

Emails from Malawi

This is part of an email from Alistair Bounds who is member of Shirenewton Church. Alistair and the other four AVS volunteers are on a mission to build a library in the primary school in Dedza, Malawi. This is an excerpt from emails that Alistair has written to various bodies back in the UK hoping to secure some extra funding for this project.

' I'm on my *GAP* Year before going to Durham to study Physics in September but at the moment I am spending a term teaching in a primary school in Dedza, Malawi, on the border with Mozambique. There are five of us living in basic accommodation with no running water or electricity but we are all having a great time.

The school I am teaching in is fantastic, with 2000+ students, around 30 teachers and 20 classrooms. The teaching is all in English from Standard 5 up to Standard 8, making it possible to teach most subjects, but at the moment I am focussing on Maths teaching and extra curricular activities, such as English clubs. English is very important in primary schools, both because of its use as a teaching medium, and because a pass in the year end English exams is a requirement to get into a *Government Secondary School*.

As a result of this the volunteers in Dedza feel that this is something of a priority in our work. We have already set up an English club and take every opportunity to speak to the students and help them with their English but we would like to do something more permanent, and with this in mind we are looking into the possibility of establishing a library in the school. This would be a major project, which would provide immeasurable benefits to the school and its students long after we have left. We have looked into the project and its requirements, and our greatest obstacle to its success is financial. To build the library, initial estimates for a room 12m by 6m with cement flooring and secure windows and doors are around 2,000 pounds (Malawian keyboards don't have pound signs). Between the 5 of us volunteers we have been able to donate 1,000 pounds of our own funding. So we are hoping to secure the rest from donations.....'

Members of Shirenewton Church are going to support Alistair and the other volunteers by sending a donation to help in the building of this library and we wish them and the Primary School in Dedza every success.

And here is a part of a rather less formal email from Alistair to his family. He is obviously having a fantastic time!

'Hi everyone,

I thought I'd give the whole family an update about how fantastic Malawi is. We've decided to build a library for the school to help with their English! All the teaching is in English and to get to secondary school in Malawi you need to pass your English exam so there are some children with poor English that just get stuck in the last year of primary school for years so we think a library would be really useful.

Its going to be a 11.5 by 5.5 metre building in the school grounds. I've been in touch with a builder and, after much negotiating, he's going to start on the foundations one week today. When we leave the school at the end of term on 24/07/2009 we should have the walls and the roof on the building and they should be able to complete the cement floor, the plastering, the walls, the windows and the doors etc by 24th August when the next term starts. I'll still be travelling then, so I'm planning to head back to the school for the opening ceremony. How amazing would it be to be to build and open a library in Malawi! I'll let you know how the progress is.....