

## Article for See

It is difficult to visit Uganda once. It is a beautiful country that claims a place in your heart.

I had been to Uganda twice before, working as a volunteer in Rukungiri with Mission Direct, but this trip was an opportunity to renew friendships there and, more importantly, to spend time with Ian and Shelagh Baird-Smith and understand better the work they have been involved with In Lira for the last 2 years (see Ian and Shelagh's article).

It was a journey of contrasts.

...Leaving England at -5°C, and coping with 35° heat in Lira.

...Miles of straight, tarmac roads followed by twisting, packed-dirt roads with enormous potholes.

...People who are extremely poor but extraordinarily generous

...Christians with few material possessions, who were rich in joy and faith, and who enthusiastically worshipped their generous God, trusting him to meet their needs.

Following appeals to churches in Southwell and others, we took with us over 60 Bibles, medical equipment, four laptops, and lots of reading glasses. But we received so very much more ...

For the first five days in the south-west, three members of the group spent five nights at Nyakaturu Secondary School (NMSS) in Ibanda. They stayed in the Headteacher's new house and received a very warm welcome. In addition to seeing the school in action and participating in the worship, the group also visited three primary schools and the Catholic Orphan babies' home. They applied funds collected by Sutton-on-Trent to purchase resources, mostly books, for NMSS. The rest of us went to Rukungiri, where we visited Modern Primary School, where orphans from two-and-a-half years old are taught and accommodated. We joined the team of the Growers, Orphans and Disabled Children's Project on a long bumpy ride to a remote village, where they held a clinic in the shade of a mango tree. Initial assessments, post-operative checks, and help and advice for parents of brain-damaged children all took place there. A new school for disabled children – the first in North Kigezi Diocese – is being built, and we met the headmaster, Henry. His wife had sold most of her chickens to pay her elder child's senior school fees, but insisted on giving us a sack of potatoes.

After a 12-hour journey we reached Lira in the north, which is recovering from many years of war, where over 6 days we visited colleges and projects, and shared worship and meals with many people. We preached and led Sunday schools at three churches, where we were given shirts and dresses that had been made for us, gifts of honey and groundnuts, and a meal – such overwhelming generosity!

The last two days were spent as holiday at Murchison Falls. A very welcome contrast there, after a hot, dusty drive, was a cool dip in a swimming pool with glasses of gin and tonic!

Marian Welham