



# UNIVERSITY OF WITHYWOOD

## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

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Charity Number 1171684

*"I have been a teacher in secondary schools all my adult life. In the summer vacations I travelled extensively in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. There I found a desperate need among young people for education, it is a sad fact that not everyone has this opportunity. In 1964 I began sponsoring two students, one in Syria, the other in Turkey. I continued sponsoring young people from my own pocket for many years thereafter. In 1995 we became a charity and with the invaluable support of our volunteers we have sponsored over 120 students" Anton Bantock MBE (1933 – 2015)*



***This is the history of the sponsorship fund written by our founder Anton Bantock. It documents his travels around the world and how he went about helping people. As a teacher, a self declared 'educationalist' and someone who kept Christian values close to his heart, he certainly made a difference. The positive knock-on effect produced some remarkable results and the foundation of our charity today.***

## **Antranik Ovagim (Turkey)**

I met Antranik in the old bazaar in Istanbul in 1964. He offered to show me round the workshop of his master, Agop Fesciyan, who I later learned was one of the city's most celebrated silversmiths. Antranik was Armenian and his workshop was situated in a number of small dark rooms in the Kaleilar Han; one of the ancient caravanserai of old Constantinople. Agop, Antranik and the other apprentices treated me with great courtesy. I was served with Turkish coffee and shown some of their work, with no obligation to buy.

Antranik spoke English reasonably well and told me he was free the next day and would like to show me around the city. In the course of that day he told me his great ambition was to study philosophy in America. On my return to UK I wrote to about ten colleges to see if they would accept him. The results were negative, so I consulted Mr Simmonds, headmaster of Bedminster Down School, where I was then teaching. 'Let him come here,' said Mr Simmonds.

His master, Agop, was happy to let him go and even paid his train fare to Bristol, in return for which I would send the equivalent in dollars to his son, Cezar, who was studying physics in the USA. I couldn't accommodate Antranik at that time as I was still living in lodgings myself. I found him a home with Mrs Venn in Bishopsworth (Bristol) who had a son much younger than Antranik at Bedminster Down School. He later moved to the YMCA in the city centre. I paid his rent and pocket money for the three years while he was at school, and Mr Simmonds "cooked the books" to conceal the fact that he was being educated at the expense of Bristol taxpayers.

Antranik was popular with the other 6<sup>th</sup> formers. He was short for his age, bullet-headed with almond-shaped eyes, a true Armenian type. He completed his A levels in two subjects and O levels in two or three others, and gained admittance to Enfield University to read Microeconomics. By this time I knew his mother and sister, Jeanette, who lived in a small basement flat in a steep sloping street in Pierre Loti Pasha, Istanbul. I stayed with them a few times on my way through Turkey to Syria and came to know Ahmet Rudolplu *'the man who is like a father to me,'* said Antranik.

Ahmet was a jovial, expansive Bulgarian Turk and a trouser factory manager. He once arrived in my classroom at school, on a visit to Antranik, bringing a barrel of real Turkish Delight for me and a pair of pyjamas which looked as if they had been made for an 18<sup>th</sup> century Turkish sultan.

To my astonishment, Antranik applied to the Gulbenkian Foundation and obtained a grant to finance his university education. This should have been a success story. Unfortunately halfway through his second year he came unstuck and we lost touch. I often wonder if he made it in the end to the USA. Even so, there was an interesting sequel. Agop Fesciyan, his former master, his wife Alis, daughter Zabel and son Hayk became, in the course of time, some of my oldest and dearest friends.

## **Yohia Nheli (Syria)**

Yohia introduced himself to me, at the age of 14 or 15, as the head of a ragged band of Arab village children who gathered round curiously when I stepped down from an old bus outside the great crusader castle of Krak des Chevaliers, Syria (1964). As night was falling and there was nowhere to stay. *'Tonight you will sleep in my house and tomorrow we show you the castle,'* he said.

His old mother and younger brothers made me very welcome. I slept that night on the flat roof of their one-room stone house, halfway along the village street of Hrat Trcman. Hurricane lamps were lit, dogs barked and down the mountainside a hundred or more prepared for the night on their beds of grain. No mattress was needed as the roofs of all the houses in that village were 3 inches deep in the grain stored there for the family's winter consumption.

His mother brought up breakfast and bedding on her shoulder, climbing the bent olive tree, which served as a ladder. Yohia took me round the castle the next day and accompanied me down the mountainside to the desert road. He told me his father, like all the men in his village, worked ten months of the year on building sites in Kuwait. *'I don't want to carry cement on my body,'* he said, *'I want to be a teacher like you, or an engineer.'*

He flagged down a passing truck and I was given a lift to Damascus. Once I arrived I found my way to the Ministry of Education, housed in those days in an old building dating from Ottoman times. I demanded to speak to the Minister of Education and at last was shown into a big room with blinds drawn and stacks of yellowing documents piled high. There was a little man seated behind a large desk. *'What can I do for you?'* He said, courteously. *'There's a boy of 14 or 15 in one of your villages who wants to be educated.'* I replied. *'We provide free primary education,'* said the little Minister, *'but we are a poor country. His parents must pay if he wants to study.'*

When I returned home I wrote to Yohia. *'How much will it cost to send you to secondary school?'* Back came the letter containing sweet-smelling herbs from the mountainside in Syria. The fees, transport and lodging (for he would have to go to the town Aleppo or Homs) fuel, oil for the lamp, books, for one year, would come to £64. I sent the money through my bank, not knowing whether it would arrive or what he or his father might do with it? Months passed. At last a letter arrived. He was in secondary school in Aleppo and the letter included an account for all monies spent.

A year or so later I returned to his village. His father, now on leave, greeted me affectionately, kissing me on both cheeks. He took off his watch and gave it to me. *'Now you are our son,'* he said. Between 1965 and 1995 I returned to that village fifteen times. Soon I knew every family member and could speak a basic Arabic. Yohia completed his education, married Maleki (meaning "queen") the daughter of a farmer and their first child was born on the day that news arrived of his success in the final examination. She was called Najah, which means "success" in Arabic.

Yohia then trained to be a teacher and took on one teaching post after another, eventually becoming Deputy Head of a new Government secondary school built on the mountainside above his village. He also learned how to install electricity, water supply and mains drainage to the simple homes in his village, teaching others the same skills and by degrees the whole place was lifted out of its Biblical past and entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As each brother married, additional rooms were added to the old family home. With a marble floor and balcony overlooking the street, Yohia's first floor apartment, with shower and TV, was the most modern in the village. In 1969 he made a memorable visit to the UK and his Arabic charm, buoyant high spirits, dynamic voice and irrepressible humour won him a wide circle of friends.

Sometime in 1997 he telephoned me (his was the first home to have one). *'I am ill,'* he said. *'They took me to the hospital in Damascus and cut some pieces from inside my body.'* *'Are you better?'* I enquired. *'Yes,'* came the faltering voice. *'I think now I am better. I am very tired.'* I wrote at once to his cousin, Kamal Kadi, whom I had known for years. When he was

18 his father brought him to the UK for a heart operation and they stayed with me for a few days. Kamal was now a doctor in a neighbouring village. He replied to my letter confirming the worst. *'Your friend Yohia is dead. He had stomach cancer. The operation was only to relieve the pain.'* The developing world, which he had tried so hard to bring into modern times, had caught up with him. He died at the age of 49.

In 2000 I made one last visit to Hrat Trcman. I stayed with Kamal and his father. We found the Nheli's family and Mustafa, Yohia's second son, then twelve, he took me up the mountainside to see the pile of stones which marked Yohia's grave. I laid three geranium heads on it.

## **Santos Buko (Sudan)**

Santos was my third sponsoree. On my first visit to Sudan in 1965 I knew nobody but discovered that one could stay in the students' hostel of Khartoum University very cheaply during the vacation. I was sent to a room that had two other residents. One was Santos. He was from south Sudan and a Christian. *'Are you a teacher or a journalist?'* he asked me. He was a gentle, serious young man wearing spectacles. I soon discovered that he had lost touch with his family because of the Civil War raging in the south.

Santos was very reticent about his own situation. Only very gradually did I learn that although the university paid for his accommodation, he had no pocket money, could not afford soap or toothpaste or mend his clothes. It was still possible to send international money orders to Sudan in those days, so on my return home to Bristol I began sending him pocket money and parcels of clothes on a regular basis. His letters always ended: *'May God bless you for me, dear M. Anton.'*

In spite of his deplorable situation, Santos did very well in the end-of-year exams. He came first in French, third in English and sixth in Arabic. In November 1966 he received a letter from his sister, Catherine Lazoro in the refugee camp at Bambouti in the Central African Republic that told him his father had died of paralysis. His mother was sick and could not care for the six younger children. She begged him to come and take care of them.

I advised Santos to travel south, buy a plot of land and build a hut for his family so that he could return when normal conditions prevailed. I told him to go to the Catholic fathers in Khartoum and borrow money on the security of my reimbursing them. Eventually he built three huts in Wau, but the new academic year was approaching in Khartoum and, on the strength of his French result, he was selected to go to Dakar in Senegal to continue his studies in the French medium.

He found tenants to occupy one of the huts and that would bring in a little rent to pay for the upkeep of the other two, in case his family could return. I wrote to the Oxfam Field Secretary for Equatorial Africa to inform them of the plight of Sudanese refugees in the C.A.R. and they replied: *'The refugee camps are some 300 miles away and there are no parcel or post for these camps. Funds had been donated from the United Nations and a Catholic Refugee service will be opening in the area which will accept post.'*

So at Bedminster Down Secondary School we began *"Operation parcels for Sudanese Refugees"*. Clothes that were not sold at our annual jumble sale would be made up into parcels, the largest size permitted by the GPO. In no way could we afford to send them airmail, and even the cost of surface mail was about eight times more than the contents were worth. Even if they never arrived, it would be a useful exercise in giving, for the children who had packed the clothes paraded the parcels round the school with sheets of purple penny stamps bought from Norma Wright at the Uplands Post Office.

Nearly a year later we had our reply from the local pastor Father Gangi *'Many thanks for the four parcels of clothes. All four have arrived in good condition. I thank you very much for the great concern you take of my people. May God reward your good services.'* I kept up the pressure on Oxfam and, at last, they requested precise information. *'What order does Father Gangi belong to? Which diocese? How many refugees? Who was his bishop?'* Oxfam passed on this information to Mr Jamieson of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and sent a copy of their letter to me:

*'I have recently had some letters from a supporter of Oxfam who has been in touch over many months with the Catholic Father Gangi who has written frequently to the supporter, Mr. Bantock, about the needs of his refugees originally near the border and now moving to Mboki. It seems that there are some 7000 refugees under Father Gangi's care and although he seems to be fairly reticent about actually requesting assistance from Mr Bantock and friends, it is nevertheless perfectly clear that there are many needs, urgent ones, among the refugees.'*

I then received a letter from Father Gangi: *'I have met the High Commissioner for Refugees and he has asked me to explain how he can help my people. At last I heard from Oxfam that UNHCR had granted \$6,000,000 for the rural settlement of Sudanese refugees near Mboki. The money would be spent on the completion of roads, bridges and water supply; dispensaries, a study of the agricultural possibilities of the area for food and cash crops. And considerable provision for the transport of food for the 1,400km from Bangui to Mboki.'* At last things seemed to be moving.

Then his time in Dakar came to an abrupt end. The student unrest that erupted all over Europe in 1968 spread to Senegal and the university was closed down for a year. Most of the students fled in military planes. Back in Sudan, Khartoum University continued to house and feed him as before, but there were no bursaries for poor students. I begged old friend Abdul Azziz El Sawi – assistant manager of the Blue Nile Insurance Company, to lend him pocket money, which I would repay. I was glad to hear that he had given Santos £10 on two occasions and would not hear of me refunding him. *'We are old friends and I know your situation very well.'*

An opportunity finally arose to study in Europe that thrilled Santos. To be transported from the tin shacks of Equatorial Africa directly to Paris, would be more of a culture shock than the reverse experience. He wondered how he would cope with the food, the culture and the climate. The French Embassy in Sudan could not give him an allowance to buy clothing for the European winter and the 480 francs he would receive monthly would be scarcely sufficient for lodging and food.

He flew to Paris in October 1968 and was sent to the University of Lyon where completed his degree course on a note of triumph. He had won the respect of both the African and European students and more than once was required to be their spokesman in differences of opinion with the university authorities. On one occasion he led a petition to Clermont Ferrand to seek the reprieve of an African student expelled for criticising French policy in its former African colonies.

Some time in 1973 both Santos and Father Gangi returned to the Sudan. The political situation had so far returned to normal he could begin his career as a teacher in Southern Sudan. I never saw him again but I continued to receive his precise, articulate and beautifully written letters in which he occasionally mentioned the fireside at Hên Gaerffynnon, near Harlech in North Wales where he had visited us one winter.

In 1977 I was in Khartoum again and made an effort to reach the south to see them. But African airline officials are not very different from African bus stands and railways stations.

The most frantic pushing and shouting ensues and it seems to be a question of the survival of the loudest. Sadly I missed the chance to meet with them on this particular journey.

Some time in 1983, just as I returned home from shopping in Witherwood, a motorbike zoomed up behind me and stopped at my gate. The rider dismounted and followed me up the path. *'Are you Anton?'* he said. I couldn't see him too closely for he wore a crash helmet and goggles, and was thickly clad in leather motorcyclist's gear. After he removed his crash helmet and I could see that he was quite young. *'I am Martin Eaves and I live in Chipping Sodbury. When I was cycling through Africa I met Santos.'*

It seemed that his route lay through the Central African Republic into Southern Sudan. At a small bush town called Lui he was hailed by an African and invited to his home. The African was middle-aged with receding hair and rimless glasses. It was Santos, now deputy principal of a girls' boarding school. He was married and there were several children. Martin was given a very warm welcome and stayed there several days. When he told Santos that he came from Chipping Sodbury, near Bristol, Santos amazed him by saying that he had an old friend in Bristol. *'Anton of Witherwood.'* On Martin's return to the U.K he had felt compelled to seek me out.

In May 1988 I received a letter from Santos, the first in 16 years. *'Dear Anton; I am sure you will be too surprised to hear from me once again after so many long and weary years. In fact, I am still alive, despite all that is happening around.'* He went on to describe how the situation was much worse than that of the *'Seventeen Years Struggle'* (1956-73). He was now Senior Inspector for Schools for French language in the Equatorial Region. He was living in Juba, which was in government hands, but the "rebels" controlled all the surrounding territory. *'There are too many losses of lives, poverty and starvation everywhere. Food items are scarce and the little that one can get by chance is too expensive for one's means.'*

## **Biodun Odumosu (Nigeria)**

In the late 1960s he was the laboratory assistant at Bedminster Down Secondary School. As I had recently (1965) returned from my first visit to Nigeria, I felt I had something in common with him. He was typically Yoruba; gregarious, fun loving and invariably cheerful. He had been studying for a science degree at Dublin University and now lived in a rented terraced house in St. Pauls. So I bridged the gap and he went back to university. On my second journey to Nigeria in 1972 and I stayed with his extended family in Suru Lere, a teeming shanty suburb of Lagos. In due course Biodun received his degree in Dublin but we lost touch.

## **Clement Azike (Nigeria)**

I met his father, Simon, back in 1965 at Kafanchan railway junction while waiting for the train to Jos, in the central plateau of Nigeria. Simon, then 19, told me he was a headmaster and some of his students were older than he was. This is not uncommon in Africa. We did not arrive in Jos until well after midnight and, as all the hotels had closed down (because their owners had voted for opposition leaders in local elections), Simon took me to the police compound where his father, Chief Mathias Azike, was a police officer.

The whole family, in the middle of the night, made me very welcome and evacuated one half of their hut to give me a room to myself for the rest of the night. There was one electric light, shared by both rooms, high up in the partition wall. Next morning I was brought hot water in a bucket for washing and then we ate breakfast of liver and onions. The youngest member of the family, Michael, howled with fear when he saw me. Simon explained that the only white man he had ever seen was the doctor who had come to give him an injection for malaria.

I corresponded with Simon for years and with his father, Chief Mathias. In due course (1969) I was invited to Simon's wedding to Angelina Ofounye, though I couldn't attend. I visited the Azike family in their hometown of Onicha Olona in 1972, 1980 and 1993. By this time their children were growing up. In about 1990 the eldest son, Clement, aged 17, wrote to me. He said that Simon, his father, a retired teacher, had not been paid his pension. It was not months, but several years in arrears. His grandfather, Chief Mathias, had met with a motor accident and died soon after. Clement asked if I could help to pay for his accountancy course. I did so for two years. When I made my fourth visit in 1993 and met with the family again, he was speechless with gratitude. But no words could have expressed his feelings better.

## **Mr Ofounye (Nigeria)**

Sometime after my visit to Nigeria in 1972 I received a letter from Mr Ofounye, a wonderful, warm-hearted old man. He told me about Onicha Olona Village Association of which he was secretary and treasurer. It seemed that a new government initiative was offering to double every sum of money raised by the Village Association for needful public works. This enabled me to tell innumerable clubs and societies (in Bristol) that I provided talks for (at that time), for every pound they gave me as our contribution to the Onicha Olona Village Association, the Nigerian government would pay a pound.

Finally enough arrived to allow the Village Association to complete three public works. The first and most successful was a covered market so that local people could bring their produce to sell under cover from the daily three-hour downpour of rain. The second, the village post office, never became operative because the government failed year after year to make a telephone connection to the national system. The result was that the jungle rapidly reclaimed the unfinished building; vines and creepers infested the empty telephone poles and, after a while, it was impossible to tell where the post office was.

The third project was the village hall. Evidently money ran out before a proper roof could be constructed, the deficiency was adapted by nailing perfectly inadequate lengths of timber together. When finished, the roof sagged so alarmingly, a process accelerated by the crowds of small children that regularly climbed onto it, that it was eventually unsafe and too dangerous to use. I was disconcerted to find that this faulty structure had been named after me! The chronic corruption of all departments of government in Nigeria at that time ensured that the "pound for a pound" scheme finally dwindled and dried up. Dear old Mr Ofounye remained a devoted friend until his death in 2003.

## **Yehuda Bauer (Palestine / Israel)**

Yehuda was born in Prague in 1926 and emigrated with his parents to British Palestine in 1939 (the year after Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia). He studied history at Cardiff University, returning in 1948 because of the war that created the state of Israel. I was given an introduction to him in 1964 when I made my first visit to Israel. He kindly collected me from the hostel in Tel Aviv where I was staying and drove me to Kibbutz Shoval, near Beersheba. Yehuda, his wife Shula and their two daughters, Anit and Danat, were members of this kibbutz and the tour he gave me of their extraordinary socialist community in the desert was an unforgettable experience.

In 1968 he obtained a grant to come to UK to research the history of the Holocaust. He brought his wife and children to Bedminster Down Secondary School, and a few weeks later I invited them to join me at my cottage Hên Gaerffynnon in North Wales. In fact, they were in the UK when the Six Day War broke out, which was electrifying news for them, for it enlarged Israel's country threefold. In talking to Yehuda about education, I came to learn that he had to teach European history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his kibbutz school and he had no reference books or resource material of any kind. He remarked wistfully on the good fortune

News to refer to in my classroom. We made a plan and I would make up a set of teaching aids for him on certain key subjects like:

*(1) French political history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with special regard to the Revolution of 1848 and the Commune of Paris 1871. (2) Bismarck and the Unification of Germany. (3) The Risorgimento in Italy etc.*

In those days there were no photocopiers in my school or anywhere else that I could find in Bristol so I located the University of Bristol photographer, a friendly man called Mr Hancock. Upon hearing the reason for my quest, he offered to make slides for me in his free time, at no cost. Certainly Yehuda could contribute nothing, for members of kibbutzim surrendered all their wealth on entering their community. But how to get these enormous volumes of Illustrated London News to Mr. Hancock's flat in Clifton? The only option then was to strap two (sometimes three) volumes onto the carrier of my bicycle and make repeated journeys from my bed-sit in Bishopsworth, over Bedminster Down, across Ashton Vale (it was usually after dark) and then push the bike up Goldeney Hill to York Place, Clifton.

The slides were successfully sent to Yehuda but gradually we lost touch. In 2008, only 40 years later, Christine Lillington located him on the Internet. He is now 82 and head of the Holocaust Institute in Jerusalem. The number of books he has written on the Holocaust and the decorations he has received is prodigious. He is probably now the world's chief authority on the subject. We have resumed correspondence and he had not forgotten him of the sets of slides and teaching notes I had prepared. Although he was no longer a member of Kibbutz Shoal, he has given me a fascinating update on its development during the last forty years.

## **Mohamed Ijjat Ouf (Syria)**

I met Mohamed on board an old Turkish ship called the 'Kara Deniz' (Black Sea) as it was leaving Beirut in August 1971. I was leaning on the rail waving goodbye to my friend Yohia Nheli and his uncle, and there was Mohamed next to me. He was, I suppose, about 26, with a great tuft of uncontrolled black hair, an amused expression and laughing eyes. He addressed me in Spanish, for he had no English. His home was Homs in Syria and he was returning to Cordoba in Spain to complete his course in Veterinary Science. The *Kara Deniz* stopped at the port of Alexandria where Mohamed had a married sister. He went ashore and brought back a mountain of appetising food she had had prepared for him but he insisted on sharing the food with me.

On the voyage to Naples, where I left the ship, he told me a great deal about his situation. His father was old and retired. He had elder sisters, but he was the eldest son and he had two younger brothers, Abdullah and Nouri. His father had subsidised his education so far, but now the money had run out and so he had to work part-time in the market. He had a Spanish girlfriend called Conché and her parents, had been very good to him, they fed him and gave him what money they could afford.

When we arrived at Naples for a full day and I asked Mohamed if he wanted to join me for the walk to Caserto, the old palace of the Bourbon kings, and then climb up the magnificent series of baroque waterfalls, cascading from the mountains behind. At Caserto we parted. Mohamed returned to the Kara Deniz for the final leg of the journey to Barcelona and I continued my travels in Italy.

In the next four or five years I visited him in Cordoba several times, usually travelling at half-term in June or at Christmas; taking the night ferry to Le Havre and changing trains in Paris and Madrid, arriving at Cordoba about 7.00pm the next day. Mohamed had his own small apartment, but at first he insisted on finding and paying for a room for me in the old Moorish quarter, which was clean and basic, and in the winter visit, had a single bar



clinging to them. The farms looked bleak, poor, comfortless places and the labour was mostly from teenagers or young children who worked silently and quickly.

In the evenings we toured the bare, brown hills of Andalusia, through olive groves and vineyards. We visited Mediosa El Zahara "The City of Flowers" a former Moorish palace, but unlike the Alhambra, in ruins, where archaeologists were trying to piece together all the tumbled parts of honeycombed vaulting. There seemed to be a kind of historical rightness in Mohamed, an Arab and a Moslem studying in Cordoba, which in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries was the great Moorish centre of learning.

Mohamed eventually married Conché and my next visit was not long after the birth of their daughter Leila. I was taken to the family's home, a ground floor flat in a complex of high-rise blocks. Mohamed had by this time, obtained his degree, but had been refused work as a vet because of racial discrimination. So he had gone into commerce, worked extremely hard and now rented a warehouse from which he supplied medical goods to all the chemist shops in Andalusia. He did his best to make me comfortable in that place as it was the only place left to sleep when I visited as his parents were visiting at the same time.

During the day I walked round the streets with Mohamed's parents, visiting the famous old mosque with them. From this time onwards I went to visit their home in Homs every time I was in Syria, sometimes with Yohia. I didn't see him again until 1988 when I was in Spain and took a bus from Salamanca to Cordoba. He now had a prosperous import/export business and a smart office out of town.

## **Samir Al Haddadin & Salah Abu Roumi (Jordan)**

They both arrived together on my doorstep in Withywood, Bristol in October 1974 and stayed two years. It was the first time that sponsorship involved accommodating young people in my own home. Samir was 18, Jordanian and a Christian; Salah was 19, a Palestinian and a Moslem. They had not known each other before coming to the UK.

The catalyst in this venture was the charismatic little Palestinian, Eissa Mustafa, who had befriended me on my first visit to Amman in 1964. Eissa had served in the British army during the Palestinian mandate and since had worked intermittently as a barman in the officers' mess of the Jordanian army. He had also worked in Pakistan and as a film extra in the epic *Lawrence of Arabia*. Eissa was a warm-hearted, affectionate soul who made friends everywhere.

I visited Eissa and his beautiful Palestinian wife, Shafiga, many times between 1966 and 1980 in their one-room hovel on the heights of Jebel Amman, and was inevitably drawn into their problems, especially after the children arrived; Mahasin, Walid, Mohammed, Allam and Ibrahim. This is what led to the sponsorship of Samir Al Haddadin. Samir's father had a small but profitable liquor shop in the shantytown of Zerqa, where Eissa and family lived after 1970. Eissa quickly found that Mr Al Haddadin – a big, rugged man with a ratty crafty expression, would let him have liquor on credit. Eissa told me that Mr Al Haddadin wanted his eldest son, Samir, to study in Britain or America; no doubt if I could help, more credit might come his way. I agreed to meet the young man.

The Al Haddadin family made me very welcome in their big house overlooking the Hadjaz railway. Samir was an earnest and deferential young man. His Jordanian General Certificate would certainly qualify him to enter Brunel College, Bristol to study for A levels and university entrance. I agreed to take him and accommodate him, and his father would pay the fees, which in any case at that time were partly subsidised by the British Government.

*'But what about Salah?'* said Eissa afterwards. Salah was a relation, the son of Eissa's cousin, and a retired officer in the Jordanian army. Salah's Jordanian certificate results were even

better than Samir's but his family had no money. After the 6-day War, 1967, they and Eissa had become refugees. The Israeli army occupied their home in Bethany on the West Bank. In that war, Salah's family had fled, mostly on foot, carrying what possessions they could, down into the Rift Valley, across the River Jordan and up into the deserts of Amman. Salah was 11 at that time. I returned to UK and finally decided, 'Let him come with Samir'.

The next two years were tough for all three of us. Samir and Salah had their beds in the front room where they both studied on a little folding table. They had to learn a new culture very quickly and their English was hardly adequate for the A level courses in Maths and Physics. Somehow we also had to find Salah's fees. He arrived in 1974 with only £19 in his pocket. I opened a savings bank account for him at Bedminster Down School and paid into it all the little bits of money that came my way for giving talks to Women's Institutes. They usually paid £3, sometimes £5. It wasn't enough. We borrowed the money Samir's father had given him and I paid it back.

To pay my mortgage on the bungalow, other sponsorships, food for all three of us, bus fares and textbooks, pushed me deeply into the red. My bank manager summoned me. *'We can let you have £5 a week.'* And for two years all three of us, lived on £5 a week. It required an almost military discipline. My friend Hazel Armstrong advised us on the subject of cheap but nourishing food; Ox hearts and sprats from the fish market. We also bought sacks of stone ground wholemeal flour from the health food shop in Bedminster and took it in turns to bake our own bread. Samir and Salah fell into with this regime, sharing the cooking and household duties. We spoke English all week and Arabic on Sundays. There was no money for extras. When I cycled to Birmingham at half term to visit my brother's family, I had one pound note in my pocket. 54p was spent on a puncture outfit when I sustained a flat tyre.

At Christmas, Samir and Salah came with me to my shared family cottage in North Wales. They matured and grew in confidence and both achieved good A level results. Samir went to Lancaster University to read Civil Engineering and Salah went to Cardiff to study Mechanical Engineering. Samir's father provided the funds, but his health was failing. He died before Samir took his finals. I knew, but didn't tell Samir until afterwards. Salah took part-time employment in bars, in Farleigh psychiatric hospital as a medical assistant, and a little money came from his elder brother who was building up a modest import/export business.

In July 1979, his finals complete, Samir made his last visit to Withywood before returning to Jordan. He went back to take responsibility for his now fatherless family. When I met him again two or three years later in Jordan he was married and they had two sons, Abdullah and Odai and a little girl called Marianna. They put huge pressure on me to visit them in Jordan. Every time I go, Samir gives me money for the Sponsorship Fund. This was the first time a former sponsoree turned sponsor.

Professionally, their careers ever since have not been straightforward. Samir was first attached to engineering firms (one of them was Dutch) and worked in Baghdad, Saudi and Kuwait. He did well and ten years later he was building banks, schools and hospitals in Jordan. But the building trade was hit badly by the on-going political crises, confrontation with Israel and finally the war in Iraq, to whose economy that of Jordan is fatally linked. Samir, therefore, set up his own company, manufacturing replica antique furniture for a widening and appreciative clientele. This now employs both his sons and several others and he can afford a smart flat in Jordan's West End.

Salah found it much more difficult to get started. Jobs in Jordan, Taiwan and Newport did not suffice. He later married and settled in Cardiff. His son Dean developed a flair for business and built up a company supplying halal meats to Moslem retailers in London. Dean also recently (2016) organised several shipping containers to deliver items for the refugees in Syria. His daughter Sara is now a successful doctor in Cardiff.

## Brother Selvanathan (India)

I met him in South India in 1982 when I was looking for the little church built by the Bishopsworth missionary, Rev. Joseph Wyatt. His niece, Dorothy Hall, then 92, had told me about him and given me a booklet he had published which contained a photograph of his bungalow in Worior, a poor district of Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappalli). I found the church with the help of the photograph and even found the big old bungalow, which is now a home for orphan boys.

While I was sketching the bungalow a young man pushing a bicycle approached me. He wore a spotless khaki shirt with pouch pockets and a snow-white dhoti which reached his ankles and gave him an almost sacerdotal look, except when he tucked it into his belt. On his breast he wore a plastic badge with the words "*Assembly of God*".

*'Which is your church, brother?'* he asked me in a tone of voice both jovial and serious. I think I told him I had a faith, but I wasn't too particular about which denomination. He waited for me to finish the sketch and said, *'I want you to come to meet my mother.'* I was quite happy to meet his mother, but it was some distance away and he offered to take me there on the carrier of his bicycle. I was much taller and heavier than he was and suggested that it might be better if I rode the bike and he travelled on the carrier. However, he insisted on doing it his way and we hadn't gone more than a few yards when we overbalanced and crashed, the little Indian underneath the bike and me on top, in the middle of a very dusty Indian road.

That incident was to have far-reaching repercussions. We walked the bike the rest of the way and presently came to an archetypal Indian house down a side road. It had a door, so low that one almost had to go on hands and knees to enter, there were no windows and an open drain ran in front. Inside were two tiny rooms, a linking veranda and yard. And there we met Melcy Jaganathan (Melcy was short for Melchior, one of the wise men), a white-haired old lady in a sari. She was not the sort of old lady you would expect to find living in an Indian slum. This was an educated woman, born to a notable Roman Catholic family in Kerala, college-educated, a dedicated teacher and finally a schools inspector. Her conversation, delivered with some humour, interlarded with quotations from Charles Dickens, Shakespeare and the Bible. *'Isn't that so brother?'* concluded her every wise remark.

She had enjoyed a privileged life-style, with a chauffeur-driven car and high-heeled shoes, but her marriage to a rich Hindu was her undoing. He later abandoned her and her son, completely penniless. They had no visible means of support, but Selvanathan, as a self-proclaimed holy man, could raise small amounts of money singing Tamil songs while playing his bulbulterra which is a kind of barrel organ.

I stayed there one night, sleeping on Melcy's spare sari on a hard wooden bench, the only piece of furniture as everything else, eating, sleeping, cooking etc. was done on the fractured concrete floor. Before leaving, I discussed with Selvanathan and his mother the idea that if he had a motor scooter it would enable him to do his proselytising without the effort and fatigue of cycling in the Indian heat and taking tumbles like the one we had experienced.

Back in the UK I opened the *'Selvanathan motor scooter fund'*, this being the first time I had involved other adults in one of my sponsorships. The money came in, two or three pounds, sometimes five. Cynthia de Tracey Reade, Mrs Withers, Lotte Bristow and even Stuart Dumbleton donated. Soon we had enough and the money was sent. The next time I was in India, two years later, Selvanathan was proudly sporting this magnificent blue moped. It practically filled the veranda of their little home. This time, I stayed ten days. The hardest

thing was the noise at night when herds of small, black wild pigs, all screeching loudly, were chased up and down the back streets by barking dogs. I almost got used to it.

In those ten days Selvanathan treated me to an in-depth experience of the open 'ashram'; the mission into other people's lives, problems and illnesses; the extempore psalm-singing, prayers, laying on of hands, counselling and healing. Sometimes this was conducted in the wayside temples of Hindus among all their painted goblets. All this, on the back of the new motor scooter in the heat and dust of India's foetid back streets.

Unfortunately Melcy had to get up in the middle of the night and go down the street to fetch water from the pump (men don't carry water in India), as it was the only time that there wasn't a crowd of women waiting to draw water. The motor scooter fund developed into the '*Melcy Jaganathan water connection fund*' and in due course money was raised to pay the landlord to install a tap in their home. Melcy's letters to me, written with an ancient fountain pen, were examples of her superior education, refinement and mobility of spirit, and should one day be published.

Melcy did not long survive the water tap connection and after she died Selvanathan also fell ill and nearly died. He was in a leper colony at Fatima Nagar. He did not have leprosy, but the lepers were the only ones who would take him in. A good woman came to nurse him and he slowly recovered. Her name was Prema. In due course I heard from her, 'Dear Brother,' she wrote, 'I have secretarial skills. If I had a typewriter, I could earn enough to keep Selvanathan and myself.' So a '*Prema typewriter fund*' was opened and Prema had her typewriter. Selvanathan would develop humanitarian ideas, Prema would realise them.

They eventually married and this is when the Selvanathan story becomes the Prema one. My next visit to India was in 1991 so I took a taxi that went for miles along the banks of the Cauvery River in the direction of Karur. At last we reached Thanirpalli where they both lived. Selvanathan had visited Thanirpalli village many times in the past, partly drawn by the famous ashram at Shantivanum situated on the outskirts.

Suddenly a young woman in a red sari ran out. '*Brother, you have come.*' This was Prema. '*Please, brother, please stay*' so I paid the good driver and thanked him. Within a few minutes there were five little boys at the door, '*These are my students,*' said Prema. '*They are so keen to learn.*' Prema prepared simple meals with about three stainless steel pots, and I slept that night on a charpoy outside, kept warm by two of Selvanathan's stray dogs who were quite determined to share the charpoy with me.

Selvanathan and Prema lived in a hen house rent-free on a small farm. The hens weren't too happy about that and continued to inhabit, so did Selvanathan's stray dogs. The farmer's name was Brother Ignatius "Iggy" who was an educated, quietly spoken Roman Catholic with a slight stutter. All the village people loved and respected him because although he couldn't pay good wages (and I was there once when a fierce lady Trade Union representative belaboured him on that issue), he still managed to ensure that all the local people were employed. His wife Alphonse, a large, motherly woman, produced endless good meals on fresh banana leaves for us all throughout my stay there.

Through Ignatius, Prema was able to find premises to start her tuition centre (The Anton Tuition Centre) for village children who clearly needed more than the very basic parrot-fashion learning in the government primary schools if they were very to go on to secondary education and further still. Over the years this has grown and so has our ability to subsidise it. There are now seven full-time teachers, hundreds of children; there are sewing and dressmaking courses for poor women which went on for ten years and now an English language centre (The Anton Institute for English), not to mention her identification of

deserving youngsters who would only get the chance they deserved in the private sector (mostly church schools).

Ignatius was sending his children to St Joseph's Roman Catholic College – the best school in Trichy and they travelled every day by bus, nearly two hours each way. A succession of dry summers, in which irrigation from the Cauvery River dried up (the State of Mysore, further west, was partly responsible for this, as they dammed the river at source), led to crop failures. Ignatius had to lay off workers and sell his tractor and stock to make ends meet. To bridge the gap before his eldest children found employment, we injected funds into his bank account several times. We, not I, for by the mid 1990s the many isolated sponsorships in Southern India and elsewhere, had become the joint responsibility of the *University of Withywood* registered charity.

In the early days I visited as often as I could; flying to Colombo in Sri Lanka and then taking a shuttle flight to Trichy or other towns in the southern extremity of India. This is hardly necessary now. Prema's flair for business, her dedication and integrity, coupled with technological advances like e-mail, mean we can talk to her on an almost daily basis.

On my last night in Worior, Trichy in 2002, Selvanathan introduced me a poor Hindu retired civil servant. Could we do anything for his daughters? I briefly met the two younger sisters, Kavitha and Meena, in spotless saris and scarves, with their school folders under their arms, pressed forward eagerly. All I could do was to promise I would not forget them. We supported Kavitha through her second year at Pavendhar Bharathidasan College of Engineering and Technology, studying a Computer Science course which she went on to complete. Meena was sponsored and in 2005 she completed her Business Administration course in Urumu Dhanalakshmi College.

### **Santhi (India)**

Santhi was "adopted" by Prema when she was about 14, from poor parents who could not afford to educate her. At the same time Selvanathan "adopted" her brother, Sudir, who became my official attendant on my last two visits to India. Santhi was more than a daughter to Prema; she became a very dear, trusted friend and confidante, helping out endlessly in the Tuition Centre. At last, with our help, Santhi began a course in Information Technology at Indira Ghandi College. This was occasionally interrupted by pressing needs to help out teaching in the Tuition Centre but she completed her studies with high marks.

### **Pastor Bathuva (India)**

A charismatic evangelist known to Prema, he was struggling to raise cash to begin a school in a desert region where there was no provision. I visited the site in 2002 on the back of someone's motorbike. There was no vegetation, no water and no transport. Chris Clark (a former pupil of Bedminster Down Secondary School) donated £1000 to kick-start the venture and another £1000 towards a minivan to collect children from outlying districts. The project is now up and running and proved to be a worthy cause.

### **Sylvana Apituley (Indonesia)**

I was travelling by train from Surabaya to Surabang in Java in August 1986. During the journey I began talking with a young man who introduced himself '*I am Martin Luther Apituley,*' and he added, '*No kidding. I am Protestant.*' Only four percent of Indonesians are Christian and most of these are Lutheran. I continued the journey with Martin Luther Apituley all the way to Jakarta. We ate at kerbside kiosks and on that journey I came to know much about him. He was an officer in the Indonesian Merchant Navy but his licence had expired and he was going to Jakarta to renew it. On leaving him at the airport, he said, '*Come back to Surabaya and have intermesh with my wife's sister.*'

His English was very quaint and I puzzled for some time what this intriguing invitation actually meant. Three years later when I was in Indonesia again, Martin Luther and his son, Pieter, met me at Den Pasar and we travelled two days to Surabaya to meet the wife's sister, Mrs Rivimasa and her husband. Martin had three daughters, Sylvana, Aprilita and Octavia. I didn't meet Sylvana then as she was at school in Jakarta, but she wrote to me later, in perfect English, *'Would I please sponsor her?'* as she wanted to go to college to study theology and church history. On the outside of the envelope was written on all her correspondence to me, *"Thank you Mr Postman."*

Sylvana turned out to be a model student in every way. In 1991 we met for the first time when I had four days in Jakarta between Singapore and Hong Kong. Her boyfriend, Igor, who was Chinese-Indonesian and a bank clerk, came with her to meet me at the airport. Unfortunately I became ill with laryngitis. Sylvana and Igor took me to a doctor and the doses he gave me restored my strength and on my last day I was able to accompany her and her youth group on an excursion to a palm-tree-girt beach where they sang Christian songs and ate coconut.

In 1992 I heard that she had won a scholarship to go to Holland and study for her Masters. She spent the first year in Groningen, learning Dutch. In her second year she moved to Leyden as it was better suited for her thesis and after completing her BA she returned to Jakarta to teach in a Protestant college. She later married Igor and brought her old parents to live with them. She found her brother a job in a hotel and, with some help from us, launched her two sisters into college courses. She also drew to our attention worthy students who did not have the means to complete their education.

She wrote from time to time. In 2005 she sent us her CV and was lecturing in theology and church history, and had travelled to about a dozen countries in Asia and Africa to speak at international conferences on human rights, the emancipation of women in Asia and the difficult position of the Christian church in Indonesia. She also now had two daughters, Kristi and Aletha.

### **Jerry Sumampow (Indonesia)**

He was a fellow-student of Sylvana Apituley at the theological college in Jakarta. She wrote to me to say that his parents could no longer afford to keep him there. Could I help? In this case I felt no further recommendation was necessary. Communication was difficult as Jerry had very little English. He did write a few times, but we need not have worried. Sylvana expertly handled the money we sent for him and reported on his progress. He obtained his diploma in 1995 and went in for politics. He rapidly became a prominent young leader on political issues and is now the head of a large independent organisation called *"an Independent Networking of Election Monitoring"*. This monitors the process of presidential and parliamentary election in Indonesia and can be dangerous work in a country which is notoriously undemocratic at times. He is now married and has two daughters.

### **Raymond Lau (Hong Kong)**

Raymond was a student in Bristol and upon meeting him asked me if I could find him a holiday job. I sent him to Mike Lillington (Bishopsworth) and he worked on some gardening landscapes. Before departing on my travels that summer, I told Raymond that if he wanted to save money, he could inhabit the "maid's bedroom" in my Withywood bungalow, rent free, instead of squeezing in with other Chinese students in lodgings at Kenmare Road, Knowle West. Raymond stayed and his time with me overlapped with Walid's second year. I was intrigued to see with what joy and pride Raymond fitted up that tiny room with shelves, desk, books, transistor etc. He told me later that this was the first time in his life that he had had a room of his own.

When Raymond's brother Stephen paid a visit to UK in 1985 to check up on Raymond's progress, it quickly became apparent that I was now part of the Lau clan. In November 1988 Stephen brought his parents and fiancée, Elaine, to stay and I made several visits to the Lau home in Hong Kong. When Stephen married, moved to Sydney, Australia with a job of maintenance engineer for Qantas, his home became my Australian base. He now has three children, Amanda, Katie and Peter. He phones me at least three times a year and sends me new UG boots (Australian moccasins) on a regular basis.

After several jobs Raymond settled in Welling, Kent and the family now run a highly profitable Chinese takeaway business. Each Chinese New Year I am loaded with presents and the Sponsorship Fund receives regular donations from him. Inevitably I inherited Raymond's friends, especially Charles Chang and his cousin Horman Chang. Both Charles and Horman spent quite long periods in residence at my Withywood home between their finals and returning to families in Hong Kong. Both are now married, have children, good jobs in UK and sufficient income to have continental holidays. The loyalty of this family has been phenomenal. They have all come back to visit or phone, and I have never known them to be other than openhearted, cheerful, relaxed and attentive.

### **Paul Wong (Hong Kong)**

He arrived straight from Hong Kong with a huge suitcase. He took over Raymond's room while studying in Bristol from 1986 to 1988. He completed his course and returned to Hong Kong, where I met him a few times with his sister, who was married to a Scottish architect called Angus. In due course all three of them, Paul, his sister and Angus, emigrated to Christchurch, New Zealand.

### **Jacek Dobrynewski (Poland)**

This was a sponsorship I shared with my Polish neighbour and old friend, Stasia Cesarz. Jacek was her cousin's son. Marysza, his mother was a farmer from Bialcow in Western Poland. From time to time she brought her two little boys, Jacek and Gregory, to stay with Stasia in Bishopswood. When Jacek was old enough he came to 'auntie' alone; a young man with a passion for music (guitar). He was then studying at a music college and planned to make a career of it. *'He should come here and learn English,'* I said. Stasia agreed to accommodate and feed him. I handled the complicated procedure involved in extricating someone from inside the Communist bloc for two years.

He arrived in 1989 and used to attend the University of Withywood to practice his English. On his first visit he offered to make tea for us. *'Disgusting,'* I said, when it arrived. *'What is the meaning of disgusting?'* he asked. *'Your tea,'* I said, *'It is cold, it is weak and it is stale'.* At that time tea in Poland was so scarce that housewives used to save the dregs of old teabags and make new brews, which were simply 'warmed up' a little in the oven. *'It was my first word in English,'* Jacek said to me years later. For that matter, "obszedliwy", the Polish equivalent, has become part of my vocabulary too.

Jacek went to work on the foundations of "The Galleries" they were building in Broadmead. Bending iron rods and mixing cement where he quickly picked up 'Bristolese'. The money he made was spent going to an English teaching college in Clifton. He returned to Poland and was offered a well-paid job teaching English which was a huge success. Both in 1993 and 1995 he brought parties of Polish children to London for weeklong in-depth cultural visits; me guiding, he translating.

In 1996 I attended the Summer School he organised for them in Northern Poland. A friend of Jarek's said to me. *'He was a natural teacher, the children loved and respected him.'*

Jacek is now married and I attended his wedding in Leszno. He and Iwona were living in a mean, two-roomed flat. He wanted to build a proper home, especially after two daughters

arrived, Kinga and Agata. So he left teaching, went into business with an Irish firm importing beef for Polish sausages. His English was essential to this process. From there he moved to a prestigious international design centre (computers) and was rapidly promoted. In 2005 he was working as the principal public relations officer, responsible for vetting, in English, new applicants for jobs. In 2006 he and his family moved into their new house. He was then travelling all over the world advising how to establish similar design centres.

## **Robert Kigadi (Kenya)**

In 1991, on my first journey to South Africa, I had to change flights in Nairobi, Kenya. There were four days between flights, so my friend Beryl Chappell advised me to stay with Trevor Owen (I knew him slightly through The Malago Society) who was then a construction businessman. Trevor and his very tall Masai business partner, Rose, made me very welcome in their large Spanish-American style bungalow in the up-market suburb of Kangemi. This bungalow and a dozen others were completely insulated from 'Africa' by high security walls and controlled gates.

I was left alone in this oasis of calm and comfort most of the day, though I could hear and smell 'Africa' on the other side of the wall. Inevitably, I got talking to their gardener, Gilbert Kigadi and he showed me round the garden. He was particularly proud of one flowerbed that was shaped like Africa with the choicest plants indicating the position of Kenya.

Gilbert was a friendly chap with a simple, warm-hearted man who never stopped talking. He asked me if I would like to see where he lives? So I followed him through the security gates, across the road and into the seething African township. We crossed a gully and came to one of many long barracks, divided into single room units. Gilbert's was at the end of the block, fairly basic, but spotlessly clean and decorated with his own cheery slogans. One read "*Sorry about the mess in here. Sometimes it's much worse*".

He cooked me a meal and I asked about his family. They lived a day's journey away, on the other side of the Rift Valley. Gilbert was just one of the great army of migrant workers who had come to the capital to find work. He was a captain in the Salvation Army and on Sundays he wore his spotless white uniform and peaked cap, and joined the vast throng of clapping, singing white-clothed black families who filled Nairobi's back streets.

On that first visit, I entrusted Gilbert for a guided foray into downtown Nairobi. He took me to the famous railway museum. Without the great Mombasa-Lake Victoria railway there would be no Nairobi and no Kenya. I noticed Gilbert making notes in a pocket book and I asked him what he was writing. He told me he was writing down things he had seen in the museum to tell his son Robert. So, at last, we come to Robert, who in 1991 was in his last year at primary school. '*If Robert wants to continue his schooling*' I said to Gilbert, '*tell him to write to me.*' In this way, Robert, aged 13, became our next sponsoree at Kwanza Secondary School.

On my next visit to Kenya, Robert was 16 and head boy and he had performed brilliantly in the final exams. Gilbert took me by bus across half of Kenya to meet him. It was a bone-shaking ride via Eldoret in the Rift Valley. At Kitale we changed into a very crowded minibus and on the last pull up, the minibus slithered off the mid road and ended on its side in the ditch. We completed the journey on foot, carrying kerosene and other provisions for the family. The Kigadi home was a mud and wattle thatched hut built by themselves in the middle of their own plot of maize, growing 10ft high.

Robert greeted me with an open, cheery smile and during that 2-day visit I became his special charge. We visited his school; Robert introducing me to his fellow students and teachers with a natural, easy-going charm. He was evidently very popular with them all. Gilbert punctuated our every move with extempore prayers, in Luo and in English.



So what next? We discussed veterinary surgery; tourism; pharmacology and nursing. In the end Robert moved to Nairobi to begin training as a nurse at Masaba Hospital; specialising in pharmacology, in which he ultimately gained a diploma. He obtained regular employment in a dispensary and worked as a nurse for private patients at night to earn more money.

In the next twelve years Robert, with help from us, has lifted up the younger brothers and sisters (Anthony, Nancy, Patrick and Christine) and taken responsibility for other people's children orphaned by Aids. We bought him a computer that enabled his extended family to become computer literate. He has also become our principal agent in East Africa for the administration, accounting and allocating of money, with precision, endless patience (for we were rarely able to meet all his estimates) and good humour.

He and his brother have rebuilt the family home and last year he married, with no fuss, no extravagant expenses, a serious-minded girl whose income supplements what he can earn. Her name is Jane Gathogo and she has a diploma in Biology and Pharmacology. For years now, Robert has ended his letters and e-mails to us with "*Jumbo, ni lile lile kuomba*" the refrain of one of those infectious, lilting songs of Kenya. It means "*The great thing is to pray*" and that is how we end our communications to him.

### **Nancy Kigadi (Kenya)**

We rather hesitated to take on Nancy, because African girls tend to drop out of school as soon as they are old enough to bear children. In the end she was sent to a girls' boarding school at Chakamanga, a very great distance from her home. On my last visit to Kenya in 2002 Gilbert insisted that I visit her. As before he and I went round the cheap bazaars in Nairobi to buy pencils, rulers, notebooks, toothpaste and sundry small sanitary items for all his children away from home. His jobs as gardener or cleaner continued to be very intermittent, but to hear him endlessly counselling and encouraging his family in a voice which hardly rose above a whisper, was probably worth a great deal more than our sponsorship.

Chakamanga proved to be a great distance in an easterly direction towards Lake Victoria. We travelled by bus and for the last part a friendly headmaster known to Robert, took us in his car for miles along an African red-mud road. We arrived at the school at the very moment the candidates were sitting their final exams. We had to sit in a corridor waiting for Nancy to finish. '*You must speak to her,*' said Gilbert. Nancy emerged in school uniform, ink on her fingers. She was quite overwhelmed to suddenly find three visitors to see her. Nancy went to Jomo Kenyatta University in Nairobi and graduated in 2005 in Information Technology. She is now a lecturer at a Christian college in Western Kenya and married Newton Chanzu, a plant technician employed in industry in 2006.

### **Patrick Kigadi (Kenya)**

Patrick was the earnest third son of Gilbert and Joyce. With no shoes and his knees showing through very worn trousers passed down from older brothers, Patrick struggled to complete his homework before the day light failed. Kerosene for lamps was a luxury they could not afford, Patrick and his younger brother Alan would sometimes sprawl with their books on their front doorstep to catch the last rays of the setting sun.

Patrick did so well at school that his teachers automatically sent him to St Joseph's College, the best public school in Kenya. Somehow we got the funds together and Patrick, in a new school uniform of shirt, tie and blazer, came through his secondary education with excellent grades and went onto his third year at Jomo Kenyatta University reading Mathematics and Computer Science. Patrick Kigadi is the ultimate justification for what we try to do.

## **Christine Kigadi (Kenya)**

When she reached secondary stage, I had to tell Robert that we couldn't take any more in addition to other commitments we had taken on in at least half-a-dozen countries. The older brothers and sisters would have to help as they always do in Africa. Christine was no doubt motivated by the success of her senior brothers and sisters. She finished school with sufficient good marks to qualify for training college to become a primary school teacher. At this stage we stepped in and paid the fees. She graduated in 2009.

## **Richard Sakawa (Kenya)**

Robert Kigadi's training at the Masaba hospital, Nairobi led us to a number of worthy candidates for sponsorship. I was introduced to Esther Anzeze, the Hospital Administrator. She was a very capable woman with a wide experience of the world, which included working for a spell in Toxteth, Liverpool. Her husband, a doctor, was killed in a motor accident in Kenya, leaving her with three children to bring up. She told me that Richard Sakawa was her most promising student. I had a chance to speak to Richard on my third visit to Kenya when he showed me round the Aids ward in Masaba hospital. In due course he wrote to me. He needed financial help with his diploma course in pharmacology. So through our contact Esther we supported him through his studies.

## **Grace Awinyo (Kenya)**

Esther Anzeze of the Masaba hospital frequently approached us for help for her son Kenneth and two daughters. She even brought the girls to UK and currently works in hospitals in Trowbridge and Bath to raise cash for their education. I went to Trowbridge to discuss the situation with her, but told her in the end that there were far more pressing needs in Kenya, one of whom Esther had already met and brought to our attention when in Masaba hospital.

This was an orphan living in her own home called Grace Awinyo. She was desperately anxious to train as a nurse. We paid for this and it seems she rapidly found her element. Her finest hour was when the American Embassy in Naizo was bombed killing hundreds of innocent people in the street. Grace wrote to me soon after describing the terrible scenes in the Nairobi hospital and how she had been rushed off her feet coping with it.

I still hear from her from time to time via Mrs Anzeze. When I last heard she had qualified as a nurse and gone to work in one of the most deprived areas of Nairobi's slums. She also went on to 'adopt' half a dozen homeless orphans.

## **Hadley & Marline Gulavi (Kenya)**

Gilbert's great friend and companion, a steady and serious man called Alfred Mbahane, was a captain in the Salvation Army and chauffeur at Mazingeri Environmental Centre at Nairobi. Gilbert shares Alfred's 'bunker', a small concrete dwelling in the grounds of the Centre and, on my last two visits I too was accommodated there. Alfred's wife runs a dressmaking business in the home village in Western Kenya which I visited with Gilbert in 2002. I met Alfred's old mother, a most intelligent old lady, and two of his children, Hadley Gulavi and Marline. In due course, we sponsored both of them. Hadley did a graphic and art design course and now deals with fabrics and design and makes African screen-printed clothes, and Marline is in her final year at school.

## **Georgette Kat Kawal (Congo)**

Some time in the late 90's Georgette met my younger brother Gavin when they were both were attending a function in London receiving awards for poetry. Georgette, who is from Kinshasa in the Congo, had evidently asked Gavin if he knew anyone who could sponsor her further studies in London University where she already had a degree in English Literature. So she wrote to us for sponsorship to do her Ph.D. I replied that while so many young people

lacked the means for secondary or even elementary education, it was out of the question for us to sponsor students beyond their Masters. Nonetheless, we were impressed with Georgette's poise and professionalism. She came to visit us several times, a quiet, earnest girl, who quietly explained to us that she couldn't return to the Congo because of the on-going civil war. She seemed remarkably organised and our friend Margaret Richardson, who visited her a few times in London, found her the same.

In her spare time earned money as a home help and companion to elderly people. She even managed to sponsor a few orphaned children in the Congo out of her own meager resources. At length we agreed to put her on our list and in eventually sufficient money became available, not all that was required, but enough to qualify for funding from other sources.

She obtained her PhD and sent us publications of her poetry. In 2003 she wrote from South Africa saying that she was applying for teaching jobs there. She sent us a copy of a public letter she had composed to Mr Joseph Kabila, President of the Congo, in which she made a blistering attack on his corruption, morality and abuse of human rights and accused him of prolonging the civil war in Kinshasa for his own gain. Nonetheless, the letter was delivered in a familiar, humorous way, in the faultless prose of a graduate of applied linguistics. Georgette had this denunciation published in the press and encouraged all her contacts to do likewise. She has thereby made it impossible for herself ever to return to the Congo so long as the present regime lasts. If there were more people like Georgette Kat Kawal, Africa would be a very different place.

### **Samuel Gomez (Ghana)**

His short, laconic letters, direct, open and friendly, rapidly established him as our principal agent in Ghana for the identification of needs and reporting on progress of sponsees. On my two visits to Ghana he was my constant companion and facilitator. His dealings with young people were firm but scrupulously just. His background is Presbyterian; a prayerful and transparent Christian. By African standards his family is noble, if not princely. He is the youngest of five brothers, all of whom have professional jobs in the public service. His eldest brother is a hospital manager; another is an agronomist, and so on. All of them are dedicated to providing humanitarian service to their tribal area (Logba Vicenta) in the remote Eastern part of the country (east of the Volta River system).

Through Margaret Richardson we learnt of the clinic they were trying to build in this very rural area. We were instrumental in providing funds for the completion of the roof, installing electricity and paying for a home for a resident nurse. Water supply (2002) was still a problem. It had to be carried from a spring 500 yards away. We subsequently paid for the hospitalisation of one of his little boys when he developed a huge fever and, in due course, sponsored his eldest daughter, Abigail.

### **Ernestina Abena (Ghana)**

When I was in Logba Vicenta village in 2002, Samuel Gomez pointed out to me a very tall girl in the village compound. '*She is highly intelligent,*' he said, '*Will you sponsor her?*' So we put her into secondary school and three years later she gained admission to a college of art and design. She completed the course in August 2008 and is now on attachment.

### **Richard Boateng (Ghana)**

The Rev. Brian Pearce, vicar of Withywood church and Canon of Bristol Cathedral (and also at that time a trustee of our charity) had made two visits to Ghana in connection with long-established links between the Bristol diocese and the Christian church in Ghana. He also had admirable plans to establish partnerships between Bristol schools and Ghanaian schools, with a view to awakening the former to the chronic needs of the latter, and perhaps rendering some kind of practical aid. This plan struggled with logistical difficulties; however he was approached by certain individuals for sponsorship. One of these was a plantation farmer who was looking for help to get his son, Richard, through secondary education at the

New Nsutam Technical School. Brian recommended Richard to us and he became the first of many beneficiaries of our Sponsorship Fund from Ghana.

Richard, after many personal set backs, graduated from the famous merchant shipping college. When I visited Ghana for the second time in 2002 I was impressed to see how he had augmented his income by fattening and later selling two young pigs. Then, before his college career properly took off, he was involved in a car traffic accident. Eventually he bounced back and finally qualified as a shipping clerk in 2006. He phoned me many times and displayed genuine gratitude for what we had done for him. He is set fair to make a success of his life.

### **Felix Nyalemgbe (Ghana)**

Richard Boateng's teacher wrote to us to see if we would sponsor Felix whose mother could no longer support him. He was being cared for by a person he called Madame Azivore. She sounded a rather forbidding character, but turned out to be a jolly young mother of several small children, living in one room in the same compound. I replied saying we couldn't take on any more sponsorships at present, but pinned the letter to the University of Withywood notice board. Margaret Richardson read it and asked what would happen to him if he failed to find sponsors. *'Nothing,'* I replied. *'He will remain uneducated and will have to go into the plantations as a manual worker.'*

Margaret and her friend Patricia Cane decided to undertake the sponsorship of Felix themselves. He was sent to a Presbyterian public school at Nkwatia for three years. They were indefatigable, raising money mostly by organising raffles and jumble sales. A very genuine rapport was established between Felix and his "surrogate mothers" in Bristol and they sent him any number of thoughtful items to assist in his studies.

Felix turned out to be a model student. He graduated with such high grades that he was immediately accepted for a BA course in Accountancy at the Cape University. From his admission to university we have taken over the sponsorship and now that his degree course is over he is applying to sit the examination for the highly prestigious international Association of Chartered Certified Accounts. We raised the very expensive fees for this, but he was worth it. On my last visit to Ghana in 2002 he was my devoted and attentive companion, quietly and efficiently facilitating the rigorous programme I had.

### **Daniel Sarpong Boateng (Ghana)**

Daniel is severely handicapped and can only walk very slowly and with great difficulty. His father managed to save some money to buy callipers to help him walk and for some years he also needed crutches. His father then died in 1990 but in view of his evident intelligence, Pope John Secondary School in Korforidua agreed to allow him to attend.

However the task of actually getting to school was a real problem and if his mother had money she would send him in a taxi. Even crossing a road was perilous for him and when a vehicle knocked him down and broke his arm, the priest-in-charge and headmaster agreed to take him as a boarder, so long as a sponsor could be found.

Daniel then remembered that some years before a white priest had visited the school with his wife, and had distributed some mathematical instruments and pens to the boys. This was our Brian and Margaret Pearce from Withywood. Daniel wrote to them and they sent him £20 and forwarded his letter to us. We sent Daniel £100 to cover his year's fees and leave a small balance for pocket money.

From that time onwards it was plain sailing Daniel blossomed and matured at that school. He had that mild, measured resonant tone of voice that immediately commanded attention. He passed his final exams and was accepted to read Modern Languages at Accra University.

Travelling around the widely scattered campus to attend lectures was a logistical nightmare for him, but his friends came to his rescue and ferried him about, and in his last year he graduated.

### **Ernest Boadi Aboagye (Ghana)**

Ernest wrote to us from Ghana saying that he had heard about our Sponsorship Fund from contacts in Kenya. I find this hard to believe, but I suppose it is just possible, for Kenya has become the main African country to benefit from our charitable work. Ernest struck me as a highly professional and ambitious person. One cannot help admiring the youth in Ghana, they give the impression of being the most motivated of all young Africans. They know what they want and where they are going. It is no coincidence that Ghana was the first black African country to become independent.

We put Ernest through the Export and Shipping College in Accra, paid for his practical attachment (placement) and driving course. On my next visit to Ghana in 2002 our 'trouble shooter' Samuel Gomez tried to arrange for a meeting for us all but it wasn't possible. Eventually we lost touch but perhaps we shall hear about him again.

### **Marida Mercier (Central African Republic)**

My abortive mission to reach the refugee camp in the Central African Republic (August 1993) led to my being stranded in Bangui for a week until I could fly out again. I went to the Catholic Centre where I quickly learned that it would be impossible in the wet season to reach the refugee camp at Mboki. While I was sketching the very African scenes unfolding before me, I was surrounded by local people, mostly children. One of them was Marida Mercier.

He was already quite well educated as his father, had been a civil servant, I learned later, he had been killed by the now deposed ex-"emperor" Bokassa. '*Je veux causer avec vous,*' he kept repeating, '*pour changer des idées.*' I learned that he was 18 and was married, his wife was "up-country" cultivating maize to bring home, for the food in the shops was too expensive for ordinary folk. He had his own room in a shanty which also housed his mother, grandfather and nine younger brothers and sisters. He had no job, no money, yet here he was, highly intelligent, cheerful, relaxed and speaking French like a Frenchman.

*Why aren't you studying, or training for a profession?* I asked. He told me that all the schools and colleges had been closed for two years after the teachers went on strike to bring down the unpopular government of Mr Kolingba. He wanted to train as a mechanic but would obviously have to pay. A year's course would cost the equivalent of what I was paying for two days in the hotel. Visa cards were accepted in Bangui at the only bank in town.

I paid M. Celestin Madas, who seemed an honest, educated man and told him that if all went well, I would send him what was needed for the second year. At the Lebanese store Marida and I bought the twelve exercise books he would need for the twelve units of the course and I gave him my waterproof cape, as he would have to walk 3km every day to the centre. I remained in touch with Marida and he completed the first year. It proved extremely difficult to send money to the Central African Republic from British banks, so the second instalment was sent from Paris by my friend Armand Braun, who refused reimbursement. Marida wrote well-constructed letters thanking us.

### **Justina Azike (Nigeria)**

In 1993 the collapsing infrastructure in Nigeria had become so bad that all schools and colleges closed down. Teachers and public servants were almost permanently on strike because their wages were months, if not years, in arrears. I found the Azike family that year desperate to continue their education in any way possible. The children were highly intelligent and had they been able to afford it, would have bought the textbooks and

continued their studies on their own. I had \$200 to spare. I put Justina, now 17, in charge. She, Clement and I made a bus journey across the great Niger River to the big town of Onicha. In an enormous half-collapsing emporium (a recent fire had removed much of the roof) we found a dealer in school textbooks. Justina had her shopping list, having conferred with all her brothers and sisters, and gave the book-man a very hard time. The result was that she obtained every book that the family needed. The joy expressed on our return was wonderful to behold.

### **Filiz Mavikaya (Turkey)**

I first met her, with her mother Fatma and brother Dennis, in Gallipoli in 1990. They were staying in the same 'pansion' and we travelled back to Istanbul together, by bus. I spent a night at their apartment in Ataköy before continuing on my travels. Filiz, about 20 with faultless English and when she told me that she had been accepted to do a post-graduate course in International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth I was sure that the *University of Withywood* could help her.

She was disabled, born without a left hand. It looked like a case of thalidomide, but I never asked and she made light of it and disguised the loss so well that one hardly noticed. Her mother ran a children's clinic in Istanbul and according to Filiz (although Bulgarian origins and upbringing in a desert town in Libya) had a very Western, if not British, sense of humour and was "very good at organising revolutions." She certainly bullied the bus driver so effectively that he made a big detour and delivered us to their very apartment block.

Filiz duly took up her place at Aberystwyth and twice (1991 and 1992) I cycled from Harlech to see her. '*Hos geldiniz,*' she said each time, those wonderful warm words of welcome in Turkish which literally mean '*How happy you come to us*'. She showed me some of her essays on Margaret Thatcher's foreign policy beautifully hand-written and in faultless prose, for which she regularly received the highest grades. Then her mother wrote to me in Turkish, *could we help with Filiz's fees?* Our sponsorship enabled her to finish the course and, while applying for jobs with United Nations, European Community agencies and the like, she started a year's crash course in Arabic at Dubai, funded by an oil-rich company.

### **Jimmy Shah (Pakistan)**

My friendship with the Shah family from Sindh goes back to 1966 when Naweed Ahmet Shah, then aged 12, asked me to be his pen pal. Over the years I came to know all Naweed's family, including his two elder brothers, Bashir and Munir. Their father, Ahmet, was from a noble Moslem family and was a landowner (zemindar). Jimmy was the only son of Munir, whom I came to know well because they lived in the steel colony at Karachi, whereas Naweed and Bashir lived 'up-country' in rural Sindh. Munir's home became a useful base for my forays into the sub-continent.

In 2002, when I was last there, his sister had just qualified as a doctor and Jimmy was in his first year reading Engineering at Karachi University. He told me on that occasion that he had applied to do the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year at the City of London College, because its qualification carried more value than any university in Pakistan. The vetting procedures for candidates were extremely stiff and out of nearly two hundred applicants that year, only two were selected and Jimmy was one of them. He must have impressed them with his buoyant and ebullient personality and his capacity to survive financially and culturally. I warned him that it would be extremely tough. Apart from the £7000-£8000 annual fees, how would he live in London?

He seemed aware of the difficulties, but was confident he could manage. 'If you get stuck, write to me,' I said. At the end of the first year he wrote. He had done very well academically, qualified for the final year, and by working round the clock in supermarkets, had raised all the money, apart from £2000. Could we bridge the gap? So we paid, and also contributed to his living expenses during his final months. He obtained a first class degree

and had also been extremely successful managing other students from different cultural backgrounds in demanding, and often dangerous, engineering projects, underground. He sent me his thesis and the reports on his progress and it was clear that he had won the universal esteem of professors and fellow students alike. In 2005 he married and is now, with his wife (also a professional graduate) employed as an engineer in London.

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### **Judith Burnett (UK)**

Judith, a pupil of Bedminster Down Secondary School in the 1960s has been teaching for many years in Valencia, Spain. Sometime in the 1990s she did a year's VSO work in Cameroon. Finding that this did not cut much ice, she identified an arid area in the extreme north of the country where there was no provision for schooling of any kind. *'If Anton can do it, then so can I,'* she said to Marie Jo Coutanche, for she had heard about Prema's Tuition Centre in South India. Drumming up contributions from the parents of her pupils in Valencia and friends in Bristol, she built a schoolroom and recruited teachers and pupils, personally supervising the whole operation by practically commuting between Valencia and North Cameroon. In the earlier days we gave cash and, mostly from the contributions of Marie Jo's French conversation classes, purchased books, cassettes and stationery from France. Judith went on to build a second and third classroom, secured European community funding and Malima Primary School is now well on the way to becoming integrated into the national educational system of the country.

### **Martin Ndiadai (Cameroon)**

Martin was extremely sensitive to the corruption pervading all the higher echelons of state education in Cameroon. Application for jobs, scholarships, studying abroad etc were all passed over in favour of ministers' sons and daughters, or those who could bribe officials. He eventually completed a Business and Economics degree and Masters and is now working as a civil servant. He was recommended to us for help by Charlie Pridell, a friend of Judith Burnett's living in London, who followed her footsteps and completed two-and-a-half year's VSO in Cameroon. She was so appalled at the lack of opportunity for secondary education (which of course is not free in most African countries) that she founded her own charity to sponsor promising youngsters that she and her friends had identified.

### **Malama Viche (Cameroon)**

Malama and Martin Ndiadai both graduated in the baccalaureate (the French system applies in Cameroon), gaining the highest marks in the whole country; he was awarded a French degree and a Masters. He went on to teacher training college and has since qualified as a teacher. The contact with Charlie Pridell continues and she, though now married and a mother, handles the transfer of money, and takes a keen interest in their developments.

### **Masha Springford (Russia)**

When Masha and her friends (many of them expatriate Russians living in Bristol) started a group called *"Help Russia's Elderly"*, some of them approached me to give talks about my experiences in Russia to raise money for the cause. This was aimed at pensioners in Moscow who were badly hit by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. At these gatherings we sold paintings and books and subscribed to the organisation which raised thousands of pounds, mostly for a church-run hospice for old people. The organisation ceased in 2008 when state run charities had much improved in Russia.

### **Lobsang Palden (Tibet)**

When my nephew, Roland Torikian, visited Dharamsala in North India with a view to learning Buddhist medicine, he met Lobsang, a refugee from Tibet. The Indian rickshaw driver that Roland was riding in refused to pick up a group of Tibetans who signalled him to stop. *'If you won't take them, you won't take me,'* said Roland. After talking with Lobsang he learned that he was attending an English language centre for Tibetan refugees run by Western volunteers. The instruction was free, but he needed money to live. We sent him £150 every

two months for two years and his English rapidly improved and he went on to work as a photography assistant in India.

His story, written in his own hand, describing his childhood with the nomadic yak farmers of Eastern Tibet; his attempts to get himself educated by becoming a monk in a Tibetan monastery; the continued and relentless persecution by the Chinese authorities, even in monasteries; and how after three years of this he and twenty-seven companions, including some children, walked over the Himalayas (skirting Mount Everest) into Nepal and finally to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala is an epic tale and should be printed one day.

### **Maria José Aguado (Mexico)**

Roland who studied and practiced Mayan healing techniques in Mexico for many years, strongly recommended Maria to us for sponsorship in 2005. Maria José was studying engineering at university, but her father had died and her grant from the government evaporated, a normal occurrence in Mexico. We agreed to give Maria José an allowance of £200 (later increased to £250) every two months. This covered most things and also helped with the cost of her mother's health problems. Maria José e-mailed us frequently in Spanish and these communications were of great value and interest to the Spanish conversation class at the University of Withywood who responded in kind and built up a relationship with her.

Maria José was made aware that her e-mails materially contributed to the classes and that the money raised from the classes went towards her education. In that way we learnt a lot about her; her interest in flamenco dancing, her visits to festivals where she participated. She comes across as a fundamentally good-natured and sensible young adult and it was no surprise to us when Roland (who had been monitoring her progress for us) told us in June 2008 that she had graduated with flying colours after three years. She is now employed as an engineer.

### **Joshua & Jennifer (India)**

They are the children of Prema's brother, Maniraj, who was extremely good to me on numerous visits to India. He was a rice farmer but rainfall was always inadequate and irrigation from the Cauvery River is erratic, owing to the State of Mysore further inland, diverting most of the water for their own needs. Maniraj returned to Malaysia (where he and Prema were brought up) to seek work, leaving Prema as guardian of his two children. She begged us to find sponsors and our friends Jo Hawkins and Helen Wright offered to take them on. They continued their education successfully and we are still in contact with them.

### **Bhuvaneshwari (India)**

She was, in the early days of the Anton Tuition Centre, one of the most promising and articulate pupils. She was the daughter of a poor weaver in the village of Thanirpalli. Prema quickly recognised her talents and recruited her onto the teaching staff. From there she went on to train as a qualified engineer, but cannot earn the salary she deserves (currently she earns 3000 rupees a month), because her spoken English is inadequate (if it was good enough she could earn 20,000 rupees a month). This case and others were the main reason for Prema beginning her English Language Centre.

### **Paul Watykere (Uganda)**

The involvement of Jane Britton (a former University of Withywood trustee) is the link between the Bristol Diocese and Ugandan Dioceses first established by Bishop Oliver Tomkins and Archbishop Sabiti in the 1960s. This connection enabled her to identify worthy students who would greatly benefit from funding to enable them to buy books. This began in 1997 when the Rev. Michael Massajje received money from the Sponsorship Fund to complete his theological training. He is now ordained and is vicar of St Peter's, Bussamega in the North Mbale diocese. His daughter, Miriam, begins her theological studies in 2008 and



received a book grant of £50. In 1999 a group of young people from Bristol South churches visited Uganda and a return visit was made in 2001 by eight young Ugandans and two youth leaders. Following a visit by the Ugandans to the University of Withywood, book grants of £50 were made on a regular basis to them.

Paul, whose father had died in the civil war and the uncle who was funding him died of Aids. On this occasion a grant of £250 enabled him to complete his law studies. In 2008 he accepted a job with the UN High Commission for Refugees in South Sudan and is involved in the repatriation of thousands of Sudanese people who fled into neighbouring countries during the 16 years civil war. He has offered to pay \$100 of his annual salary into the Sponsorship Fund and we have advised him to open an account in Sudan and let the money accumulate until he can find a worthy candidate for sponsorship. In August 2008 Paul informed us that he had already begun the sponsorship of two or three young Sudanese whom he had identified.

### **Nathan Kyaminga (Uganda)**

Nathan is the brother of Lorna Wasagali who received a book grant in 2008 while studying for his 'O' levels. Our friend Jane Britton had made five visits to Uganda in the last 12 years, which has enabled her to safely deliver the book money and to monitor progress. Return visits by Ugandans to Bristol several hosted by Jane and her husband Laurie, serve to keep the link going and provide a safe channel for funding. The only exceptions made to the book fund were: £250 to Richard Watuulo to help him pay off his PhD study fees at Portsmouth University.

### **Gazi Cömert (Turkey)**

I met Gazi at the bus station in Adelaide, S. Australia. He told me he was Kurdish and had fled to Australia on a tourist visa to escape discrimination and persecution in Turkey. He had applied to the Australian authorities for asylum. He was very nervous and afraid that he would be deported and repatriated. I put him in touch with some of my Australian relatives, among them Thea Haynes in Melbourne, who might be able to reassure him. While waiting for official permission to stay, he went to college to improve his English.

We sent him some money to begin the course and contributed something towards his living expenses. In due course he was granted political asylum and is now an Australian citizen. On my return to Australia in 1995 I met him again when I took a ferry from Sydney to Manley, a popular resort at the mouth of the harbour where he was working in a bar. I scarcely recognised him. It was quite a shock. In place of the demure, apprehensive illegal immigrant, he had become a fully-fledged "Ozzie", T-shirt, flip-flops and baseball cap. His hair was long and wavy and there were rings in his ears. He had even changed his name to Jerry Comet!