

News from the Wysome family – Tanya, Johnny, Anna and Alice

Back in February and March we had a 6 month sabbatical, rented out our house, and took our kids off their school roll. We were really keen to not only be tourists but for the kids to make connections with local people and see that there is a big wide world out there.

Growing up in Shropshire Anna and Alice have had a fairly quiet, comfortable life like many children in the UK, with all their basic needs met and parents attempting to give them everything they want and more. As teachers we also see the attitudes of young people changing as they want satisfaction and gratification ever more instantaneously. The rise of the social media world, with many children now more interested in their phones than in any form of social interaction is worrying to us, and not how we want to live, and made the idea of getting away from this by travelling and volunteering a very attractive option for us.

We were fortunate enough to visit Rwanda and spend a month at the Kinamba project, although we really wished it could have been longer! A friend of ours who had lived in Kigali had recommended that we get in touch with Meg about volunteering at the project and we are so grateful that we did. Meg has created something genuinely life-changing for the children who attend the school, and the local community- but it also turned out to be life-changing for us.....Anna and Alice, who turned 11 and 9 whilst we were in Rwanda, will never forget the time they spent working with the fantastic children and staff at the school.



We arrived in Rwanda after 4 months of travelling, which also included a volunteering period in a school and conservation project in Sri Lanka. On arrival we went to find the Kinamba project where we were immediately introduced to the wonderful Epiphanie, who could not have been warmer nor more welcoming to us all. She is a hugely charismatic and strong person and the children at the project clearly hang on her every word whether she is teaching, leading an assembly or joining in with

games and dancing during break time. Anna and Alice loved her straight away. The amazing Meg arrived a couple of days later, by which time we had already been able to do some teaching in all of the classes as well as witnessing a special Friday performance of drumming and dancing for the visiting students from Green Hills academy.

Over the next 4 weeks we had so many memorable experiences. Meg had procured an electric keyboard so we were able to teach the children some silly English songs, which was entertaining. Hopefully the 'Splish, Splash, Splosh' handwashing song is still a big hit in Rwanda!

Anna and Alice spent hours with the younger classes, helping with reading and numbers and playing games with the under 6s. Tanya did some maths teaching and organised a maths treasure hunt and helped the children with their English. Basically we just tried to make ourselves reasonably useful and attempted not to get in the way! It was such a privilege to be warmly included in the daily life of such a lovely positive group of people. What stood out to us throughout the experience was the spirit of the children at the project. They could not

have been nicer, particularly in their attitudes towards Anna and Alice. They immediately integrated our girls into every game during break times and were generally trying to allow them to win. They were so generous towards them, which to us was genuinely humbling, and so supportive and kind. From the uplifting daily assemblies at 8am onwards, working at the school was a genuine honour for all of us, and we remember everybody there extremely fondly.



Leontine, the music teacher is an absolute force of nature and we always tried to get involved with her lessons. She had the energy of 100 normal music teachers (myself included) and the Kinamba children love working with her. Isaac, Aimable and Jackson were all fabulous and very generous in allowing us to help out with their students, and the teachers and teaching assistants in the younger classes were delightful, giving Anna and Alice lots of responsibilities on which they thrived.

At the heart of all this of course, was Meg, who has worked miracles to get Kinamba where it is today. They feed everyone there every day, including weekends; there are sports coaches in rugby and cricket arranged for the children; school remains open until at least 7pm to support children with their homework; Meg has basically adopted various students and she has also helped to set up sewing and craft making amongst several of the parents.

Of course there is the sponsorship programme, of which we are delighted to be a part. Teta and Hope-Lucky (our sponsees) were really delightful friends to Anna and Alice and we hope to keep in touch with their progress over the years.





We're thrilled to see that Meg has been recognised by the British government with her Point of Light award. She was definitely an expert at hiding her light under a bushel so it's brilliant that someone has shone the light back on her for a change. When we met her recently in the Lake District she was selling some of the aforementioned crafts at a fayre to raise more money and she never seems to stop....she is either AT the project or raising money for it. Having been there for such a short time we can see why.....it is such an important thing to do and so many lives have been changed for the better because of 'Mama Africa' as she is known! Epiphanie, Meg and the teachers are running a genuinely important project and we would love to visit again over the next few years. We urge anyone reading this who is a supporter of the project to continue that support- I can't think of a better cause and not one penny is ever wasted there...it all goes to food and education directly. On behalf of the Wysome family we would just like to say an enormous thank you to Meg, Epiphanie and everyone at the project. Long may it continue.

