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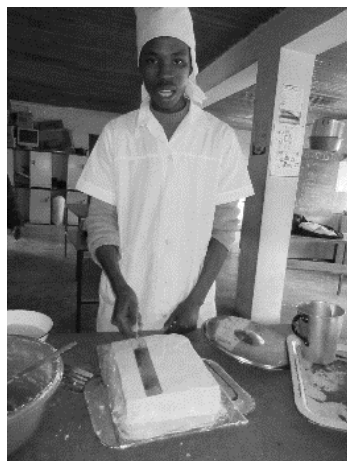
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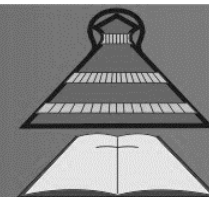
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Exhibits from St Mary's Home Economics School Exhibition Day

Basotho
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Newsletter 2017

Dear Supporters

This time we have a special edition of the newsletter devoted to trustee, Graeme Shaw's, trip to Lesotho earlier in the year. While there, he looked at recent changes, met students and college principals and members of our Lesotho Committee as well as consulted with our hard-working administrator, Motselisi Hlubi. Despite Lesotho's difficulties, Graeme paints a picture of hard working and optimistic people dedicated to the development of their country. Thank you all for helping us to add our modest weight to these efforts.

Philippa Bird
Chair of Trustees

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Revisiting Lesotho after 36 years

Locating Leribe

My wife Jackie and I took a 5 day trip to Lesotho in May. It was Jackie's first visit, and 36 years since my last trip, with the West London Chaplaincy, back in 1981 (same year as Princess Diana's wedding!).

These days we have Google Maps, but funny thing was - Leribe wasn't on the map! I knew it was near Ficksburg, which *was* on the map. So we drove in that direction and quickly prayed (with eyes open for safety reasons). Just as I finished praying, I spotted the Leribe Craft Centre, looking the same as ever. It turns out that Leribe is the name of the Province; Hlotse is the name of the town.

Signs of progress

The town had grown, but the centre looked much the same, although there was now a Shoprite supermarket opposite the convent and, unlike 1981, the shop was well stocked, particularly with pilchards: there were pilchards on nearly every aisle, pilchards in oil, pilchards in tomato sauce, in sweet chilli sauce and in hot chilli sauce. Perhaps a lorry had broken down. Not everyone shopped there though, and there were still stalls on the sides of the road selling things like mealies (corn-on-the-cob).

The other thing I noticed was that there was now a mosque in Hlotse. There was also a Vodacom shop in the town, which have become a necessity of life, not just for phone calls, but also for paying bills using the *m-pesa* system on mobile phones.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference was the impact that the Chinese had made in the country – building the hospital in Hlotse, large textile factories in Maputsoe and the new parliament building in Maseru. Many of the roads were built or maintained by the Chinese, and many were in a much better state than on the South African side of the border. But what hadn't changed was the friendly smiles of all the children we saw, who loved posing for the camera.

A busy itinerary

We arrived at the convent on a Monday, after a four hour car journey from Johannesburg. Sister Mpolokeng was expecting us sometime in May or June, but wasn't 100% sure; she kindly immediately started putting an itinerary together. Firstly, we went to meet Motselisi at St Mary's School of Home Economics, adjacent to the Craft Centre and the houses for the disabled women that the Chaplaincy helped build all those years ago. After all our past correspondence, it was good to finally meet.

We interviewed Motselisi and fellow Lesotho BET Committee members, Sister Mpolokeng, and Mrs Machakela, who we met at St Rose College, in Peka, about 30 minutes down the road towards Maseru. Fortunately we had a four wheel drive car, as the track off the main road was quite challenging.

Lively and enthusiastic students

This Catholic Church run institution provides 6 month computing courses, equipping students to get jobs in many of the local (mainly Chinese) businesses.

It's possibly 30 years since I last came across a Compaq 386, but it was still going strong! And fortunately they also had some newer computers. The students were very lively and enthusiastic, seemed to take great enjoyment from their course, and were grateful for the opportunity. Unfortunately, the BET sponsored students didn't know who was paying their fees, so we were able to rectify that.

Later, we travelled with Lesotho Committee chair, David Chobokoane, to Maseru to see the LOIC students in action and meet the staff and principal. David discovered that one of the teachers was an old friend from the village he grew up in. It was so gratifying that these busy people set a side time to meet us at a moment's notice. It seemed very well-run and the BET sponsored students knew the fact.

Finally, we visited TSL in Hlotse, and met former BET student, Mr Poofolo, now the carpentry teacher. TSL was founded by the Catholic Church in the sixties and has seen many BET students over the years. Again, there was a great sense enthusiasm from the students and enjoyment in their courses, particularly from the women training to be electricians.

In the afternoon we visited St Mary's Home Economics School; the students were exhibiting their handiwork, including some impressive cakes and various forms of needlework. The day was cut short when a huge storm blew up, ripping large sheets of corrugated iron off the school roof and blowing over trees and powerlines.

Happy memories and hope for the future

We have many happy memories, and our parting impression was of lively and contented people, with great optimism for the future. Hopefully it won't be such a long time before we return.

Graeme Shaw



These are some of the students Graeme and Jackie met on their trip to Lesotho. This Christmas, you could give the gift of hope to a young person in Lesotho, and help to inspire more smiles like these! You'll find the donation form on the back of this newsletter. Or visit our website www.basothoeducationaltrust.org and donate online.

A regular donation will ensure the smiles never falter.

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Mountains overlooking Katse Dam