

YOUTH VISIT April/May 2005 by Geaorge Mbavo and Jane Nvambe - Programme Diary
(pictures deleted)

DAY 1

We had a good flight. We made friends with Victor who, as an experienced traveller, helped us with getting through customs and that sort of thing. John Myers met us at the airport and drove us along motorways to Leamington Spa. This took 3 hours including a refreshment break. We were glad to reach our hosts and settle in. At first it did not seem as cold as we had been warned; but after a bit we started to feel the drop in temperature

DAY 2

Sunday was a day of rest. George was staying with Bill and Joy Evans, while Jane stayed with Nicola a student at Warwick University who lived on the other side of the road. It was a sunny but not a very warm day. Bill and Joy showed us round Leamington. The parks are really beautiful with lots of lovely flowers which are well tended.

In the early evening, some members of Warwick OWL and some of future hosts came to meet us. Nicola bought us a single use camera each, and we were able to start taking photos, such as this one.

Achievements

Recovery from Journey. Adjusting to different food, and way of life. We negotiated that sporting activities be added to our programme

DAY 3

On Monday, Nicola took us to Warwick University and showed us around.

We were able to meet Charlotte and Michelle who organise students to do voluntary work in the surrounding communities. The name of the organisation is Warwick Volunteers

We did not realise until we got here that Britain is in the middle of a General Election; and polling day is on Thursday next week. The student Union had organised a meeting attended by the four main candidates for Warwick Constituency, and we were able to hear them being questioned by students. We thought the Labour candidate gave the best answers. In the end he was re-elected by a narrow margin.

Achievements We learned something about University education in UK. We have stimulated the interest of Warwick Volunteers in One World Link. They are now planning to do a project with One World Link in the new academic year

DAY 4

In the morning, we met Dave Jones and his colleague youth workers who work for the County Council Community Education Department, and also visited their headquarters, where we met the County Youth Service Officer Nick Francois.

We had lunch at Bath Place Community Venture where we met Jane Knight. The Bath Place Centre has always supported One World Link. It could be a link community centre with the Bo OWL community centre once it has sorted out its current funding problems.

In the afternoon we accompanied Matt Smith to collect a group from the Lillington Youth Centre for an arts project at Community Arts Workshop

Achievements We gained an overview of the County Youth Service. We had our first contact with young people belonging to a youth club. We had a dialogue with the staff at the Arts Workshop

DAY 5

We changed hosts today, and settled in during the morning. In the afternoon we had a meeting with John Myers and Bill Evans to talk about our programme and expectations

In the evening Jane went to Songlines to participate in a community singing class run by Bruce Knight. George went to the Annual General Meeting of the GAP community centre in Warwick..

Achievements Jane taught a Mende song, and did a good public relations job. George stimulated interest in the Link with the GAP youth workers, and met the Board Member of Warwick Hospital who is advocating links with Bo Government Hospital

DAY 6

In the morning we visited the Young Housing Project (YHP) in Leamington, where Rob Harris explained the work of the project and showed us around.

In the afternoon Jane attended the primary school teachers linking group, while George attended a demonstration performance by the Sez U community theatre group put on for youth leaders. This was a dramatic presentation of issues facing young people to stimulate their thinking about them. In the evening we went to the Leamington Samba Band rehearsals and joined in.

Achievements We identified that YHP would like a link with a similar organisation in Bo. We thought that the Unaccompanied Children Project might be the most suitable. Jane was able to give useful information about Bo and its schools to the teachers. We greatly enjoyed our session with the Samba Band, and were able to stimulate more interest in the Link amongst its members

Day 7

In the afternoon, we attended a party to say goodbye to a long standing member of staff who is a black person.

Among the people we met at this party was Judith Ellis who once worked as a VSO teacher at Segwema. In the evening we observed two sports sessions which are specially for children who are disabled, and we are due to return next week to take part. We could not take pictures of this because there are strict rules in Britain about not taking photos of children without parental consent.

Achievements. We observed how English people conduct themselves when they put on an event to say goodbye to a fellow worker. We saw how able bodied children interact with disabled children to assist them to join in ordinary leisure activities.

DAYS 8-10 incorporated the UK Bank Holiday Weekend and May Day Festivities; so they were partly programme and partly leisure. When you are an exchange visit programme you are never really "off duty" because you are always being seen and meeting people who are interested in you; and there are always things to observe and learn. You are ambassadors for the Link and for your Country.

Day 8

John and Marion Myers took us to the AGM of the Youlgrave village link with Bangbutt village near Mile 91. Youlgrave is a 2 hours drive away in the hilly area of Derbyshire County. We had a picnic and walk on the way. We were able to watch a video of the visit by 3 people from Youlgrave to Bangbutt. John McFarlane Treasurer of OWL and Jariatu were also there.

It was interesting to see how a link operates at a village level, it has more potential for invoking everybody in the community.

Achievements We helped build good relations between Youlgrave and Warwick links

Day 9

We got up at 4-30 a.m. this morning to attend a Morris Dancing ceremony to celebrate the first day of May. This is a very old tradition which goes back to pre-Christian roots. A special dance is performed at the rising of the sun. The dancers dress up in special costumes. They hold sticks when they dance which are clashed together in the rhythm of the dance. It was very cold, but we warmed up a bit when we joined in at the end. Afterwards we went to one of the dancer's house with all the dancers to have a cooked breakfast. While we were there we were interviewed on local radio. Later on we went to the Learnington Canal Festival with Bruce Knight and Rebecca and boating on the river Learn.

Achievements A radio interview to talk about our Country and to explain the Link. General public relations and Enjoyment

Day 10

We went with Jeff Howarth to a Point to Point Horse race, rode pillion on his big powerful motorbike, and went to a party at the house of a classical musician.

Achievements We learned more about the English way of life in different respects

Day 11

In the morning and afternoon Jane was due to participate in the PE teaching of North Leamington Secondary School but rain and gymnasium repairs prevented this. Instead she took part in the activities of the Performing Arts Department of the same school.

In the evening, she observed a youth basketball coaching session.

George had a quiet day and in the evening on TV watched Liverpool progress to the final of the European Cup by beating Chelsea.

Achievements Jane did not do what she wanted today, but it was useful to see parts of the performing arts curriculum. And to learn how a group of youths have been motivated to take a sport seriously and gain skill and self esteem.

Day 12

We went with student volunteers from the University to do some landscape gardening in a street in Coventry. This is in a poor area of the city where the population is constantly changing. The City Council had put in some brick-enclosed earth plots for roses and other shrubs some years ago; but these have become neglected; so our job was to get out all the old plants ready for re-planting with something more attractive. This is one way that students who come to Warwick from all over the country can do something for the local community which they inhabit during their study years; but we did not see much sign of appreciation from local residents.

Later in the afternoon we took part in an after school dub for primary children whose parents are not at home at the end of school. We met up with Matt Smith again.

In the evening we were the guests of the Mayor of Leamington, Councillor Mota Singh at an Asian evening of dance and song.

Achievements. We worked alongside university students and other volunteers on an equal level doing the same work. We got involved with a group of younger primary school age children, and had additional contact with youth leaders. We helped the Mayor to reinforce his message to his own Sikh community that we all live in one world and need to cooperate and understand each other across the world.

Day 13

We went to The County Council Offices at Shire Hall to meet Hussine Yumkella, who told us about the plans for a "development partnership" between the Warwickshire County and Bo Councils; and we met her boss John Scoullar who is assisting this to go forward. We hope to meet him again.

Later in the morning, Jane went to the Asian Ladies swimming club. George visited Warwick Hospital Pathology Laboratory to have a tour of the facilities. In the afternoon we went to the Black Youth Project. In the evening we visited Coventry to view the cathedrals and had a meal out with Michelle and her husband.

Achievements Jane learned to swim. George learned about pathology practice at Warwick. More youth contacts were made and activities observed

Day 14

We addressed the morning assembly at North Leamington Secondary School Sixth Form, and had a tour of the sixth form facilities, and met some of the students. We participated in a meeting between the Headteacher of this school and the One World Link schools sub-group to discuss the proposed link with Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Bo.

In the afternoon we went to Aylesford Secondary School in Warwick. We had a tour of the school, and we addressed the Year Seven (11 year olds) assembly at the end of the day.

In the evening we went back to the sports session for disabled children for a second visit.

Achievements We helped to recruit a group of Sixth Formers to look at fund raising ideas for Bo, and to think about a presentation of the school to send to their new link school. We assisted in the discussion with the Headteacher which had a positive result. We helped the Year Head at Aylesford School to promote the idea of a One World Link dub in the school. We have more understanding of secondary education in UK

Days 15 and 16.

We visited Marie Outdoor Activity Centre in North Wales this weekend. We experienced quite cold weather. At one point it even began to snow which was something strange to experience. There are mountains in Sierra Leone, but they are in a different part of the country; so this visit was particularly memorable

We were able to observe a range of out activities, and spend time with Dave Jones. During this period Jane became quite unwell.

Achievements The main achievement was to have an opportunity to evaluate activities that might be available on possible future youth exchanges for our young people to experience.

Day17

Jane was examined by a Doctor and sent to the hospital for blood tests but no malaria parasites detected, but she is still unwell.

George observed the detached youth project working with disaffected youngsters in danger of getting into crime and drugs in the afternoon. In the evening he met the Labour Councillors Group of the Leamington Town Council at a social event at Councillor Singh's House. His daughter in law and Mayor's consort

provided the food. A good discussion of Sierra Leone's problems took place. Unfortunately there were no meetings of the Town Council during the visit and we did not meet other Councillors.

Achievements George learned how a detached youth work works in Leamington. The young people are approached when they are standing around together in the street and engaged in talk and given the opportunity to learn to drive a motor vehicle. Awareness raised of the issues faced by youth in Bo.

Day 18 and 19

London visit cancelled due to Jane's ill health. In the morning George returned to the Pathology Department to take video of the instruments and processes.

In the afternoon he spent time with Janet Alty talking about ideas and possible ways forward.

This is a picture of us with John Myers who was responsible for the co-ordination of our programme. The following day, George spent the morning with Stewart Cowie of the Prince's Trust. Jane and George visited the Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs. Jane felt very unwell afterwards, despite no positive blood test, she commenced treatment for malaria.

Achievements We were able to complete a comprehensive picture of the range of youth services in Warwick District.

Day 20

In the morning George completed a presentation for the evaluation meeting in the afternoon.

George and Jane attended the evaluation meeting at which various conclusions were reached about the lessons from the visit and on possible ways forward. These will be in a separate summary report; and are not listed here.

In the evening, Martin Tarawally of BODDA came up from London and he and George attended the Methodist Scout Group in Leamington.

Achievement Contact established with BODDA. Possibility of reviving a Leamington - Bo Scout Link advanced.

Day 21

A final meeting with County Council Officers to discuss youth aspects of the proposed local authority development partnership

END OF PROGRAMME