

Malawi 2019

For those of you who don't know my name is Catherine Stuart and in June I was one of a group of 40 students and teachers from St. Margaret's Academy that went out to Blantyre in Malawi to help build two classrooms and paint another two. The Journey took 32 hours.

The first view, we had of the city was hundreds of people along the main road selling everything and anything to get enough money to survive.

We stayed in Blantyre and it was a 45 min bus ride to the school we were working at. On the way we could see people washing their clothes in the river that was full of rubbish, children chasing after the bus begging for money and waving at us.

When we arrived at the school the students were running after the bus excited to see us. We were greeted by some of the teachers before having the opening ceremony. At the ceremony the children performed traditional dances and songs, the mothers of students sung and danced, and we heard some lovely words from local people about how the project will benefit the community and we learned how to welcome certain members of the community.

We learned how to brick lay, decorate and move bricks for hours at a time but as a result Ntondoko have 2 refurbished classrooms and by September they had another 2 new classrooms so all 6 classes will now work in classrooms instead of under trees or in a shed.

We gave schoolbooks for the library some from Scotland and some we bought in Malawi. We had a paired reading session with the children which they loved. All our spare time at Ntondoko was spent playing with the children with a parachute, football, bubbles, singing songs or being taught Chichewa by the pupils.

We did have some time off in which we trekked up Mount Mulanje, we got up for sunrise and watched the sunset on Lake Malawi. We celebrated Mass during sunrise. We went on safari and although we didn't see elephants and lions, we still saw lots of wildlife mainly hippos. We visited lots of projects that support young people in Malawi, The Comboni Technical College, Open Arms Orphanages in Blantyre and Mangochi. The Textile Workshop in Mangochi, Jacoranda Foundation, Childcare Malawi, Rainbow Hope Secondary School – We brought donations from Scotland to support these projects.

We visited a Tea Plantation where we learned about the value of Fairtrade. We took part in and enjoyed a 3 and a half hour Chichewa Mass and in Fr Simon's case followed that with a 2 hour Corpus Christi procession. Then a visit to the Malawi museum, we saw a traditional round house and heard about the slave trade and Malawi traditions.

It was a truly wonderful experience and I would like to thank Canon John, Fr. Jeremy and all of you for supporting me and enabling me to go.

I have some photographs if anyone would like to see them or you can see lots more on the Facebook page, St. Margarets for Malawi 2019

<http://stmargaretsacademy.org.uk/>