

I said last year that I expected 2007 to bring more hard work, the drawing in of more people and some solid progress, and that is how it has turned out.

Linking. The link between Scotland and Eastern Cape moved up another notch with the formalising in November of an agreement between Amathole District Municipality and Glasgow City Council. A group from Amathole visited Glasgow as part of the joint local economic development project, and during this visit the Executive Mayor of ADM and the Leader of Glasgow City Council signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding on broadening co-operation between the two Councils far beyond the initial project funded by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. ACTSA's role as marriage broker in this relationship was generously acknowledged at the ceremony, as well as privately by the Amathole representatives. We are delighted that the connection has progressed this far, and look forward to doing what we can to help deepen and strengthen it.

Much earlier in the year Mark O'Neill, Head of Arts and Museums in Glasgow, visited East London to advise the Board of the Heroes Park memorial project there, and we know his assistance was greatly appreciated. We hope it will be possible to assist also the Nelson Mandela museum in Mthatha, which asked for information on taking the benefits of the museum out to local schools.

Glasgow City Council has also taken on the convenership and provision of the secretariat for Local Authority ACTSA, which is another very substantial contribution to the building of links between local government in the U.K. and Southern Africa as a whole.

Brian Filling's expertise and contacts in further and higher education have continued to increase connections between institutions here and in South Africa, both through British Council initiatives and more directly. An agreement was signed this year between Lovedale and Glasgow Metropolitan Colleges, arising out of earlier ACTSA contacts. The move of Derrick Swartz from Fort Hare to Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth should encourage new links. Other contacts with Fort Hare will continue, notably with the library there. Through our Book Appeal container we were able to transport the late Ethel de Keyser's book collection from the Canon Collins Trust to the Liberation Archive at Fort Hare, and our annual ANC anniversary social in January raised £250 for the Archive's development appeal.

When the new Scottish Government launched a public consultation on the future of its International Development policy we were able to respond with a submission that argued the case for supporting the Eastern Cape link as well as Southern Africa more broadly. David Kenvyn did the main drafting for us. We hope to submit evidence also to the Scottish Parliament's External Relations Committee, in response to its own separate enquiry.

We are constantly struck by the number of community and institutional links that exist between Scotland and Southern Africa quite independently of ACTSA and about which we often only hear by accident. We obviously have no wish (or ability) at all to exercise any kind of control over these. It is good that there is so much interest and goodwill, and we are pleased to be able to play our own part in encouraging and enabling productive links and in assisting sometimes as the opportunities arise.

Book Appeal. Part of the link with Eastern Cape and a very large piece of work in itself, the Book Appeal's demands this year have been unrelenting. Our fourth container was dispatched in April, sent off by the President and General Secretary of the STUC from their Congress meeting in Glasgow. Congress itself had a strong ACTSA presence, with delegates asked to bring book donations and an ACTSA slot in the main programme, on top of our usual stall and a Zimbabwean trade union guest.

Both offers of books and enquiries about volunteering have kept coming in and all need to be responded to. The Bookdonors project in Selkirk is a new source of books and offers almost unlimited supplies. At the present rate of work it seems likely that the next container-load will be ready only a year after the previous one rather than the more usual two or three years. This is obviously a good thing in itself but also a challenge financially and organisationally. If the Appeal is going to continue to expand, new resources of accommodation, finance and organisation will be urgently required.

Events. Our annual ANC anniversary social in January this year featured Stuart Round, who showed an abbreviated version of a film about his work smuggling material to the ANC underground during the apartheid years. The Anti-Apartheid campaign, this time nearer home, was also the theme of Glasgow Caledonian University's Witness Seminar on the history of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Scotland.

Denis Goldberg and George Johannes both attended to contribute from the platform alongside more local activists, and those attending found it valuable. The entire proceedings were recorded for the AAM archives and are available on the GCU website. A barbecue held immediately afterwards by the Purdies raised some £800 to commemorate Edeldgard Goldberg, principally through support for the Ububele counselling project.

The annual Burns Supper at South Africa House was also memorable as always, and used by the High Commission as an opportunity to develop contacts well beyond ACTSA itself.

A meeting with Verne Harris of the Mandela Foundation in July was very productive, and led on to planning for the 90th Birthday celebrations in 2008.

One planned event that had to be postponed was the second annual Mandela/Tambo Freedom Lecture from which the speaker had to call off. It should take place at a later date. The 2006 lecture was published this year as a pamphlet, thanks to Glasgow Metropolitan College.

We were glad to be represented also at some events organised by others – notably the unveiling of the Nelson Mandela statue in Parliament Square in London.

Southern Africa. We have assisted ACTSA's Dignity. Period! campaign over the year, distributing material and encouraging and forwarding donations. As mentioned above, Lucia Matibenga of the ZCTU attended the STUC in April, and Annie White assisted in introducing her to Scottish trade unionists. We have circulated campaign action points from ACTSA in London on Zimbabwe, and have kept in touch with the Scotland Zimbabwe Group.

Brian Filling was invited onto an advisory committee set up by the Mozambican High Commission. We were pleased to meet Siphwe Hlophe from Swaziland twice this year – at CIVICUS in June and again at the Scottish Parliament in December, though we were not responsible for either meeting. We have circulated material about ACTSA's Vedanta campaign, and have been in touch with SCIAF about possible joint campaigning on the issue.

We have started working again on trying to encourage the setting up of a Cross Party Group on Southern Africa in the Scottish Parliament, taking account of the new intake of MSPs and the changed roles of others following May's election.

We have been involved in some campaigning work on Economic Partnership Agreements as they affect Southern Africa in particular – raising EPAs at a meeting with Scottish MEPs in February, circulating ACTSA's briefing paper and the recent Trade Justice Movement campaign postcard and online petition details, and taking part in the TJM lobby of the German Consulate in Edinburgh in April. TJM Scotland also prompted a letter to the Scottish Press from MEPs of three parties.

Stalls. The number of separate stalls was slightly lower this year at 20, but the total time involved in fact increased, not least because of a new 5-day stall in Edinburgh. All stalls serve the dual purpose of telling people what we are up to, and selling goods from community groups in Southern Africa, though the balance varies with the nature of the event. We have been gradually expanding our range of suppliers, with goods now from 7 SADC countries though all, of course, on a very small scale. We have raised with Amathole DM the question of support for small suppliers in finding their way into exporting small quantities by post.

Other work. We have continued to respond to requests for information or other assistance from a variety of quarters, have been actively represented in ACTSA's UK structures, have kept up our links with NIDOS, have spoken at occasional meetings of other organisations, have kept up strong links with the South African High Commission, have supplied volunteers to the Workers Beer Company for four events, have kept up our website though without giving it the time and attention it needs, and finally waved goodbye to the Peter Magubane photographic exhibition as it departed for Norway early in the year. Several members have visited Southern Africa for different reasons, all making their own particular contribution there.

We have succeeded in drawing in quite a number of new people, mostly through the book appeal, Workers Beer volunteering and the stalls. Several of these have become involved in helping in other ways, and a smaller number have become interested in ACTSA more generally. We could not function without the willing help of a large number of volunteers for specific tasks, but if we are to increase the

scale of what we do as we need to we will have to find ways of encouraging and enabling more people to take on the organising of areas of work as our present capacity is stretched pretty close to its limit.