

Diary – Tanzania April 2010

April 7th 2010

Long and boring and overcrowded flight to Tanzania from Amsterdam. Some strange people on the plane. The guy next to me was behaving like a Palestinian terrorist – scarf over his entire face and then a hood over his head and generally rather odd. In front of Joanna sat two African guys who made more than the most of the free alcohol. They were very loud and cheerful but disturbing ever one around them. We wonder why staff continue to give drinks to people who have clearly drunk enough. We were late departing because a cargo door wasn't shut properly – very unnerving to say the least. Anyway we arrived safe and sound. Met by a Paradise friend and arrived at the Lodge around 10.45.

April 8th 2010

Slept not particularly well. The weather is not nice – very damp, humid and raining a lot. Saw Ad and caught up on his news. Then had a taxi to transport us plus all the clothes etc to Usalama. Wound Catherine up by pretending I was still in UK and beeping her. She was suspicious but overjoyed to see me as were the kids. Met Joram – child Number 7 - mother died when he was 1 month old – cause unknown. Father has many children, very poor and not coping well. I heard that Aron (2) who ran away home is OK but his older brother and sister were not particularly happy when he returned home. Dressed the children up in all their new clothes which was fun. Catherine and Anna are fine and the house was immaculate. Unfortunately Eliza is not reliable for helping with washing – think her mental health issues frequently seem to get the better of her, which is sad. There is currently no water in the village which means it all has to be carried quite a distance. Mama Daudi continues to be interfering – has gone on at Catherine about cutting the hedge etc. Catherine seems to cope OK with her and has asked me to keep the peace with her so that they can manage living with her so close.

TO DO LIST

- Arrange for shelves for kitchen and store
- Go with documents to Arumeru District to sort out the licence for the house. Progress already been made but they need to see me apparently
- Get the children to Meru hospital for check-ups and testing. Pastor Elfius is away but will do it with him when he gets back. Joanes still has to be transferred from Usa river when his latest test results are back but he seems to be doing well and gaining weight. He will start on vitamins now.
- Worm all the children – they are very pot-bellied so we think it may be worms.
- Try and get some grass seed sown
- Finalise budget and shop for food
- Teach Catherine to use ATM – she is confused by it
- Paint the house inside and decorate the walls – it needs brightening up and to be more child friendly

- Get the older children sorted out with schools – this is vital – Catherine still wants them all educated privately but unless we can get decent sponsorship that will not be possible for now.

So plenty to do. Wish the weather was better – the roads are dreadful and the pathways very muddy and slippery and I am scared of falling and hurting myself. Chilly tonight so will try and have a hot shower if it is working ok.

Friday April 9th 2010

- Joanna experienced the earth moving overnight - no one else did. In fact could have been some sort of minor earth tremor as opposed to a knee trembler.
- Town with Ad – Bank, Chemist, Book shop, bag, combs, Mcmoody for lunch
- Gave up on daladala – taxi to Sanawari and walked up to house
- Kids asleep to start with
- Sat on balcony – talked with Catherine
- Kids up – played with kids – long meeting on budget issues – looked at and took accounts away
- Riot over plastic animals – Dominic dominant – Lining up animals and then shared – M did some reading and some sums at their request – picture books, vocabulary etc.
- Daladala to main road – walked to hotel
- Dinner and worked thro figures – frightening ourselves
- Saw Joanes teeth in a horrible state – went to local quack and I mean quack as he was in pain. Got liquid paracetamol – cheered him up. Decided he needs to revisit hospital on Monday. Also discussed again having all kids checked out for HIV status. Probably Monday

Saturday 11th April 2010

- Lift to main road – Daladala to see Julieth.
- Kids and adults delighted to see us
- Coco na Helen did Maasai dance
- Julieth came with Anna (HIV+)
- Kids loved photos that Marian had taken of them with climbers from last August – Marian says she will plan in advance to repeat this with more photos to include everyone.
- Played with kids – much chat with Julieth. Julieth spent a long time with her “husband” Kipara on telephone. Arranged to do the hospital visit on Monday with Pastor Lema as chauffeur for the children.
- Had Banana stew for lunch - kids stuffed as usual – Rosie in particular – feast or famine. Followed by a series of songs including something about Madonna that we did not fully understand.
- Left to return home with Julieth. Nearly driven off the road by an apparently blind and stupid driver which in fact was Paradise coming to surprise us. Julieth left me hanging by offering a

secret but another time. What a little tease. Lift with Paradise to Cafe Africa (Starbucks lookalike) for coffee and cake on him. Then back to hotel – sat and put world to rights watching the swimming – heard about political “Fight” back home. Discussed football again. Confused conversation with Patrick re: cacao – Paradise phoned a friend. Dinner and bed in preparation for painting. Saw a wedding photo session take place. Thought bride seemed miserable until we discovered bride has to be miserable so as to show her parents she is sad to be leaving them? Erm!! Not sure about this. Took pix.

Sunday 11th 2010

Rose early and ate a hearty breakfast before setting off on an hour’s walk, collecting Ntibu on the way, to Usalama to start our painting. Ntibu was a great help and we managed to make quite a decent job of the sitting room and front porch. The children were taken off for nearly three hours to church by David and Grace leaving Catherine to prepare food and Anna had her day off. Painting was hard work and messy and we all ended up very speckled wazungu as paint flew around. Jeremiah (our Maasai guard’s nephew) came to visit. He responded quite well to my remark that he seemed to enjoy watching everyone else working. He also wheeled in two candidates for the 2 days a week job we have created. First candidate was turned down by Catherine – lazy. Candidate number 2 was accepted – Mama Hilary – and will work two days a week at Tzsh 5,000 for 6 hours and her lunch. This is necessary as Catherine and Anna are struggling to cope with the washing.

When kids returned from church we all sat down to lunch. We got told off for talking and were informed that in African families, lunch is eaten in silence. Needless to say we got the giggles. Having finished our lunch in abject silence Joram (aged 4) proceeded to vomit his entire lunch over the mat, at which point we removed ourselves (very helpfully) on the grounds that we didn’t want to pick up any infection that was around. Children had great fun and became very boisterous playing with bubbles. Joanes in particular seemed to become extremely exuberant and mischievous including running off with Joanna’s camera and removing her hair bands whilst inspecting the paint in her hair. Whilst we were all sitting outside, Jordan (aged 2) was seen with poop hanging from his bottom in a delicate trail so Catherine was dispatched with said child to remove poop.

Helen worked on selling off Joanna for cows to supplement the funding for the project. One cow appeared quickly. No final transactions will be made until Joanna’s dad (a vet) has assessed the animals’ health. Jeremiah invited us to go for a SHORT visit to see Ishmael about grass seed and possibly scrounging bananas (green ones). We were a bit shocked to see Jeremiah man handle Joanes quite roughly, causing him to cry due to a misunderstanding about whether or not he was coming. After a hundred mile trek, uphill, with Joanes and Mercy (in clogs) in tow, Ishmael wasn’t in. TIA. However, we saw beautiful countryside, lots of Maasai dwellings, and were followed by various assortments of children, none of whom wanted their photos taken. So we trudged back, wearily, with Helen threatening to kill Jeremiah for taking us on a wild goose chase, passing a herd of puppies (that at first sight looked like they were being beaten) and picking up sodas for the kids before returning to the house. Sweet little Joanes accidentally found that soda was extra fizzy when shaken and proceeded to demonstrate this to everyone, especially Helen, who became soaked not just in paint but in coca-cola as well.

Following the soda games, a little gang of village children appeared at the entrance to the garden, very interested in what was going on. The Usalama children proceeded to start chasing them away, throwing sticks/stones where necessary. It seems they have already become quite territorial. This is good in a way as it shows that they are settling in, taking care of each other, and becoming a family.

Ntibu continues to paint, oblivious to everything else going on around him. Various children seemed to appear with bad teeth, rashes and unidentified objects on their ears. Hopefully some of these issues will be resolved tomorrow (at the hospital) and hopefully we will remain in good health.

Catherine has organized for a fundi to come and fix shelves for the kitchen for 60,000. He is coming on Tuesday. We set off on our weary trail home but picked up a dala-dala on the way. Helen sat next to a lady who promptly covered her nose with her kanga as though there was a terrible smell in her near vicinity. Ntibu suggested it was Helen's hand sanitizer but we all knew otherwise. The lady kept her nose covered for the remainder of the journey, causing much hilarity on the back seats i.e. Joanna and Marian. Pictures were discreetly taken. In the meantime, some of the other passengers made pleasant conversation with Helen (she clearly couldn't have smelt THAT bad). After disembarking at Ilboru, a well-deserved taxi ride was taken to the lodge.

As the sun set, and all was peaceful with the world, we became invaded by giant, edible (to Africans perhaps), flippy, flappy things, sending Marian diving for cover. Unknown to us, Joanna was being invaded in her shower, by these, slugs and spiders. A new gecko had also appeared, possibly to defend her. That will teach her to leave all her lights on.

News travels fast in Tanzania and at dinner this evening, mine host Ad appeared at Helen's side with a gas mask on his face saying he couldn't stand the smell.

Monday April 12th 2010

As usual the arrangements regarding meeting at the hospital with the children went crazy. Julieth told us at 9.30 that they still hadn't picked up everyone so we were left standing at our meeting point for a long time. Joanna and Marian left to go to Shoprite – a lot further than they realised. Meanwhile Catherine calls and says they are at the hospital and where was I. So she sent a driver to collect me and I arrived to be greeted by a sea of little worried faces. No sign of Julieth who had been forgotten in the pick up. Catherine didn't have a clue what to do next so summonsed Pastor Elfius who came at haste on his motorbike and took control of the situation thank goodness. The children were so good given the length of time we were hanging around. Eventually Catherine and the pastor took six for their HIV tests and we found a little Western Style playgroup for Joanes and Mercy. The others returned with Dominic sobbing his socks off – they took blood from the arm as opposed to the finger prick we had been led to believe would be adequate. Awful. Anyway, we calmed him down and all the kids went into the play area and had a whale of a time. We had to take Jordan back for a finger prick as he was too small for the full torture. Finally good news – all are clear of HIV but have to return in 3 months time for a follow up test. Meanwhile Joanes has to go back to the hospital early tomorrow with Catherine and myself to have his awful teeth looked at. It will cost a lot of money but they cannot be left as they are. He is naturally very anxious around hospitals given his history so we are dreading it. I personally find this stuff emotionally draining and distressing.

Finally the lift home to Usalama arrived back at the hospital so off they went. We went into town to try and use internet and change money. Naturally no power throughout town so a wasted trip. Then we ended up in a quite unpleasant area looking for the daladala back to Ilboru. I got separated from the others and was hustled big time. Fortunately I recognised what was happening so yelled at the top of my voice and my assailants beat a rapid retreat. I was not a happy bunny. So back to Ilboru for a couple of hours relaxation. Ad had collected some of the Mayfly invasion from the previous night and had them deep fried as a special surprise. I refused to eat them despite his assertion that they were delicious and tasted of shrimp. Managed to get onto the internet finally after two days of no success. Ad entertained me with yet more of his funny and somewhat dubious stories so no reading yet again. Eating out tonight for a change. Early start for me tomorrow – need

to be at the hospital by 8.00am. Fundi should do the shelves for the kitchen tomorrow and the new help, Mama Hilary starts Wednesday. There is still no water and not much rain so big problems at the house for washing. This is Africa yet again. Life is unpredictable, uncertain and at times downright awful. I saw the queues of young adults waiting to be tested/given their results and their prognoses. Not a good state of affairs. You have to live it, breath and see it to believe just how bad things can be here sometimes.

Tuesday April 13th 2010

Today I left Ilboru at 7.20am to walk to meet Catherine and Joanes. We caught the daladala to Usa River to take Joanes to the "Dream" clinic to discuss the teeth. Julieth was supposed to come too but appeared to be late as usual. So we got off the bus and Joanes pointed out Julieth strolling casually along the road – how she actually managed to get there before us I do not know. Probably on her broomstick. The clinic visit was very interesting but also upsetting. When you arrive you check in and then have to wait with many others – mainly adults and participate in a lesson on health care matters. They have an excellent book on general health issues that everyone is expected to read. Then we were called into to the clinic. One lady measured Joanes weight, height, limb circumference and temperature etc. He was quiet and anxious. Then we were called in to consult with the Doctor. He was delightful and we had a long chat. Interestingly he has only studied medicine for two years to diploma level and has to find the money for three more years study to get to degree level. He asserted that things are studied in much greater depth in those two years than in the UK– not sure about this. When he realised that we were running a home for orphans he offered to be available at weekends if needed to come to check out all our children thoroughly. He passed Catherine his number. He said Joanes CD4 count was still high so still no need to start him on ARV treatments which is really remarkable given that most children do not live much past 5 if they are untreated. He is gaining weight now. He then said he would ensure that we could go straight to the dental clinic at another district hospital some miles away and begin the process of extraction. He gave antibiotics and the letter and we set off again to the dental clinic. We were also told that he would be treated for free which was a relief. I met the people who fund the "Dream" clinic. They are opening new premises at the end of the month and asked that we should attend to show support as ordinary people rather than the dignitaries. Unlikely I can attend but will encourage the girls to go.

On the way to the dental clinic we passed what appeared to be a large wedding cortege with vehicles decked in streamers and balloons. The lead car – open backed truck actually contained a coffin and the people standing around the coffin in the truck were busy videoing the cortege as it followed on behind. Quite bizarre. The dental clinic was sparse and archaic but the dentist was pleasant and kind to Joanes who was by this time panic-stricken. He sent the girls out as they were getting anxious so I had to remain to hold Joanes's hand during the extraction procedure. Not pleasant for him and I wondered if I would end up on the floor. I was surprised that I had to remind the dentist to wear eye goggles during the procedure. I had to be gloved up as well in case of blood flying around. The tooth came out quite easily – Joanes burst into tears and sobbed when Catherine came back in to the room. He was really upset and traumatised by it all. And so home we went. I brought Catherine and Joanes to Ilburo for a rest. Joanes finally felt a bit better and Ad sweetly mashed some avocado and some banana and gave him warm milk which he enjoyed.

We went into the pool and finally persuaded Catherine to don a T-shirt and my legless tights and to come in. She had never been in a pool before and she looked hilarious and her face was a complete picture. But in she went and began to swim. We could not believe that she had never swum before. Incredible. Joanes now drugged and pain free became quite lively and finally requested to come in to the water. He laughed a lot and clung on to me for dear life but was enjoyed himself immensely.

Some consolation for the horrors of the morning. He then went on my computer and finally watched a DVD whilst Catherine and I showered and sorted out the shopping list for the giant shop tomorrow. What a thing to look forward to – NOT!! Hope I don't run in to Pangaman again.

So another weird and wonderful day in Tanzania draws to a close. There are some good and kind people in amongst the rest and I was truly impressed by what I saw at the clinic. Wish I could help the whole AIDS issue in some way – we shall see.

Wednesday 14th April 2010

Marian's word for the Day is buibui – a prize for the first correct translation of this word without cheating or going to Google translate.

Morning at Usalama – Apparently Catherine's new helper, Mama Hilary, helped for two hours and then disappeared with no explanation. Catherine will investigate fully and her pay will clearly be adjusted accordingly.

Marian's morning – I went up to the house and arrived in the pouring rain, holding up my trousers which were falling down. I was greeted by Jordan with a sticky bun (aka mandazi) who promptly decided to vomit all over me. I promptly handed him over to Anna. Two men (fundi) appeared on a bike with a load of wood, disappeared round the side of the house and started to build shelves for the kitchen. The job was completed and they were paid 60,000 shillings for their work. The morning was spent with an extremely lively group of children and a variety of toys from the store cupboard. The play camera and phones were enjoyed and Joanes, who was particularly boisterous, seemed to have recovered from yesterday's ordeal. The 'no speaking whilst eating' rule went out of the window in Katherine's absence and after a hectic morning I ate my lunch having lost the will to live.

Meanwhile, Helen and Joanna undertook the torture of the week – The Big Shop. Ad (Ilboru lodge) assisted greatly with a pre-Big Shop tour of his favourite (and cheapest) stores. As usual, everyone was late, Julieth in particular. First stop was for mass quantities of rice, beans and peanuts. There was sniffing and tasting of rice and sifting of beans ("yes but these beans are very dirty and if we buy 25kg we actually only have 18"). Peanut testing provided a nice little pick-me-up. In the midst of this we seemed to get into a racial discussion about whether or not Chagga men make good husbands with Catherine teaching Joanna hand signals for 'will you marry me' and 'no I will not' in the background. TIA. Yet again.

On to Neema enterprises and a surprisingly straight forward and un-stressful purchase of a number of items on our list. We were offered two diaries as free gifties which Helen decided would be quite nice for 'the girls' in order to teach them how to a. Be on time and b. Not forget their appointments. Catherine realised she had been running a day behind everybody else for who knows how long as her phone was on the wrong date. Both ladies were both given an intense lesson in diary-using later in the day.

Then we ventured into the market and guess who appeared, yet again? Panga Man and friend. We tried to give them the cold shoulder but they did what they do best and trailed after us looking miserable and hurt. They were accompanied by a couple of little 'bag boys' who like to sell bags as a not very obvious cover for their pick-pocketing escapades. We did manage to emerge from the market fully intact, if not a little stressed, with a variety of fresh fruit and veg, a set of shelves for the kitchen and a sufforia cover.

As we practically ran back to the bean, rice and peanut shop to meet the driver that Paradise had kindly sent to assist us, we passed a huge crowd of people, shouting and cheering and generally having a great time. We thought perhaps there was a rather enthusiastic preacher at the centre of all of this, but no, apparently there was a thief, being beaten to a pulp prior to being picked up and taken away to be killed. Unfortunately this is no joke and, very disturbingly, this didn't just seem to be acceptable but actually very entertaining. We found the whole thing thoroughly upsetting and were quite shaken up by it. As usual, there were no police in site. Arusha Central Market area is a bustling, lively place. You can find the best, freshest local produce there, and it is a great way to get a feel of local life. Unfortunately, it has a very dark side that you can never forget, and is not at all welcoming to tourists.

After a quick drive by Shop-Rite to pick up bleach and 5 very much needed Bounty chocolate bars, Helen, Julieth and Catherine headed back up the wonderful road to the house. Meanwhile, Joanna returned to Ilboru to prepare for her interview aka stress out a little, pace around, have a swim (carefully keeping her towel on until she was practically submerged in order to not excite local builders), and be chatted up by a rather dodgy un-known bloke who asked for her room number. She did however, enjoy a monkey sighting.

Back at the house, Helen was greeted by a rather frazzled Marian who had had more than enough of the lively children of Usalama. With vomit down her shirt it is perhaps lucky that Helen's dala-dala friend from the previous day was not present. Everybody unloaded the van, kids ran riot and then Ishmael (our guard from our previous visit) appeared. We chatted about the garden and the kids went in search of bricks for edging, having been promised a reward. Ishmael promised to return tomorrow to start sowing grass. The vegetable garden is looking good. The store cupboard was re-arranged with much help from Julieth. Finally we left to return to Ilboru.

As an afterthought on leaving, Helen observed, around the corner of the house, a delightful pile of poo, and the give-away abandoned trousers of Jordan. Catherine was instructed that she must discourage this activity else the health authority people will not be happy when they come to inspect us.

On return to Ilboru, Helen had to entertain Joanna for half an hour until the phone rang.

Thursday 15th April 2010

We rose later than usual to treat ourselves to a relaxing morning. We finally queried Ad about an item on the breakfast menu that had been puzzling us since our arrival – Porch. We thought perhaps it meant Perch, perhaps it was poached eggs, or perhaps it was a Dutch speciality. Due to our general lack of awakesness at breakfast time, none of us had ever dared to order it. Ad, somewhat surprised at the question, replied that it was Porch (not helpful at all Ad). Eventually, the penny dropped. Porridge! Ad realized he'd spelt it wrong, understood why no one had ever ordered it, and vowed to correct all of his menus.

Moving on....we had a relaxing morning, watching the rain and trying to decide whether or not to stop the children coming for a swim in the afternoon as had been planned. By mid day we decided that it was too wet and cold and postponed the plans. So, Julieth and Catherine rolled up on their own, Julieth all prepared with her swimming gear – long black leggings and a vest top. Of course, the sun shone. Remarkably, despite the cold water, Julieth, looking very glamorous, got in!!! She was persuaded to go in because Helen agreed she would go in as well. Needless to say, once Julieth was in Helen changed her mind. She seemed to really enjoy herself, being dragged around the pool by Joanna and Marian in her first ever swimming lesson.

Helen interviewed Julieth in preparation for the setting up of a web page for Ebenezer orphanage. Also discussed was the documentation that would be needed at Aru Meru district tomorrow.

We were picked up at 6.15 by Paradise and his family (Eliza and Bryson) and taken to the new cinema complex at Njiro. Welcome to California! We were shocked at the high prices of pretty much everything to be found in the shops. Clearly a place for wazungus only (and wealthy ones at that). So, having paid extra money to sit in the balcony of an empty cinema, and having reminded the operator to switch the film on, we watched possibly the worst movie ever made anywhere in the world, albeit an American film – The Legion. Warning – if you're thinking about seeing it, don't bother.

Even though it was apparently supposed to be a scary film, we had a good laugh about it all the way to Nick's Pub afterwards. We thoroughly enjoyed standard Nick's Pub fare of fish, chips and ndizi (washed down with a little Konyagi) before heading back to Ilboru and falling into our beds.

Friday 16th April 2010

With rather bleary eyes, Joanna and Helen rose early, to pouring rain. During breakfast it quickly became clear that a walk down to the main road would be at best a series of slips and slides in a mud bath and at worst a death trap. A taxi was called. Catherine was picked up and we headed for Aru Meru district council offices. As always, there was an argument with the taxi driver about the fare and as always, Julieth was late. Joanna spent the waiting time (and most of the morning) visiting various less than savoury public conveniences (perhaps the Konyagi???).

So we met Mr Christopher Pallangyo– district social welfare officer and a very charming and delightful man. He explained the process of licensing, all necessary documents were exchanged and an inspection of Usalama was scheduled for next Wednesday morning. Helen was given her homework for the weekend in the form of a delightfully up-to-date (2006) and entertaining 'The National Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Children's Homes'.

Among other things, these guidelines state that boys of 4 years of age or more must sleep in a room with girls of 3 years of age or more and that we must provide 'micromittments to children'. They will be read in depth and answers will be at the ready for next week!

Following an urgently needed visit to Shoprite (toilet paper for Joanna) and an unexpected meeting with Paradise at a coffee shop (toilet for Joanna), Helen and Joanna very happily accepted a lift back to Ilboru from Ad, who was in town to pick up his daughter.

Due to rain, rain, and more rain, the children's swimming had to be postponed again. So we thought we were going to have a nice relaxing afternoon by the pool (doing homework of course). We thought wrong. Will we ever learn?! TIA! Julieth and Catherine appeared with long and miserable expressions on their faces and sat in abject silence, refusing, despite Helen's threats, to tell us what the problem was. Finally, they told us that they had been summonsed to Arusha HQ by Mr Panga, the Senior Welfare Officer, not to be confused with Panga Man (from previous episodes). It seems that Mr Panga was not happy because we were continuing to accept children without his approval, despite having told us we should carry on. To cut a very long story short, he apparently finally said to them 'everything is fine but when I come to inspect you just make sure there are no children there'. TIA. The conversation became very animated and this obviously entertained the cleaning ladies in the hotel who swept the same piece of doorway one after the other so they could earwig and observe the lively interchange.

Helen called Mr Panga and arranged to see him on Monday in his office. He was grumpy but Julieth said he's always like this on the phone.

There was a large party for the evening meal at Ilboru (mainly Americans), very concerned as to whether or not they would be travelling home as planned tomorrow due to all the flight disruptions (volcano in Iceland). However, we were all entertained by the kitchen staff singing and dancing which made a really nice change.

As we write this we are in the midst of a tremendous tropical storm and are wondering how we're going to get to the house to do our painting tomorrow. A boat might be useful at this point.

Saturday 17th April 2010

Off we set again to the house to continue with our painting exercise. Despite the torrential overnight storms the road was not as bad as we had expected. We were given a lift to the bottom of Sanawari where we picked up Ntibu and set off up the hill to the house. This road was worse than ever – it had visibly changed appearance with huge chunks washed away by the rain. And so we arrived – hot, sticky and sweaty before we had even started work. Ntibu became a lean mean painting machine and we managed to complete the whole of the living/dining areas and the corridors without too much mishap. I started work with the two eldest boys on the preparation of another piece of the garden in order to plant small squash. It was a satisfying and enjoyable task despite the humidity and ever-threatening rain. We managed to clear and prepare and plant a large plot of squash – it will be interesting to see how these plants grow. All rather trial and error but good for the boys to earn a little pocket money for their hard work. They really are delightful kids – I wish some of our UK children could be a little more willing and happy to help out. So they each earned TzSh 450 and went secretly down to the local store to buy themselves sodas. You would have thought they had been given the world. We left at about 4.15pm and Ntibu showed us a short cut back to the house which only involved one dicey patch of terrain and me falling into the mud.

We are of course all getting very concerned about the flight situation with Marian due to leave on Monday. Mike is doing his best to get information at the UK end but things seem to be getting worse as stories and rumours filter back to us from various quarters. The hotel is filling up with stranded people all unable to get on to planes until next Saturday at the earliest.

Sunday 18th April 2010

We went to town in the morning prior to going to Paradise for late lunch at 4.00pm. We had arranged to meet Elizabeth (ex-matron of Faraja at 1.30pm). We had a long list of errands to complete but due to one problem after another we managed to do less than half. It was lovely to see Eliza and catch up on her news; she is very happy at her job with Seeway.

Paradise picked us up in his new car and took us to his new house on Fire road. It's in a great location, really close to town. The first thing we saw when we entered was a table covered in plates and food warmers filled with enough food for at least 10 people – chapattis, Swahili salad, Tanzanian king fish, chips, Mboga, pasta, rice, chicken.....!!!! We were happy to see his sister again and, greatly doubting how much of the cooking was done by Paradise himself, feeling slightly sorry for her. We ate, 'shared stories' (as the Tanzanians like to say) and, upon being presented with a platter of fresh fruit, ate some more!

The meal was followed by movies and concerts– Mr Bones, a slapstick spoof documentary about bush men and an evil coca-cola bottle, Michael Jackson and Boney M. Both were improvements on our recent cinema experience. Possibly more amusing was watching our hosts falling around laughing while we sat there with puzzled expressions on our face. Joanna and Marian were, for the

first time jealous of Helen's smoking habit as it gave her an excuse to step out of Paradise's sauna and into the cool evening air and observe the local wildlife, namely one frog and an albino cat.

We were plied with Konyagi and spent some moments admiring the stars before being driven home by our gentleman friend.

Monday 19th April 2010

Due to Volcanic activity elsewhere in the world, Marian is still with us! She teamed up with some other stranded travellers and they successfully (we think) booked themselves onto new flights on Sunday.

Today was our meeting with the notorious Mr Panga, Regional Commissioner for Social Welfare. We went, ever so 'umble, to acknowledge that he was apparently upset with us. We apologized immediately for any mistakes we might have made, informed him that nothing was intentional, and asked that he advise us on how to progress forwards.

He was uncooperative and aggressive, refused to give us information on what we could do and, furthermore, asked us who were we to think that we could come into his country and think that everyone was stupid. To cut a long story short, the meeting was very unproductive, we were going round in circles, and we decided it was best just to leave. We headed back to the hotel to relax for a while before the kids came for Mercy's birthday party and to meet up with Patrick who was due to come at 2.00pm. (He actually arrived at 3.15 – Africa time again). It was lovely to see him and Joanna enjoyed catching up with him after 2 and a half years. 6 Usalama children arrived, ready for their swim. Initially, they seemed a bit taken aback by this pool of bright blue water and half naked wazungu floating around it. However, after watching us, one by one they joined in and by the end of the day we had to drag them out. In summary they all thoroughly enjoyed their first experience of swimming and will hopefully come back on Thursday for a second go with Fiona.

Fiona is a doctor who is volunteering at a nearby hospital. She was minding her own business, out for a relaxing swim after a day in surgery when our mob set upon her, absolutely fascinated by the fact she could disappear under water and do handstands. She was a great sport and the kids thoroughly enjoyed tossing coins into the water for her to retrieve. Fiona has agreed to give everyone a simple check over which will hopefully be happening later this week.

After hearing about our meeting with Mr Panga, Paradise came for a drink to offer his sympathy and a few unrepeatable choice words. He said that we should carry on working with the district people and get passed by them as Mr Panga would be hard pushed to turn them down. Feeling much more relaxed, we headed to dinner. Fiona and Mercy were with us, Mercy having her birthday meal of Chicken and Chips, falling asleep half way through it and having to be carried by Joanna back to Helen's room for a night in the lodge. P.S. She still kicks like a donkey but had more space to do it in.

Tuesday 20th April 2010

Mercy woke up, remarkably not too early, and enjoyed a hearty breakfast with us. We then headed off to meet Catherine, Joanes, Elias and Jordan for a jolly morning outing to the dentist/hospital. Jordan was diagnosed with Malaria. Poor Joanes had yet another tooth extracted. Elias got off lightly but was given a lecture on correct tooth brushing. Unexpectedly, poor Mercy ended up having a tooth pulled out also. Kindly, yet again, the dentist didn't charge for any of this treatment and Joanes has to be re-tortured next week. Helen's MP3 acted as a distraction, albeit at the source of minor disputes.

So our once happy band of little soldiers, now a miserable band of wounded soldiers, headed back home on the bus. Joanna and Helen headed into town for a sneaky lunch at Africafe and a sneaky peak at the internet on a hunt for information on volcanoes, travel disruptions and general news on what is going on elsewhere in the world.

We bumped into Edward, a.k.a. The Last King of Scotland, who gave us a lift to the dala-dala for which we were truly grateful. Back at the hotel we joined Marian, still busy working on her flights, for a relaxing few hours by the pool.

Catherine informed us that John (uncle of Aaron and Elias) has sown the grass seed for our garden which is very kind of him.

Wednesday 21st 2010

Joanna went off to catch up with our old Maasai friends from three years ago. Marian and I went to meet Mr. Christopher from Arumeru District Council to bring him to Usalama to re-start the registration process. He was very positive and seemed impressed by what has happened to date. He stressed to us that the process is a process and takes time, like everything else in Tanzania. He will visit a couple more times and will then send the health authority to inspect us in due course before writing his report to be submitted to Social welfare in Dar-es-Salam. I suspect that things will not be as easy as he appeared to imply and that as usual hiccups will occur but at least we are operating above the radar. He did say he may well want to place children with us in the future, which is a good sign. We were tested on the contents of the out of date booklet on registration and were told he had only one copy so would have to photocopy the pages we needed for our future reference. Photos were taken and it was all smiles when he left.

We then set off with Catherine and Elias as our guide to have a look at the local primary school. I use the word local loosely as we in fact had to walk through some beautiful but challenging country side for well over half an hour to the school. We were informed that this was definitely the nearest. How small children are supposed to cope with those distances every day, goodness knows. Anyway, we were greeted by a very tired and stressed head teacher. He seemed more interested in what we might do for him and his school than what he could do for us but we soldiered on. There are so many children in this school that they can only attend part time. They are short of teachers and some of the teachers we saw appeared to be sitting around doing very little indeed. The classrooms were basic, overcrowded and depressing. To succeed in this system the children must be highly motivated and I guess that most will leave having learned very little. People have to pay and if they don't have the means then the children cannot attend. It is no wonder that literacy rates are so low in Tanzania. Because we had missed the registration date our children cannot be admitted until January 2011 after registering them in October of this year. We feel that for now Catherine will try to offer some basic literacy and numeracy at home and in the meanwhile we will return home and try and seek out funding for private schools if possible to give our children the best possible chance in life.

Thursday 22nd 2010

After a very tiring day yesterday Helen stayed in the hotel for a rest time. Paradise visited for a couple of hours which was lovely and we caught up properly and chewed the fat over lunch. Very pleasant. Marian and Joanna went into town and tried to further sort out flights for Marian, with no more success than was expected. No one is contactable on the phone and so we are at a loss as to what to do. Mike is trying to sort things out for her in the UK. The children came late afternoon for a quick swim and then we got ready to go out for the night. We decided to go out to the airport 40km away to try and get some sense from someone face to face. We arrived to find the airport

shut and no one to be seen. Not good news. So we returned to Arusha and caught up with friends in a new bar. I choked on a hookah pipe, we met some weird and wonderful people and then left to eat elsewhere. We finished off the evening at Via Via, the local night spot, which was fun and finally got back at around 2.30am. Not good with work to do the next day.

Friday 23rd April 2010

The morning after the night before.

As we are unable to get our children into school probably until January 2011, Catherine has agreed to spend an hour a day teaching them basic literacy and numeracy. The children are keen to learn and need to catch up a lot. So we went into town and bought a selection of basic English readers and some exercise books etc to be kept solely for the teaching times. We also bought some posters to brighten up the rooms. We also went yet again to our now very helpful pharmacist to get yet more advice on how to try to eradicate the problem of impetigo – Mercy has a second outbreak of this wretched infection and Aron's face is now covered in the stuff. Joanes is showing signs of a breakout. So we were given a broad spectrum antibiotic mix for them all and creams and head lotions and hopefully these will do the trick if used correctly.

We headed yet again up to the house. We were greeted by Bibi Jordan who had come to bring paperwork for Catherine and the Welfare Officer. Marian and Joanna started the great toy sort out and Helen with Catherine's help tried to give yet another lecture to the children on hygiene. I used paint to try to demonstrate the importance of washing hands. One child had paint on her hand and was encouraged to touch the next child and so on to show how bugs can be passed on. I hope that the point is being made especially to Catherine who, despite insisting on individual combs for everyone was seen to be using one comb on several children. I also had to address an H.I.V. transmission issue because little Jordan, sick of having all his toys snatched away by the bigger ones, decided to try and bite Joanes. I had to explain that if he had broken the skin this must be taken seriously and although risks would be slight he would have to be tested after three months for the virus. Poor Catherine – it is a very steep learning curve. I helped her to update the record book and again stressed the importance of this record keeping activity for the authorities. I put the posters on the walls together with other materials I prepared at home and it certainly brightened the place up.

I showed Catherine how to apply the creams, lotions and potions for the Impetigo outbreak – it will be a miracle if none of us three gets it. (In my case – yet again!) We also had a demo lesson of look and say reading techniques with flashcards and left at 5.45pm. Fortunately Jeremiah came with us to show us the short cut as it was beginning to get dark and he also carried back a large case for me which was a great help. Without him we could well have got lost and almost certainly would have all ended up falling in the stream and the mud. He stayed for a soda, we tried to stay awake long enough to eat dinner and fell into bed exhausted after the exertions of the day and more to the point the night before.

Saturday 24th April 2010

Today was a strange day. A day of rest to some degree and a lot of it spent waiting around for various people to turn up who didn't. Marian went into town to meet a friend. Joanna and I hung out in the morning and we expected a) Paradise's brother and sister to turn up at 2pm and b) Catherine and children to come for a swim and c) Julieth to come for a swim. Unfortunately Catherine was unable to come due to the fact that the water had gone off yet again in the village so she and Anna had to go some distance to fetch water and then had to queue along with the rest of the village for some hours for the tap. The Paradise relatives failed to show up or answer texts so about 3.15 we decided to head out to investigate costings for water storage and collection. As per

normal soon after we had left we got a call asking us where we were. We decided to carry on with our task and tell the miscreants to wait for us until we got back. Typical African timing.

We returned with our costs to take home for Mike and then spent a bit of time and cold water trying to get the young people into the pool. They got in and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Then, after a good deal of faffing about, we all went out to a meal with a family row ensuing during the trip to the restaurant. Mama Africa waded in and told everyone and anyone off. Finally peace was restored and we had a nice evening. A volunteer from another project will be coming to visit our project on Tuesday.

Sunday April 25th 2010

Today we left early (ish) and headed off to the house using the shortcut for the first time on our own. We successfully navigated our way across country and arrived at the house to find Ntibu (painting machine) already hard at it. So we set too to finish the kitchen area and also managed to paint some lovely motifs on the living room walls. Joanna was chief designer and artist and painted lovely kipepeo (butterflies) on the wall along with a rambling plant around the arch and two huge sunflowers at the front door. Jeremiah drew out and painted the lettering "Karibuni Nyumba Ya Usalama" (Welcome to Usalama House) and did a good job. Ishmael set about setting mole traps – much to my unhappiness but acceptance that we need the veg – and we discovered that our first baby pumpkins were beginning to sprout. Very satisfying! Yet another lecture was delivered on NOT scribbling on the walls – just because we can do it it didn't mean they could!! Typical adult logic again.

We finally negotiated with Catherine to take four children back with us for swimming. We were accompanied by Jeremiah and Ntibu on the trip back to Ilburo. The four children had a grand old time. Grace had to be told off for trying to hold Elias under the water when he was demonstrating his breath-holding skills. Joanes shivering constantly very full of himself and contrived all sorts of antics in order to avoid being dragged out of the water. In the end they were all successfully removed from the pool and ushered back to the bedroom for drying and dressing. The bathroom seemed to be a form of entertainment especially for Joanes who seemed to enjoy alternatively scalding and freezing his hands with the taps. After a picture show on the computer for the children and for Jeremiah they were all escorted off the premises and Jeremiah took them all home. He was given my MP3 player and batteries on loan until next time – my policy is to encourage people to help wherever possible and earn their "Gifty" as opposed to just expecting handouts. Exhausted we all had food, tried to catch up a little on what is going on outside the world of Tanzania and went to bed. Busy last few days looming.

Monday 26th April 2010

Marian had to sort out work so stayed at the hotel in the morning. (She is only going to be 9 days late returning to work due to random bad volcanic behaviour) Meanwhile Joanna and Helen raced to town on a mission – to try and bottom out the endless list of last minute stuff. Met Catherine who had a long lesson in using the ATM – much to the consternation of the growing queue behind us. She then went in search of a loo plunger and cutlery tray whilst Joanna tried to sort out her airport transfer – unsuccessfully. Helen had a frustrating time trying to register Mike's local cell number but finally succeeded. Then we all met up with Paradise for a quick drink and he proceeded to give a long and somewhat noisy explanation of today's public holiday – The Arusha Declaration/President Nyerere. This is complicated but associated with Independence from G.B. in 1967. We also attempted to explain the meaning of the word "passion" apart from passion fruit juice to Catherine who promptly attempted to hide underneath her scarf with embarrassment. (I reckon mock embarrassment).

Joanna and Helen then went off to meet Paulo na Moses na Londito (their brother at Njiro) and Marian joined us later. They are well settled as guards and have a nice little home with all mod cons (relatively speaking) and seemed very content and healthy. Much better than sleeping in a garage on cardboard as they were forced to do when we first came as volunteers. Moses was teased about a bit of writing he had to do for his English class – “I love girls and I want to marry 10 girls and have 10 kids in each girl”!!!! Umm!!! Suggested this was a plan requiring a lot of strength and cows/cash. Moses response was that perhaps this was not a good plan. We bought them and their Maasai friend sodas, said sad goodbyes again, headed back into town for an early meal. Then back to Ilboru to carry on working through the list. Two days remain now and I personally am starting to feel very sad, but happy to go home but know as ever that I will miss my friends and our lovely extended family at “Usalama”.

Tuesday 27th April 2009

Our last full day in Tanzania. Joanna headed early into town to go to the bank and to meet Lisa, a volunteer from another project, to bring her to see our house. Marian and I met them with driver at we headed up the now almost impassable road to “Usalama”. The road has seriously deteriorated in the last few days – possibly due to the amount of rainfall. We are quite concerned about this as it makes Catherine’s tasks much more difficult and time-consuming. Lisa was incredibly impressed by the state of our house and the cleanliness and homeliness in particular. We showed her the record keeping books that Catherine is now keeping and she was further impressed by the emphasis we are putting on health education and diet for our children. We are still a little concerned that the toys are not being used when we are not there and that they are not being cared for as we would have hoped. Another lecture ensued. Catherine arrived back home with Joanes, both exhausted and wet after their trip. Whilst she was away, Mama Goodluck appeared in quite a muddled state and told me that her house had been burnt to the ground that morning. Her main concern seemed to be that the paperwork she had prepared for us for Dominic and Goodluck had gone up in the blaze. It is a mystery as to how this fire started – given her serious mental health issues and local bullying of her and her family anything could have happened. I decided to give Catherine TzSh 10,000 to pass on to her as a small contribution towards feeding herself and her remaining children. Interestingly, when she arrived, Goodluck appeared briefly to say hi and then carried on playing with the others; her visit didn’t seem to unsettle him or Dominic unduly. Catherine attempted to find her later on in the day without success. Marian went with Jeremiah to find the family of Joram and ascertain whether or not they were prepared to do the paperwork necessary for the officials. The father agreed so hopefully that will get done in the next few days. Yet again it brought up the issue of supporting children within their own family whenever possible but without a good deal of local help and funding for now this will have to wait.

We spent a bit of time painting the childrens’ hands and putting hand prints along the corridor. That was fun but Anna was not looking highly amused by our strange western ways. I then went through the books with Catherine and sorted out money matters for the next few months. She was as always miserable as our departure looms nearer. She is doing a wonderful job. I paid Anna her salary and emphasised how pleased we are with the work she is doing and she assured me that she was very happy to continue with us – which is a great relief as she is a little gem. We then walked the bigger kids across to Ilboru accompanied by Jeremiah. They had a swim which they enjoyed as much as ever. He kindly escorted them home again and we got ready for our final night out at Dibouti lake with Paradise and hangers-on. We had a great evening and drowned our sorrows at leaving in the local Konyagi. We ate at a local restaurant and returned to bed somewhat the worse for wear and with various amusing, albeit non-broadcastable incidents to chuckle over.

Wednesday 28th April 2010

Our final day. We escorted Joanna to her bus for the airport. I was very sad to see her go – she has been a great help and support as well as tremendous fun. Marian went for yet more money for her overstay due to volcano activity. I walked back to Ilboru Lodge and attempted a little packing. Around noon Julieth came to say hi and announced that she would come back after her computer class and come to see us off at the airport. She knows how painful I find it to leave and is a great comfort. Then Jeremiah appeared to say goodbye and stayed all afternoon. I think in the fullness of time he could become an important part of the project as he relates well to our boys and is a big brother/father figure to them. All the children and Catherine and Anna in her Sunday best arrived at about 2.00pm and we spent the afternoon swimming and talking and generally having fun. Catherine was in her usual doleful mood partly due to our departure but also because her feet were sore and swollen. Catherine insisted she accompany me to shower and get ready to leave for the airport. In the midst of this Paradise appeared with 5Kg of cacao for me to bring back – it is apparently classed as a super-food and son Andrew thinks we can sell it at a healthy profit for the charity. We shall see. Julieth came back and finished my packing, clucking around like a mother hen. Finally we said our sad farewells to our lovely family and got going to the airport with Julieth cuddling me for the entire journey. The heavens opened and lightening flashed but the storm passed just as we arrived. We checked in without problem much to Marian's relief and headed for home. And so another varied, eventful and busy trip is now complete. There is still much to do and it is now absolutely vital that we step up with fund-raising and sponsorship in order that our children's' futures are secured. They will grow up to be healthy, happy and well-educated young men and are the future of the beautiful but troubled country of Tanzania.