



## NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2005

Two new courses were launched in the New Year – Spanish conversation and the music group. Both have made astonishing progress in the first six months. The Spanish class (Wednesday mornings 10-12) has made excellent use of the services of one of our sponsorees, Maria José in Mexico, who has been sending us passages to read and translate and correcting our garbled replies, typed and e-mailed to her by the indefatigable Christine Lillington.

Four of our 'estudiantes' sallied forth to the Costa del Concreto in June, which occasioned an interesting exchange of more messages on postcards, mostly about the extraordinary activities of Spanish 'monjas'.

The music group (Jane Fidgen, concertina; Sue Meacock, accordion and banjo; Dave Lomax, guitar; Fred Wilkins, harmonica; Anton, B flat trumpet and Don Townshend, voice, whistle and everything else) meets at Jane's home and after many rehearsals, gave their first public performance at the Dundry Revels, when 50 or more gathered on the lawn at the home of Pat and Francis Gillett, whose magnificent hospitality, eatables and raffle raised over £100 for the Sponsorship Fund.

A return visit to the Gilda Cinema at the home of Joan and David Tuff, where an evocative programme of 1940s documentaries followed by superior refreshments, raised a further £50.

French conversation groups continue to meet with great regularity at the home of Marie Jo and André Coutanche raising over £180 in the first six months of the year and a repeat performance was given of their intriguing computerised presentation of the music and lyrics of Georges Brassens, adding a further £25.

Anton's series of talks on Anglo-Saxon history at Filton raised £150 and he continues to give endless talks and lectures on many varied subjects to groups throughout the area, giving up his time and energy to bring in more funds for our young people overseas.

In February Stephen Banfield, Professor of Music at Bristol University, gave us a programme specially devised for our students on British music, inspired by the great poets – probably the most eloquent presentation in all our 18 years existence. Record attendances (up to 20 or more) turned out for Martin Crossley Evans talk on Hannah More; David Selwyn on Thomas Hardy's poetry; 'Paddy & Fanny', Irish evangelists by Glyn Edwards and also, interestingly, for a talk by Alan Middleton on fire safety.

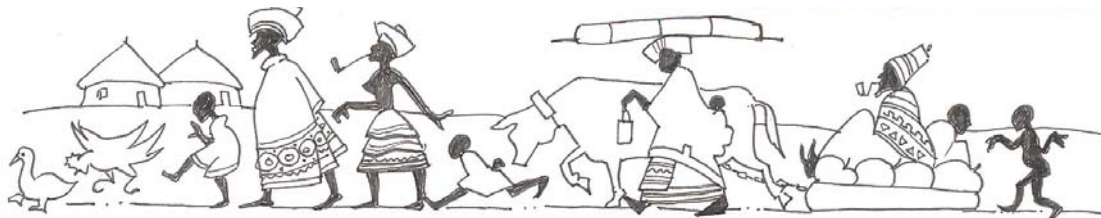
The Royal wedding at Windsor in April provided ample opportunity for our ardent thespians to give their own version of it in the back garden until extreme cold turned the evening into a singsong and musical evening before two roaring log fires.

The lifesize and extremely realistic masks of Charles and Camilla we purchased, found their way in due course on to dummies of the same, who have graced our university proceedings ever since and at the end-of-term extravaganza granted degrees to Barry Wilkins for being the best gentleman student of the year and Jane Fidgen for being the best lady student.

We celebrated the centenary of Anton Chekhov's death with a talk by the other Anton, his namesake, and some students went to a production of *The Seagull* in Bishopston and *The Three Sisters* at the Tobacco Factory.

A number of new students of the University of Withywood have been introduced to community living and cultural activities at the cottage in North Wales and further visits are planned in the autumn.

Two important projects are in preparation for the near future. (1) The linking of the lower and upper quadrilateral slabs with a continuous platform from which to stage drama, concerts and exhibitions. Already tons of rubble are arriving by shopping trolley and all-day work parties are



planned throughout the autumn. (2) The purchase by Anton of a colour photocopier which will enable albums to be made for educational purposes from the Illustrated London News, from which Glyn is currently compiling a thematic index.

**THE SPONSORSHIP FUND** has received sturdy support from all those good people who have donated money, enabling us to claim Gift Aid and a number of others including Stephen Banfield, Claire Follett, Gordon Calvert, Frances Hughes, Jean Isaacs, Helen Wright, Betty Hands, Sue and Brian Dart, Eileen Harkins, Jo Hawkins (and others who wish to remain anonymous) have made more than generous donations. These sums have enabled us to carry many of our students into university courses – notably Maria José (Mexico) engineering; Felix Nyalemgbé (Ghana) accountancy; Daniel Boateng (Ghana) languages; Patrick Kigadi (Kenya) mathematics; Kavitha and Meena (S. India) sciences and Chrisemeka Azike (Nigeria) architecture.

Some notable successes are Nancy Kigadi (Kenya) who we sponsored from primary school and is now teaching Information Technology in a girls' college and Jimmy Shah who is working for an engineering firm and studying to become a chartered engineer. During the past year we helped 45 people in 7 countries as well as two schools and the Indian sewing fund.

Our good friend in S. India, Mrs Prema, has written to say that she is bringing all our projects (the Anton Tuition Centre, sewing and dressmaking classes) under one roof, which has meant an outlay of £380 for construction costs. We hope to be able to raise this in the near future. Individual sponsors have come forward to sponsor the two small children featured in our last annual report, Jennifer and Joshua, as well as another Indian child called Joseph. We are most grateful to these ladies.

We had hoped the British High Commission in Ghana would allow Samuel Gomez – our troubleshooter there – to make a short visit to us this August to discuss the work of our sponsorship, but for the second year running his application has, for some reason, been rejected.

At the end of July Charlie Pridell, former VSO worker in Cameroon, returned there and took £400 from us for two college students and Jane Britton will be arranging for seven £50 book grants to be taken to deserving students in Uganda. Even so, the problem remains of how to get money to many of our sponsorees without incurring ruinous bank charges and at a recent Trustees meeting it was decided to approach the Minister for Overseas Development, via our MP Dawn Primarolo, and to raise public awareness through articles in the press. We would welcome suggestions on how to overcome this problem which currently costs us around £600 each year.

**PUBLICATIONS** The University has prepared for publication: -

1. A new book in our travel series **"Overland to Calcutta for £44"** and we hear from the University Press that publication is imminent.
2. **"British Prime Ministers from Robert Walpole to Tony Blair"** – a series of cartoons and caricatures with explanatory notes – to be published by John Hickey of Classroom Resources.
3. **"Tyntesfield: the Inside Story"** – to be published jointly by the University of Witherwood and The Malago Society.

Many, many grateful thanks to Christine, Marie Jo, André, Glyn and our Trustees, as well as many others behind the scenes for keeping things going.

