

# MVUMI HIGH SCHOOL, TANZANIA

## NEWSLETTER August 2007

Dear Friends and Supporters,

**R**ichard Morris finally bade his farewells from Mvumi at end-September 2006. His remarkable tenure as Headmaster will not be easily forgotten and the superb set of buildings he hands on, combined with his great energy and determination to 'fight on' in the best Churchillian tradition, have made Mvumi into a nationally recognised school.

In a recent visit the Regional Commissioner was heard to ask: "Why does everyone want to come to Mvumi and why do they ask me to get them places when the school says no?!"



The Assembly Hall

Applications reflect Richard's legacy, with 300 applying for 70 places in Form I and over 100 applying for a place in Form V, with a large number of very strong candidates.

Numbers are in fact very healthy and the School is full. Having added a further 50 students, the current roll of 430 is the highest ever. In Tanzanian terms class sizes are small but we are hoping to introduce a three-form entry, which would enable us to cut class sizes. The new intake in both Forms I and V are very bright and some of the most talented we have ever been able to attract.



Form 1 Students compare notes

There is considerable competition now with the Government opening schools in most districts, so the School will have to provide a high-quality education to compete. That should keep us on our mettle.

The new Headmaster's arrival was a little difficult, with visa problems and an early vehicle mishap on the tricky Mvumi road, but the School has been adapting to the replacement of 'kiwi' vowels with the Windsor version. They have not always found understanding easy!



The New Headmaster  
John Clark with School  
Shamba

The School continues to make progress academically and the Form IV results were some of the best it has enjoyed. In Form II all candidates were successful and, in general, the School continues its march up the league tables in the region. This was reflected too in some encouraging results in the Form II Mock examinations. There is considerable competition now with the Government opening schools in most districts, so the School will have to provide a high-quality education to compete.

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The Headmaster congratulates the Deputy Head Francis Maluga on good examination results



Mvumi teaching staff

One new initiative has been to engage in an academic competition with a newly-created Government school in Mvumi Makulu, the next village. It sharpened the competitive edge of the students as well as providing a good sharing of ideas with other teachers. We hope it will be the start of some fruitful partnerships. Similar arrangements are planned with other schools in sport, debating and academic competitions.



Student Art work



A science lesson with visiting teacher, David Townend

Practical work in the lab

Our building programme has continued, to meet the demand for new places. Two new classrooms extension for boys has very attractive four-bed rooms with their own study facilities. A generous gift from Dr Challoner's High School for Girls in Little Chalfont, UK has enabled us to plan a school shop and domestic science space, with construction beginning in the latter part of this year. It will provide a practical commercial opportunity for students as well as training in the culinary arts. Anthropologists may be interested to know that 'bachelor' in Kiswahili means 'a man without a kitchen'. I am not sure we will be teaching the boys how to cook yet!



We have been very fortunate as a result of the generosity of a number of benefactors:

- We are in the process of completing the installation of our own Internet to provide access for all computers in the Computer Department, Internet provision for the Administration block and an Internet café
- A School Website is planned which should provide an excellent opportunity for students to write in English and keep Mvumi in the news. The Friends of Mvumi Secondary School ('the Friends') Website is also undergoing a revamp.
- We have gained a minibus thanks to a kind donation from the Friends in the UK



The rugged safari minibus

- A golfing event by a well wisher raised the money for the Friends to provide a new football pitch for the School
- And a sponsored reading of the Bible by Friends in Eton Wick, UK has enabled us to purchase some badly needed Bibles as well as funding a sponsored student for four years.
- Eton College organised a sponsored swim for the Friends, which raised over £13,000. Part of this money is earmarked for the purchase of textbooks and to underwrite bursaries for the new intake in 2008.
- The Library has been extended thanks to kind donations organised by our local MP, the former Prime Minister, Dr John Malecela, and by the Rotary Club in Dar es Salaam, operating through book suppliers in England.

We are hugely grateful for all the above.

It has been an excellent year for weather in Mvumi and this has kept roofs full of maize and millet and made fee collection easier. But there is still a great deal of poverty and the Friends' Sponsorships Scheme provides an education for students who could not otherwise afford it. Visiting the homes of students provides a reminder of the very narrow divide between plenty and poverty. There are fuller stomachs this year but that follows several years of meagre returns.

Home conditions are spartan



A home visit provokes considerable interest



Youngsters fetch water from the river bed



The Headmaster with Julia Bengough

Julia Bengough has taken over from Pam Martin as the School's Sponsorship Organiser in Mvumi and both ladies have experienced at first-hand the harrowing accounts of need. Peter Konig continues his sterling work as the Sponsorship Co-ordinator in the UK.

We are so thankful for the kindness of sponsors, for their letters to students and genuine interest. It would be excellent if each could attract a new sponsor to secure our funding for the future. And they will of course be very welcome if they are prepared to undertake the six-hour bus journey from Dar!

There have been moments of sadness as we would expect. In a burglary at the School in January a policeman subsequently lost his life bringing the ringleader to justice. In an area affected by Rift Valley Fever the school lost one of its students to the disease during the Easter break. A new student on the way to a new life at Mvumi lost her life in a road accident. These incidents remind us of the precarious hold on life that many people experience. But there are great energy and enthusiasm here and a real sense of optimism, even when the odds seem stacked against us.



Enthusiasm amongst the spectators



The old football pitch

Some of that energy and enthusiasm has been most obvious in our sports matches against local schools. The football team is exemplary in defence and build-up (but less sure in front of goal) and our netball team continues to be hugely successful. A new junior team has played and the School enjoyed a competitive inter-house competition in which the Bishop's team finally defeated Richard Morris's team!

There was also a very successful trip to Mikumi National Park, enabling some students to see the animals and birds which they had only read or heard about – although a small herd of elephants only just missed the School on a trip to the area in search of water in July. The minibus has opened up opportunities which were previously impossible.

It has also been a time for distinguished visitors. Two old Mvumi students of distinction have visited the School: the former Prime Minister Dr John Malecela was guest of honour at our first Form VI graduation; the Professor of Law at Dar es Salaam paid an affectionate visit; and the School hosted a celebration for Mvumi Primary School, which was rated the best primary school in the country. Perhaps its older sister may achieve something comparable in the future...

The school continues to prosper therefore, thanks to the generosity of so many friends.

Do please keep in touch.