

VILA MANINGA, MOZAMBIQUE JUNE/JULY 2007

On the 25th June, 2007, I set off with 4 other people on what would turn out to be one of the most memorable and fascinating trips of my life. We were heading to a small, charity run village deep within the Mozambique countryside. The opportunity was given to me towards the end of last year after Elizabeth Thomas (Gig) mentioned that the village was starting to develop a new project which would generate enough income to make the village more self sustainable. She said that the village was looking for a group of people from the UK to travel out there and plant 150,000 eucalyptus seeds. The group was to be led by Chris Ricketts, who having already been out to the village on two previous occasions was the ideal person. The group consisted of 5 people, myself, Chris and Stephen Dix from Marcham and Sarah & Polly Dow from Cholsey. After several planning meetings, and an armful of vaccinations, the day came when we were to leave.

Our first destination was Johannesburg airport, South Africa, where we caught a connection flight which took us into Beira, one of the larger cities in Mozambique. On arriving in Beira, we were greeted by Mr & Mrs De Jager who after many years of extremely hard work have been able to set up an orphanage and bible college at the village. Before we could set off on the 3 hour journey to the village, Mrs De Jager gave us each a bread roll, and with the butter and cheese on the bonnet, we made ourselves a quick pack lunch in order to reduce the time spent travelling in the dark. This turned out to be a good idea as some of the potholes we passed were huge!

Previous to leaving, Gig had warned us not to expect any special accommodation and that long drops would be the most likely form of a toilet! However, on reaching Vila, we were lead into what had become the guest quarters, male and female bedrooms, toilets and showers, a kitchen, even a three piece suite. I think it's fair to say that we were all truly amazed at how comfortable the place was!

After a good night sleep followed by a light breakfast, we were taken on a quick tour of the village, and then introduced to Neil, the son of the De Jager's , who was to become our boss for the next 4 weeks. After lunch, Neil took us up to the nursery where we saw the scale of the project for the first time. Twenty rows, each containing 8000 pockets laid before us and we started to realise what Gig had meant by really hard, laborious work.

We started work the next morning at 7:00am, and on reaching the nursery Neil showed us the size of the seed we were to plant and the best way to describe the size of this seed is probably salt grains, yes, they were small! We were presented with a sheet of card and a nail which would be used to scrape the single seeds into each pocket and the hard slog began. Our day consisted of a 7 – 9am shift, followed by breakfast, then a long 9:30 – 12:30 shift which turned out to be most challenging with the heat peaking at 12. 12:30 gave us a welcomed hour and a half lunch break which took us to 2pm. We then had the final shift, which ended at around 5pm. We spent the evenings hanging out with the local orphans, playing cards or what turned out to be most entertaining, chasing the rats around the kitchen!

We continued like this for what turned out to be just two weeks as we had finished the seed ahead of schedule! Having finished the seed, Neil decided that we all deserved a holiday, so plans were made and we set off towards the coast to do some snorkelling for a few days, over a beautiful coral reef.

After returning to Vila, we spent a few days planting 16,000 teak seeds which we were glad to find out was much easier than the eucalyptus! After this we were given a chance to spend time with the children and we set ourselves the task of completing a project of making each child a pillow case and blanket for their new beds that they were to receive. This turn out to be great fun and I was particularly impressed by the way the children picked up the sewing technique, especially the boys!!

During our trip, we managed to compile a wish list with the De Jagers which included everything that they thought the village would need that would be sent on a container from the UK. The list included 3 to 4 old washing machines, 2 small chest freezers, wheelchairs, wheelbarrows, watering cans, mirrors, clocks, electric sewing machines, musical instruments, books written in Portuguese that would be suitable for children. If you feel that you have something hidden away at home that you do not use which is on the list then please ring Chris on 391329.

All in all, this trip has given me a tremendous insight into the African way of life and taught me to value my possessions much greater. Needless to say, I will definitely be making another trip in the future!!! I would like to thank Gig for all of the organisation that she did to make the trip possible as well as the De Jager's for making our time at the village feel so special. As a group I think we would all like to thank a local charity and the two generous people who funded all of our transport and food for the duration of our stay.

Finally, I would just like to say a huge thank you to the other guys who came; Chris, Steve, Sarah and Polly, without whom the trip would not have been half as fantastic.

JOS ROWE

See cover for photos

CROSSWORD ANSWERS BY ALISA

ACROSS

1 Bus 6 Timekeeper 9 Littlemore 13 Inn 12 Open Day
15 Nib 17 Owl 19 College 23 Vex 25 Effervesce 27
Entertains 28 Wet

DOWN

1 Balloon 2 Denman 3 Kerria 4 Apt 5 Train 7 Islip 8
Sty 11 Now 13 Eel 14 Doe 16 Ice 18 Leveret 20 Offers
21 Leeway 22 Given 23 Vi xen Use 26 Ate

MARCHAM PLAYERS

Several of our talented young actors are disappearing in the autumn:- Max Hutchinson to the Rose Bruford Drama School in Kent and Sophie Cumber to Leeds University to read drama and as we intend to produce a play in late November, we need new blood! Of course there are other jobs in every production: Stage Manager and Assistant, Prompter, Costumes, Make-up, Lighting and Sound, Scenery and making or finding Props and Furniture, Publicity, Programmes etc. If acting is not for you, but you have a talent/desire to be involved in any of the above functions, you are also most welcome – do come and join us. Contact either Joey on 01865 391242 or Dave on 01865 391964.



DEIDRE MATON

www.marchamplayers.co.uk