

Jen and Nathan's News April 2007



Well another 4 months have passed by in a blink of an eye and we are feeling a lot more settled even though things have been turbulent at times. The joy of getting to know the boys, the staff and our community in deeper ways is accompanied by the frustration of living and working in a developing country that has so much potential but just isn't able to find it yet, where you take your car to the garage for repairs and it comes out with less working parts than it went in with. Our work has moved from feeling out of control to gradually feeling like we can at least hold on with our finger tips and we have had many visitors who have brought us a good supply of chocolate!

After our new year break to Mombasa we felt relaxed and ready to face the year that lay in front of us. Sadly that lasted only a matter of hours as we found ourselves stranded at Nairobi Airport. The Ugandan airline had gone bust and cancelled our flight with no other flights back to Kampala that evening. They refused to find us anywhere to stay for the night and we are still waiting to see if we will get a refund on the extra plane ticket we had to buy to get home. To add insult to injury Nathan's mobile phone was stolen at the airport. We eventually made it back to Tudabujja and decided we'd try not to let it bother us.

Later that week one of our boys got seriously ill and we had to rush him for emergency treatment which is about an hours drive from Tudabujja through Kampala's crazy traffic. At one point we had to stop and pull the boy out of the car because he had stopped breathing. We really believe that God performed many miracles on that journey. The car managed to squeeze between gaps in the traffic at high speeds, which would not normally be possible. He kept us all safe as we weaved in and out of cars and trucks and the boy is now well again, although we still don't know what was behind it all.

A couple of weeks after that our car was broken into from a 'secure' car park. They stole a bag with personal items in, thankfully it is all replaceable. We then had our first encounter with the Ugandan Police Force to get an incident report, about 1 month and 8 trips to the police station later we finally got the report. Had we paid the bribes they hinted at it could have taken just a few days!

Our work has been challenging this term. Jen continued to cover the Administrator who was on maternity leave and Nathan covered the Farm Managers job to enable George, the teacher, to focus on teaching. Nathan, who knows nothing about farming never mind tropical farming found himself studying primary school text books to grasp some basics. This proved to be a stressful and challenging time for both of us. We had hoped to get stuck into our jobs as Centre Managers and start to make changes and implement new things after Christmas having given ourselves a term to settle in but we'd not been able to do this as much as we had hoped. We found this very frustrating, especially as we were doing jobs which we had no experience of. However it does mean we can now quote the opening lines of 'Out of Africa' - *"I had a farm in Africa..."*

At the end of March the Administrator came back from maternity leave and we had managed to employ a farm manager, the burden lifted and we now feel released to do the work we are passionate about.

In February we had a visit from the directors of the 'Last King of Scotland' and James McAvoy who was the doctor in the film and also played Mr Tumnus in Narnia. The boys really enjoyed the day, we showed them Narnia before they came so they could see some of James McAvoy's

Jen and Nathan's News April 2007

work, it made us laugh when one of the boys looked a bit confused because 'his legs looked normal!' As a result some programmes have been shown about Tigers Club on the Community Channel on Freeview. If they are still on, look out for them.

Through out the year many new boys have arrived and others have left to be resettled back home, placed in new Foster families and sent to schools. We are now beginning to know how to deal with the mixed emotions of the joy of a boy leaving to return back to his family but our own personal sadness of knowing that (hopefully) we won't see them again but occasionally there is a boy who touches our hearts and it is hard to say goodbye. Since Christmas we have had a number of older boys 15 to 18 leaving and younger boys 8 to 12 year olds have come in, this has changed the atmosphere at Tudabujja, we can be much more silly and play games but it means that Nathan's conversations about Arsenal, Chelsea and Man U have reduced. It is a nice change but I'm sure at some time it may swing back the other way and that will be good too.

Over Easter our families came to visit us, both sets of parents and Jen's sister Sarah. We had a great time with them, we spent time showing them around Tigers club and the boys loved having them around and regularly ask if they can use my mobile to phone to call them, even though some of them can't speak English except to say "*How are you?... ..I'm fine!*"

We also took some time off while they were with us. It was a really refreshing time even if there was a lack of space at times. We went on a safari to Queen Elizabeth National Park and then went and relaxed on a beautiful Island in the South West of Uganda on Lake Bunyoni, near Kabale.

When we returned to Kampala our families also got to see the joy of a Kampala riot. There is normally one about every month or two but this time it was a serious one with several people being shot and killed. Thankfully we managed to avoid it thanks to a member of staff who gave us warning as we were just about to head straight for the centre of it all.

So all together it has been a really exciting, bizarre and challenging time. One we are glad to see the back of but at the same time we are also glad having gone through it. It is not long till we are back in the UK at the beginning of July. So we will hopefully catch up with many of you then.

Lots of love,
Nathan and Jen.

For regular up to date news got to www.nathanandjen.blogspot.com
Or just to say 'Hi' - n.j.gregory@talk21.com



Our parents with Auntie Zelly on their Easter visit to Tigers Club



James McAvoy talking with George, the teacher at Tudabujja.