

# Uganda Trip Main Report - Summer 2012

In July of this year 19 students and four members of staff travelled to Uganda to visit our link schools, Lakesite Primary and St James's Secondary. After a very long journey, over 24 hours consisting of two plane trips and a very long coach ride, we arrived at our destination of Jinja, the second largest town in Uganda.



We spent the first part of the trip visiting our link schools, talking to students, watching lessons, sharing talents and competing on the sports field. At Lakesite we were treated to a show of traditional singing and dancing, performed by some of the students we sponsor. It was amazing to see their excitement and enthusiasm, and listen to them talk about how much they enjoyed school life. Whilst at Lakesite we were shown around the local village, a small fishing community on the banks of Lake Victoria. The visit really opened our eyes to the poverty and difficult lives experienced by children living in Uganda.

During our visits to St James's we took part in an assembly to celebrate the link between the school and BCCS. A particular highlight was a performance by the students of Bristol House at St James's, so named in honour of the link. Their performance was mesmerising, full of energy, passion and laughter. Following the assembly we took to the sports field, pitting the best St James's had to offer against the might of BCCS. With an impressive display on the netball court, winning 7-0, our spirits were high and the football match began. It was end-to-end action and the atmosphere was electric, with the whole school and even some locals watching. However, the heat and pace of the game was just too much for us and we lost 3-2.



Whilst at St James's we also visited the as yet unfinished girls' dormitories, currently under construction using money donated by BCCS. This new building will provide much needed space and privacy for over 300 girls, many of whom are currently residing in the old library in cramped and difficult conditions. It was really pleasing to see how the money we have raised over the years is being put to use.

Other highlights of our stay in Jinja included a visit to ASCO (African Street Children Organisation), who run a home for street children, helping them to fight addictions and get their lives back on track. We were very impressed and moved by the work they carried out and hope to support them in future projects. We also visited water projects in the local area, which were funded by BCCS. In June 2010 eight members of staff did a 47-mile Green Man sponsored walk around the outskirts of Bristol to raise money for the projects. The projects were a well which Peter Bond (a senior BCCS teacher and former Uganda Link Co-ordinator who retired that year) also funded with his leaving-present, and a protected spring in memory of BCCS Head of Geography, Dave Perry, who died in early 2010. Further funds were raised over the next two years and the projects were both completed last summer. Our final day in Jinja was spent visiting Granny Joyce.

Granny Joyce had polio when she was younger and as a result has lost the use of her legs. As a school we sponsor her and on this visit we went to see how she was getting on with her new trike, bought with funds raised last year. We also examined her facilities and have agreed to fund the construction of a new latrine and roof for her hut, which were in such a state of disrepair it was hard to believe they were still being used. We look forward to seeing the building work on our next visit. We also helped the charity Softpower, painting a primary school in the local community, and visited a local orphanage, Sonrise.

The final part of trip was spent at Red Chilli Resort in Murchison Falls National Park. Activities included chimp trekking through the bush, tracking lions, giraffes and elephants on an early morning safari, rhino tracking and avoiding hippos whilst trying to go to the toilet at 3am. One particular highlight was the climb up Murchison Falls to see the river Nile forcing its way through a gap of only 7 meters and plunging over 45 meters at a rate of 300 cubic meters per second. It was quite spectacular.



This trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity for the students; it was emotional and rewarding to see how much the link and the funds raised changed the lives of so many. It was an experience that will never be forgotten.

*Written by students Hannah Javid, Jess Purcell, Alicia Daniels, Aurelia Farrall, Jason Harkness and Harry Green. Edited by Kara Telfer, who was one of the accompanying staff members.*