

Things have not got any quieter over the past year, and the general picture is still one of too much to do, too little time and too few people to do it. We have actually achieved a great deal again, but are still finding that we have to move too quickly from one issue or activity to the next to be able to derive the full benefit from any one visit or other initiative. I will try to summarise the year, but can't include everything.

Twinning

The twinning of Scotland with Eastern Cape has again been our main focus, with quite a lot done but so much more potential.

The link between South Ayrshire and King William's Town seems finally to have begun to take off, though the Renfrewshire/Umtata link is still some way behind. Following a meeting we had last December with Helen Liddell (then Scottish Education Minister) and a subsequent letter from her to a number of Education Conveners, several local authorities wrote to us about making links, and the main hold-up has been our own lack of time. We are still awaiting a reply from COSLA about the formation of Scottish L.A. ACTSA.

The Scottish Pre-school Play Association was put in touch with Khokela Early Learning Centre in Cradock, and arising from this we arranged a very intensive 3 week visit to Scotland by the Director of Khokela, Thembekile Nabo, and his wife Ellen who works in adult education. During a whirlwind tour of umpteen local authorities and individual projects in many parts of Scotland, and a brief informal meeting with Sam Galbraith (the current Education Minister), Thembekile and Ellen took home a long list of Scottish contacts wanting to make links in Eastern Cape, and the follow-up will keep us busy for a long time. Two Glasgow secondary schools which had already expressed interest in twinning links were put in touch with schools in Eastern Cape through Thembekile, and this link was reinforced by a visit from Cheryl Carolus to Hyndland Secondary School during her short tour in October.

We were still catching our breath after the Nabos' tour when another visit to Scotland was arranged. This time the focus was on Jane Wilford's field of health, and the visitors were Lillian Cingo, nurse manager of the Phelophepa Health Train, and Emile Prince, former Dental Manager on the Train. In a hectic two-day visit, meetings were held with nursing and dental training institutions as well as with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, to encourage support of all kinds for the Train's tour of Eastern Cape in the first 5 months of next year – including possible visits. Several medical students from Scotland hope to do spells on the Train next summer, though by then it will have moved on to other Provinces. The contacts made or strengthened by the visit should help with other health-related initiatives as well as the Train.

Glasgow Caledonian University's very productive link with nurse training at University of Transkei has continued to develop. After an approach from Nceba Moss, our longstanding contact in Port Elizabeth, a link with a sports psychologist there has also recently been made by GCU. The 600 second-hand student nurses' uniforms from GCU that I mentioned last year were duly despatched in May to UNITRA.

Two visitors from Stutterheim spent some time with Scottish Community Business and met also with community groups, which helped to strengthen the twinning network though we didn't arrange the visit.

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament opens up great new opportunities for developing the twinning link, and much more time needs to be invested in this than we have so far been able to give. We did write to all the candidates of the main parties during the election campaign, and received written support for the twinning link and other aspects of our work from about 10% of the MSPs actually elected. A good number of others who didn't send back the pledge form are longstanding supporters, so our problem is one of time for organisation rather than any lack of potential support.

Provincial as well as national elections also took place in South Africa this year, which meant some changes in Eastern Cape's team of ministers, but a start has been made on making fresh contacts. One old friend now returned to the Cabinet is Nosimo Balindlela, who visited us in 1996. She is now Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture. Prof. Mayatula, formerly E. Cape Minister of Education, is now Chair of the Education Portfolio Committee in the national Parliament. We sent condolences to Premier Stofile on the tragic death of his student son in a road accident.

Book Appeal

This particular part of the twinning link has seen some developments over the year. Thanks to a lot of effort in the collecting, sorting, packing and eventual loading of the books, our second container was sent off in May, and reached King William's Town in July. About a quarter of the load was nursing books and periodicals

from GCU, going to UNITRA.

The Balmore Trust, whose warehouse we had used for four years as their share of this joint project, was giving up the lease on the building in Airds Lane so we had to look for new accommodation. Glasgow City Council has now very kindly given us the use of a large room at the Mitchell Library, where books are gradually accumulating again (including yet more nursing material from GCU). Because the library is shut on Sundays, the routine of weekly sorting on that day has been disrupted and a new routine not yet established. We are grateful to the Balmore Trust, to the Scottish Co-op for continuing to transport books for us from all over Scotland, and to all the individuals who have worked so hard on different aspects of the project.

Other Visitors

Our particular focus on Eastern Cape has not prevented us taking a wider interest. In March, Rev. Keith Benjamin from Cape Town travelled widely in Scotland for a week as part of a U.K. tour, speaking to all kinds of people on the issues of drugs, poverty and development.

In September Gwede Mantashe, General Secretary of the South African National Union of Mineworkers, spent one very long day (and a very short night) in Scotland, speaking to trade unionists in various contexts about the campaign to persuade or force Cape plc to compensate its former employees in South Africa for the devastating effects on their health of the company's total disregard for basic safety precautions during its years of mining and packing asbestos. This is now a major ACTSA campaign.

In October Cheryl Carolus, South Africa's High Commissioner to the U.K., visited Scotland for another solid two days of meetings with useful people. This included the official opening of the Scottish Anti-Apartheid Movement archives, and George Johannes' collection of papers, at Caledonian University.

In November we were able to take Nomazizi Rajuli (sister of our Scottish Committee member Khanya), who is about to become Head of an arts-based school in Gauteng, to visit Douglas Academy in Milngavie, a secondary school with a specialist music school attached.

Other Campaigns

The Angola demining appeal launched at last year's AGM was put into suspended animation shortly afterwards due to the new outbreak of full-scale war in Angola which made demining impossible for the time being. Some money has been coming in, and the project will be revived when the situation allows. The British Government's recent dramatic policy shift against Jonas Savimbi should speed that day.

On debt relief, our main activity has again been our part in Jubilee 2000, which has mostly meant David Kenvyn's active participation as our delegate and especially his organising of the cycle-ride demonstration from Edinburgh to the G7/8 summit in Cologne. Our new ACTSA Scotland banner also had its first airing at the human chain rally in Edinburgh after much stitching into the early hours of the morning.

The European Union/South Africa trade talks on which we had campaigned over a lengthy period finally led to a signed agreement this year. ACTSA's role in lobbying for a fair deal was acknowledged by South Africa as having made a real difference.

Public Activity

Apart from the specific initiatives outlined above, our normal everyday publicity and educational efforts continued, providing stalls and speakers for various events. A major development was the launch of our own website, for which much of the preparation had been done by our Vice-chair Colin Anderson before his tragic death in January. We are grateful to Alan Cairns and Brian Purdie for all the work they have done on the site.

When our core group of activists is so small, illnesses and bereavements have a big impact on our work, and it is frustrating to see how much more we could do if we had the human resources. Every visitor we have goes away astounded at the level of goodwill, interest and enthusiasm that they have found here wherever they have gone. Our problem is not a lack of opportunity but our limited capacity to use all this goodwill productively. Nevertheless, a good deal has got done over the past 12 months, as in previous years, and we fully intend to get a lot more done over the next 12 months. The invitation to Brian Filling to represent Scotland at the inauguration of President Thabo Mbeki is a sign that our efforts are appreciated.

John C. Nelson