
BAMENDA VISIT REPORT

15-26 FEBRUARY VISIT BY PORTSMOUTH BAMENDA COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Members of the Group - Colm Lennon ,Chair ,Jo Overton Vice Chair , Bob Hayes , Treasurer, Fr. Vincent Harvey ,and Sylvia Foster and Chris White ,who were both visiting Bamenda for the first time.

Members at Esu
Womens
Empowerment Centre

Day 1 - Mon 15th Feb

Flight from London to Yaounde where we were met by Fr. Michael Bibi who took us to the home of Quinta, his sister for supper; afterwards we retired to our hotel for a good nights sleep.

Day 2 - Tues 16th Feb

After breakfast at the home of Quinta we set off on the long road to Bamenda. In all, the trip took approx. 6 hours with the last 40 kilometres being very slow due to the poor condition of the road.

At Bamenda we were greeted by Fr. Michael Kintang Chairman of the B P C and some fellow members. They kindly served us refreshments. Later we left for Archbishop's House for supper before returning to the Pastoral Centre and settling into our accommodation.

Day 3 - Wed 17th Feb

Esu

At 8.00 am we set off on the road to Esu to visit the Youth and Women's Empowerment Centre which is being funded by P B C with the support of the local community who have supplied labour and local materials. We are also grateful to the Fon who made the site available and is a big supporter of the project.



After being greeted by the Fon at his Palace we then moved to the site where we were greeted by the students who presently number 25 along with three members of staff. Since our last visit in 2014 considerable progress has been made, with all the buildings now completed but with further work to be done with painting, furniture, equipment etc. it is hoped that within 3 years the Centre will be self supporting.

Wum

Following the visit to Esu 3 members of the group went on to Wum to John Paul II Sec. School (JOPACC) with the rest of the group returning to Bamenda. JOPACC, which only started in 2006, and was supported in its early stages by P B C is now well established and has ambitious plans for new science laboratories .The group visited the classrooms and were warmly welcomed by the students.

Afterwards the group was welcomed by the local parish priest ,Fr. Chrisantus and were accommodated at the Presbytery.



Day 4 - Thurs 18th Feb

Wum Health Centre

After breakfast we visited the Local Health Centre where we were greeted by Sr. Jacinta who took us on a tour of the facilities .Over the last few years the centre has been supported by the P B C in improving toilet facilities and the water supply . Unfortunately the original pipes were made of iron and are now rusting with the danger of polluting the water supply.



Yemge

The group then left for Yemge to visit the nursery school which has been funded by P B C with the support of the local community. After 3 hours on some of the worst roads in the country we arrived to be warmly greeted by the local community.



Following the blessing of the classrooms we were formally greeted and entertained by the nursery children . Some more work needs to be done but it is hoped to accomplish this in the near future along with furniture and play equipment.

In the future it is hoped to have a primary school and a new church. We then left Yemge to return to Bamenda arriving 7 hours later.

In the meantime, Fr Joe took 3 of the group out to Alatening Church. This is a mission station of Akum Parish which, with the assistance of Bamenda Funds has been building a church for the



community here over a number of years. They are now making good progress and have extended the original plans at the suggestion of the Archbishop.

Akum

Whilst we were there we called into the primary school which stands on the same site just to say a brief hello.

Moving on, and with a little time to spare, Fr Joe took us unannounced to Akum Hospital. Sr Dorothy (Matron) willingly dropped everything to greet us and also to bring her senior staff to speak about their work. The hospital is a registered TB treatment centre and appeared to be thriving with GP, Surgical and Gynaecological medical services also available. It suffers like most of the health establishments from water shortages and unpaid medical bills.

Our next stop was the Treasure Centre where we renewed our friendship with Sr Kathleen. The centre continues to provide education and support for 147 children with learning disabilities but is now struggling to sustain itself as grants from various sources have been cut back and the majority of the parents are unable to afford the fees. A further concern she expressed was for safeguarding the older children who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. A government social worker assists with cases of abuse. Volunteer speech, art and music therapists or others with relevant skills are always welcome.



After lunch, we set out for Bamenda Central Prison with Sr Dorothy Yefon who is one of the chaplaincy team. We were given an extensive visit including the Youth dormitory and workshops (e.g. shoe making; art; traditional embroidery); the chapel; the women’s wing with newly refurbished shower area and improved dividing wall (funded by Portsmouth Bamenda Funds) and the general courtyard. There remain concerns for the security of the women’s area and overcrowded conditions in the whole prison. St Joseph’s parish Copnor support the provision of supplementary food by holding an annual Bamenda Sunday lunch.

Day 5 - Fri 19th Feb - Group 1

Bukow

Our first stop was to visit the Health Centre at Bukow which has been supported by P B C. Originally it was intended to expand the Centre but because of a dispute over land ownership it



has now been decided to move the Centre onto land owned by the diocese. In the meantime it is hoped that temporary facilities will be provided on the parish land prior to work commencing on the new centre.

Babanki Tungo St Patricks Comprehensive

After our visit we travelled on to St. Patricks Technical and Comprehensive College which is only two years old. Along with the core syllabus the school has departments in Building Construction, Electronics, Fashion, Home Economics . During our visit we were able to see the students practising their skills.



Babanki Health Centre

Our next visit was to the Babanki Health Centre which has been supported by Clinicare and P B C over the years. All the buildings are new with a well equipped theatre. Unfortunately ,because of the lack of a doctor on site , the facilities are underused .The services of a doctor is being actively pursued and hopefully the Centre will soon be operating at capacity.



Ndop

St Peter and Paul's Primary School Ndop is twinned with St. Finians ,Cold Ash .Thatcham .Unfortunately due to a misunderstanding the pupils were all attending a sports day in Ndop.We did however manage to have a discussion with Mr. Ganda Austin ,the Head teacher and Fr. Samoa ,the school manager.

For the year 2014/15 St. Finians raised some £430 (344.000 frs.cfa).A schedule of the work carried out was presented to be forwarded to St. Finians.

It was agreed that the Group would visit again on Wed. 24th.



School Grand Tour - Group 2

This was a very busy day for our group as we were due to visit a number of schools most of which are twinned with schools in Portsmouth diocese.We set off about 8.00am and our first visit was to Azire primary school which is twinned with Springhill primary.We were welcomed with songs and a speech from the head boy.We then moved on to the two primary schools at Mankon which are twinned with St Swithun's primary.Our next call was to another primary school this time at Nkwen which is twinned with St Bernadette's.

We moved on to St Paul's Comprehensive College at Nkwen twinned with All Hallows.



Our final visit of the morning was to the primary school at Bayelle which is twinned with St John's primary at Andover.After lunch at Archbishop's House we set off again to see the primary school at Mbengwi which is twinned with St John's primary Portsmouth.

There was then an unscheduled stop to see the primary school at Boyui where a new classroom



was under construction. This school is not twinned. Our final school visit of the day was to St Joseph's Comprehensive College at Mbengwi which also does not as yet have a twin in Portsmouth diocese but would be interested in establishing such a link. After an exhausting day we detoured on our way back to go to the Cistercian Monastery for a moment of quiet reflection before returning to the Pastoral Centre.

Day 6 - Sat 20th Feb

Today we had a meeting with the Finance Dept. at Bishops House arising from which we discussed, and agreed a new procedure for speeding up the sending of money approved for the various committed projects.

After lunch we had some free time to do some shopping and have a little relaxation.

SAJOCAH

SAJOCAH (Saint Joseph's rehabilitation centre for children and adults with disabilities) focuses on the rehabilitation of children and adults from their disabilities. We were met by Sr Celestine Kienyoh, Sr Christencia Akwanwi who is in charge and Sr Joseline who is responsible for visitors and water supply.

The start of our visit was in the orthopaedic section. This area caters for both adults and children but the majority of patients are children. Typically three months after an operation the patients have two to three weeks of rehabilitation. There is a workshop to customise the prosthetics



for each patient.



The future is to provide better convalescence for adults by creating greater separation between the areas for adult and children particularly in relation to stroke and those suffering from falls from height. This will be by the completion of a two storey building catering for 40-50 patients. The foundations have been built.

Continuity of water supply is a challenge, particularly in the dry season not helped by issues with the current borehole. The centre had had no water at all for two days prior to

the visit. Re-digging this borehole should alleviate this problem.

Day 7 - Sun. 21st Feb

Pastoral Centre and Mount Jangma



Mass was celebrated at the Pastoral Centre (left) in the new Chapel of Blessed Paul VI which is almost completed but still in need of windows ,completion of the Community Hall ,furniture etc.

After Mass we spent a pleasant few hours meeting the local community In the afternoon we made a trip to Mount Jangma where Stations of the Cross have been erected and which is a place of pilgrimage. (right)



Day 8 - Mon. 22nd Feb

St Blaise

After Breakfast 3 of us were collected from the Pastoral Centre and loading the vehicle with nursing and midwifery supplies provided by Portsmouth diocesan charity Clinicare, we headed down to St Blaise clinic to meet up with Sr Imelda Kuh Healthcare Coordinator. There are ambitious plans to develop St Blaise into a Referral Hospital for long term conditions but this project is in its infancy. From there we all took the 2hour journey to Njinikom Hospital.

Njinikom

Njinikom hospital is functioning efficiently under Sr Olive (Matron); she has introduced new measures to reduce the death rate in the hospital and to improve the productivity of the staff. With contributions from St Colman with St Paul Parish Cosham, a patient’s kitchen is being constructed where relatives will ultimately be able to rent gas kitchen units on which they can cook for their sick relative. In line with being a TB and HIV treatment centre, a new TB area is up and running and together with Project Hope (Community Health Project supported recently by Portsmouth Cathedral Parish) it has been possible to reduce the incidence of HIV slightly. Malaria and Typhoid remain the biggest clinical problems but in common with other health centres – unpaid medical bills and water shortage in the dry season are a constant challenge.

After a brief visit to the orphanage in the hospital grounds which currently has 9 children in its care, we headed back to base.



Fundong - Group 2

Today we visited St Jude's Primary School Fundong which is twinned with St. Peter's P S Winchester .We received a wonderful welcome from the children and staff and visited the classrooms to see the children at work.



We also visited the adjoining school ,C.S .Fundong and were made very welcome.

On our way to St.Bedes the Parish Priest,Fr. Noah requested we visitSt.



Francis Xavier P.S. Many of the classrooms are in very poor condition ,some are in the process of being demolished and replaced .The school would love to be linked with a school in Portsmouth Diocese,with St.Dominic's Woodley ,a possibility.

Our next stop was St. Bede's Sec. School Ashing which is twinned with Bishop Challoner School Basingstoke where we presented prayer cards commemorating this Year of Mercy.



The principal ,Fr. William Neba,and staff then took us on a tour of this mixed comprehensive school where we had a chance to meet up with the students.[photo]

En-route back to the Pastoral Centre we stopped at the Seminary where Fr Paul trained. 150 Seminarians are in training for the Priesthood, eleven will be ordained at the end of March.

Day 9 - Tues. 23rd Feb

Maryvale Centre

After breakfast we were treated to a series of presentations from many of the organisations in the Diocese including Justice and Peace,Education Secretariat. Radio Evangelium ,the Catholic Youth Foundation and many others.this was followed by a Q & A session .

In the afternoon a meeting was held with the Bamenda Portsmouth Committee where we discussed ways of strengthening the links between our two dioceses and identifying processes for improving communications between us.

In the evening we had supper with the Mill Hill Fathers

Day 10 - Wed. 24th Feb

Ndop

Today we returned to St.Peter and Paul's School Ndop,twinned with St. Finians Thatcham where we were warmly welcomed by the staff and pupils and spent some time sitting in on their classes.



The highlight of the visit was the children demonstrating their skills with the parachute game which was a gift from St. Finians.



On return from Bamenda meetings took place with the Health Co-ordinator ,Sr.Imelda and the Head of the Education Secretariat Fr.Augustin.

In the evening the Group had dinner with his Grace Archbishop Cornelius and members of the B P C . There was general agreement that the visit had been worthwhile and had led to improvements pin a number of areas e.g in forwarding finance earlier for projects once they had been approved.

Day 11 - Thur. 25th Feb

Departure from Bamenda to Yaounde arriving after a 6 hour trip - after dinner an early night.

Day 12 - Fri. 26th Feb

A restful day visiting the sites before departure for the Airport and return to London.



Yaounde Cathedral