



TWENTY YEARS OF HELPING AND STILL GOING STRONG!

The Gambian Schools Trust was registered as a charity in 2003 by Kathy Oldfield, following a visit to The Gambia in 2001 with Christine Schofield, with the aim of supporting nursery education. Through the financial, material and physical support of hundreds of UK supporters, we have improved the prospects and circumstances of thousands of Gambian children and their families. The work continues

NJALAL SAMBA, our newest project, was built in 2022. Simon and Nick Gill visited early in 2023 and kindly sent us this most moving article:-



“In February this year we finally made it out to Njalal Samba in The Gambia to see the new school built with the legacy from our late sister **Carolyn Williams**. Travelling with Hilary and Steve Lawther, we were able to gain a true appreciation of the real Gambia and a sense of the challenges faced in building the school.



After the 6 hour journey we were greeted by the whole school, staff and mothers from the village, singing Gambian music and

holding notices welcoming us both. A surreal and really emotional moment for us as we took in the happy scene in a state of near disbelief!

The head teacher, Mr Bah, then showed us round the 4-classrooms, the library, the teachers' accommodation and toilet blocks, perimeter wall and vegetable and fruit tree growing areas. Some 40 trees had been planted, both inside and outside the perimeter, including mango, orange, lemon and pomegranate. Already 110 children, aged from 4 - 14 years were enrolled (*editor note - now 115 and growing!*)



And then we were treated to a dancing display in front of the school by girls in traditional Fula tribal dress. We joined in, causing much amusement especially from the mums!!



After a tour around the village, the day finished with us handing over boxes of books and games. This resulted in us teaching the headmaster and librarian/early-learning teacher how to play dominos, snap and jigsaws!!

At the end of our second day at the school, having watched a game of football (Bradford City v Huddersfield Town !!) and sat in on lessons, we had to say goodbye after an absolutely amazing visit.



This really had been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us - witnessing the joy brought to so many children in the building of the school and our sister's name living on in The Gambia. We are deeply grateful to the Trust for all the good work that it does in improving the lives of so many in The Gambia and also to Steve and Hilary for being such wonderful hosts.

— Simon and Nick Gill”

Steve Lawther reports on just some of our other activities and involvement

“EXPANSION AT LOUMEN AND KUMBIJA:- In response to the growing school roll and demands on classroom space, we have added two additional classrooms at Kumbija and one at Loumen. At both of these rural schools we are entering the digital age (albeit on a small scale) by the addition of solar electrical installations in the library. This is to power a small number of laptop computers and provide light to enable evening study. Thanks go to **Shipley Rotary Club** for funding the solar at Loumen, **Bradford Bronte Rotary Club** for helping with construction costs at Loumen, and **David Wright, Mercia Asset Management** for providing laptop computers at both schools. Our rural schools are now Lower Basic schools providing education for pupils up to the age of 14.

The **SCHOOL TRIPS** we funded for Grade 5 and 6 pupils have proved so successful we have committed to fund these on a bi-annual basis to ensure that pupils have an opportunity to travel outside their area and visit various sites of interest in The Gambia and to open their eyes and minds to opportunities before leaving to attend Upper Basic schools for further education.



Stone Circles of Wassu

EDUCATION:- The Central River Region (region 5) had just introduced a programme to equip all their 200 schools with a reading corner in each classroom in every school that doesn't have a school library. A mammoth task!!

We were able to help with donations of metal storage cabinets and 100's of boxes of reading books. Two large government trucks were easily filled to get their programme off to a flying start.

Special thanks this year go to Trustee Paul's father-in-law, **Bill Howard**, who scoured charity shops in Southport and donated more than 20 banana boxes of suitable reference and reading books.

18th CONTAINER:- Once again our long time supporters came up trumps, and with new schools, organisations and individuals donating a wide range of materials we easily filled to capacity our **18th 40-foot container**. So much material that we needed a second temporary storeroom, full to bursting, in The Gambia to take the overspill from our permanent store. We had no problem kitting out the three newly built classrooms with all the furniture and learning materials they needed!

Does anyone remember the skeleton in our 2021 newsletter? **“GEORGE”**, as he's now known, has a robust metal stand on wheels and has now started his tour of several Gambian senior schools at Alieu Badera memorial school in Brufut. He's sure to bring “life” to their Biology lessons.

- Steve”



☆☆☆ **Two dates for your diaries** ☆☆☆

Hilary and Steve will be hosting their **annual Garden Party on Saturday 15th July** at 12, Briarfield Ave, BD10 8QR.

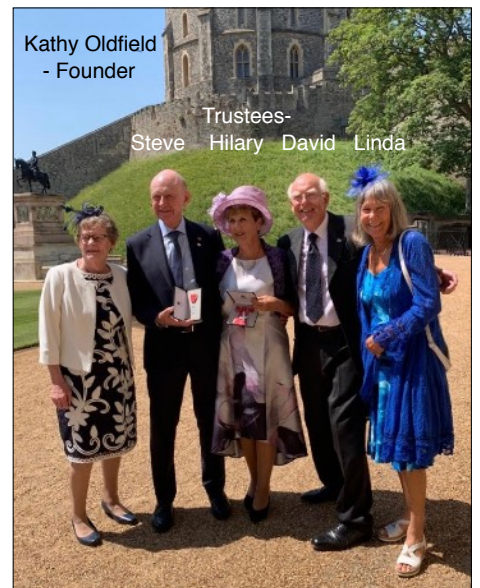
We will be back in the churchyard at **Saltire Festival on Saturday 16th September**. Thanks to all who have continued to donate money and materials for sale helping our work carry on through this cost of living crisis.



MBE AWARDS



We are thrilled to announce that Hilary and Steve Lawther have each received an MBE for their dedicated work with GST. Truly modest, they strongly emphasise that their acceptance of the awards recognises the efforts of our founders, our trustees both past and present, and all our loyal supporters. Tremendous achievements from an amazing team.



For more information on our events, how you can help or get involved, or to look for updates, please check our website and social media, or contact the trustees via our main phone number, or by mobile where indicated:-

Christine Brown, Linda Gunn, Hilary Lawther MBE (UK 07932 650644), Steve Lawther MBE (UK 07946 400475), Paul Neimantas (UK 07510 224894), David Oldfield