

WIRRAL METHODIST CIRCUIT

HAITI PROJECT

REBUILDING THE LÉVÊQUE METHODIST SCHOOL



THE STORY SO FAR



A mostly mountainous country with a tropical climate, Haiti's location, history and culture once made it a potential tourist hot spot - it was known as 'The Jewel of the Caribbean'.



However, decades of poverty, environmental degradation, violence, political instability and dictatorship have left it the poorest nation in the Americas. Also, the huge wealth gap between the impoverished Creole-speaking black majority and the French-speaking minority, 1% of whom own nearly half the country's wealth, remains unaddressed. This only serves to emphasise the need for education amongst the majority to lift them out of the poverty pit.

Over the past 240 years Haiti has suffered many natural disasters in the form of hurricanes, tropical storms, floods and earthquakes. In January 2010 natural disaster struck again with full force as the capital, Port-au-Prince, was hit by a magnitude 7 earthquake.



International Aid Organisations swiftly assembled in Haiti, but, apart from providing temporary shelter and immediate food aid, little was achieved.



Rev. Marcus Torchon returned to Haiti briefly on two occasions during the aftermath. In May, at the Circuit Meeting, he introduced us to the Lévêque Methodist School situated NW of Port-au-Prince. This school had survived four major hurricanes in 2008 but crumbled on the day of the earthquake.



The school had housed 6 teaching staff (sourced from across the island by the Methodist Church) and 130 pupils of whom 90 had reported to classes since the earthquake, the other 40 had not been accounted for.

After Easter classroom activities had resumed with 7 classes meeting in the church chapel and 2 classes under an almond tree.



Even before the earthquake, the provision of daily nutritional food for the pupils whose parents are unable to adequately nourish them at home had become a priority (the cost per child per day is 50p). The school feeding programme had not yet resumed.

After hearing about the Lévêque children, the Wirral Circuit embraced the project to rebuild the school. A project team was appointed and fundraising began.

In July, the team received visual impressions and detailed costings from a Civil Engineer appointed by the Haitian Methodist District. We learned that approximately £180K (contingency figure £200K) would cover the re-construction of the school (using hurricane and earthquake proof materials).



The new school will have 8 classrooms, offices, staff rooms, sanitation, kitchen, dining hall, dormitory for the teaching staff and the all important clean water tank.

Cholera swept through Haiti after nearly 100 years without any sign of the disease in the country. This is a water-borne disease and has killed over 3,800 – nearly 200,000 have been treated. The tragedy is – this outbreak is thought to have been brought to the island by either UN peace-keeping troops or Aid workers.



Thankfully, it was not all bad news.



One cholera survivor.

In October Marcus returned to Haiti. Whilst on the island he was instrumental in setting up the project Wirral bank account. The 4 signatories are:- President and Treasurer Methodist District Haiti, District Conference Secretary and District Education Director. There will be no 'outside influence' regarding the funds which we will transfer to this account.

The old school building had been demolished and the site cleared.





During the following two months, the Project Team put together a Funding Letter of Agreement which was signed by all parties in Haiti and the Wirral. A Periodical Progress Report will be completed before each tranche of £15K is sent to Haiti supported by photographic evidence of works completed.

At the Service of Remembrance and Dedication on 12th January 2011 a cheque for £100k was symbolically received by Marcus on behalf of the Lévêque School in Haiti from the Wirral Circuit.



Earlier in January the first £15K had been released and transferred to the account in Haiti. Work began on ground clearing and excavation for the foundations.



Further progress in March.....



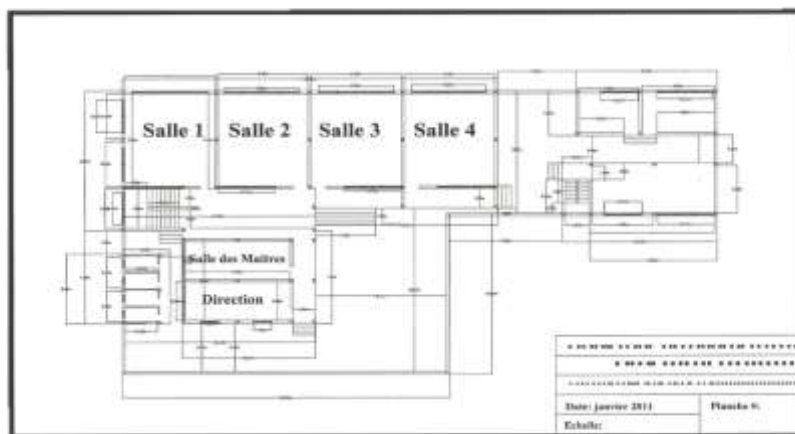
..... and May.



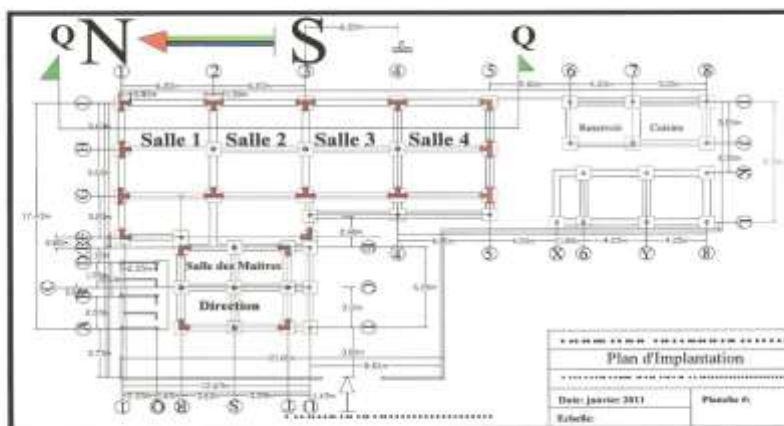
Although there had obviously been some progress in building it had been slower than anticipated. The June report was accompanied by a revised cost of £230K (contingency £250K) and a detailed explanation.

In summary – excavation for the foundations revealed that the previous school had been constructed on clayey soil with a shallow foundation in an area where the depth of ground water is only 3 feet. The engineer redesigned the foundation and support structure to take into account these findings and also recent seismic reports.

Original School Plan



Revised School Plan



Marcus returned to Haiti in July to visit the site and returned with these pictures.



Northern side of the school



Western side



Supporting pillars/beams of construction



Head-teacher's and Bursar's rooms



Lévêque school children speak – WE LOVE YOU



- LÉVÊQUE IS BEAUTIFUL



- THANK YOU WIRRAL CIRCUIT



Lévêque church choir



Lévêque church leadership (including Renee & Marcus)

So far (August 2011) we have raised in excess of £185K. The project has received a tremendous amount of support across the Wirral circuit and from further afield. The following is an extract from a long list of organisations and events which have helped us to get to this point:-

- Individuals
- Churches within the Wirral circuit
- Churches and circuits country wide
- Sunday schools and youth groups
- Church groups, organisations and societies
- Wirral Coastal Walk
- Carol Services and card sales
- Concerts, dances and film shows
- Coffee mornings, lunches and suppers
- Fairs, quizzes and bring and buy sales
- Bible readings
- Open gardens
- Bag packing in supermarkets

The project team and the Lévêque families are very grateful for the support received to date and hope and pray that this will continue until the school is completed.

..... to be continued