were building a school for Protestants and all the Catholics would be chased away.

The school was being built for British school children. Once it was completed a massive community would come from the UK to evict the local people from their land and take over the school.

The usual stories were also in circulation about the Headteacher/local community leaders etc taking all the money and buying a new car. The meeting was a success and the local community returned to work with renewed enthusiasm.

During the school holidays two of the pupils (14 years old) volunteer to help on site. One of them has to walk 9km to get to the site. All they ask in reply is to eat breakfast and lunch with us. Their commitment really spurred us on with the work.

Other Points of Interest

Reading kick off the new season against Man Utd. Afterwards, the works manager from the site told me (with a straight face) that he was expecting an exciting race for the Premiership with Man U, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Reading all involved!

Team name chosen for new youth football club, Nakayima Royals. Nakayima is a tree in Mubende that is believed to cause increased fertility among women. Royals as a tribute to a football team from England.

Club developed into three age groups U14s, U16s and U18s. Sets of football kits for each age group purchased. First ever match against local town "Mityana Young Stars". Announced on local radio that white coach is predicting a massive win for the Nakayima Royals. I didn't. We win anyway 2-1.



Block 1 completed to window level



Scaffolding for bricklaying up to ring beam level



Fabricating reinforcement cage for ring beam



Hi tech lifting mechanism for reinforcement cage



Cast ring beam



End of another day

September

Work Progress

Roofing complete on Block 1.
Brickwork complete to wall plate level on Block 2.
Trusses fabricated for Block 2 roof.

Other Points of Interest

2nd group of UK volunteers arrive for 2 weeks.
3 new coaches join Nakayima Royals.



Checking line and level of brickwork at wall plate level



Making trusses on top of the building to avoid heavy lifting



Adding purlins to attach roof sheets to



Roof sheets on one building and external gable plastered. (Our temporary kitchen to right of photo)



UK Volunteer Group 2 – plastering



Plastering (don't worry the final finish isn't like that). Stephen found it a bit cold so he has got his ski suit on!

October

Work Progress

Block 1 almost complete. Block 2 trusses raised for roof. Brickwork to gables completed.

Work on a seventh classroom began. Once complete this will make the school "Grade 1". The only school of this type in the sub-county and one of only four in the county. A group of seven skilled Ugandan workers remain on site to finish the work with the local volunteers.

Other Points of Interest

Moved out of house and into one of our new classrooms.

Attended my second "introduction" ceremony (like an engagement party crossed with a soap opera and a pantomime.) I am tasked with carrying a 25l goured of beer on my head to make it possible for the grooms party to enter the event. The distance from the car to the party was about 100m. The road was very muddy and slippery but I managed to safely get to the party. Then there was some kind of pantomime situation going on about whether we should be allowed in or not. By now the beer was getting quite heavy and every time I moved it sloshed around so it was difficult to balance. All the time someone was telling me how important it was that I didn't drop it or put it down. In the end I had to have two other people on either side of me making sure it didn't fall off my head. And all the time I had a sort of dress on.

Nakayima Royals U14s and U16s travel to Fort Portal, results are 2-5 and 3-1 respectively.

Nakayima Royals U18s win Independence Day Tournament.

Testimonial match played on my last day with U18 team. I am shocking and have to come off at half time before I collapse.

Club registered as community based organization and developed into youth sports club to include netball for girls. There is more to this story and there is now a website which is not quite complete but worth a look <http://www.nakayimaroyals.org>

Endless embarrassing speeches and leaving ceremonies before I leave.



Introduction ceremony – The “dress” is called a Kanzil



Introduction ceremony – the happy couple



Nakayima Royals U14s



Nakayima Royals U16s



Nakayima Royals U18s with guest appearances for a testimonial match.



Construction work on the blocks was phased so that partially finished classrooms could be used in the temporary situation.



The skilled team that is completing the work with the locals (minus the white man).



Me with some of the team



Leaving ceremony 1 of 37



Leaving ceremony 18 of 37

I HAVE ESTIMATED THE FINAL COST OF CONSTRUCTION AT £28,000. THIS SOUNDS LIKE A LOT BUT THERE ARE 600 PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL SO IT IS BASICALLY £46.67 PER PUPIL. WHAT A BARGAIN!

WORK ON THIS PROJECT IS STILL ONGOING AND WE ARE GOING TO BE FUNDRAISING FOR NEXT YEARS PROJECT SOON SO IF YOU ARE TEMPTED TO MAKE A DONATION PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO DEVON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION. EVERY SINGLE PENNY IS SPENT IN UGANDA ON THE BUILDING PROJECT.