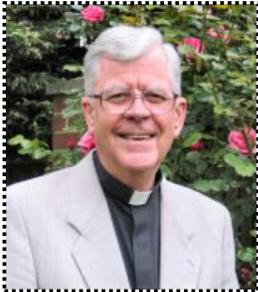


PORTSMOUTH DIOCESAN BAMENDA COMMITTEE

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

OF

VISIT OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PORTSMOUTH DIOCESAN COMMITTEE TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BAMENDA

14TH – 26TH January 2008

Delegation:

Rev. Mgr Vincent Harvey VG representing Bishop Crispian Hollis
Rev. Mgr Ronald Hishon, Chair Portsmouth Bamenda Committee
Dr. John Hughes Committee Member
Mr. Colm Lennon Committee Member

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OF VISIT TO OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PORTSMOUTH DIOCESAN COMMITTEE TO BAMENDA 14TH – 26TH January 2008

Notes:

- While there is a description of new or ongoing project request, there is no specific budget proposal. That is being drafted by Colm Lennon in the light of our Visit, for discussion at the next full meeting of the Committee.
- The Document references refer to written material made available to us while in Bamenda. Copies are available on request.
- There are pictures of nearly all the places and projects described above. To facilitate electronic mailing these were not embedded in this report. Selections can be sent by e-mail or CD on request.

This report can be found on the Portsmouth Diocesan website.

In addition a specific Bamenda website '**bamendaandportsmouth.com**' has been registered and will be on-line, hopefully by Easter 2008. The volunteer web mistress is Mrs Ana Dobeson, a lecturer in IT at Portsmouth University, who maintains the website for the Cathedral Parish. Her e-mail address is: ana@dobeson.co.uk if you have any facts or pictures you think may be helpful, please send them to her.

- In a meeting of Vincent Harvey and Ron Hishon with Fr Gregory Ngwa, the Archdiocesan Financial Secretary, it was clarified that:

The Archdiocese did not wish (as it used to previously) to make any charge for our transportation and board during our stay.

To maintain the Archdiocesan offices and administration, there is normally a deduction (of about 6%) on all financial transactions. We should take this into account when making grants.

There was a need for Mass intentions for the priests of the Archdiocese. These are set in Bamenda at 2,000 francs = approx £2 per Mass, of which 600 francs goes to the Diocese and 200 francs to the retired priests' Fund.

Monday 14th January

THE JOURNEY

We departed London Heathrow on the 14th January on the 6.40 am flight to Paris, and arrived at Douala Airport after five in the afternoon. We were met as promised by Father Michael Bibi, whose further education in catechetics at Maryvale Birmingham had been financed by the Portsmouth Diocese.

Douala is the largest city in Cameroon, a sprawling tropical Third World City with an average temperature in the high twenties or low thirties, rain all through the year, and 95% humidity. We slept the night at the urban health centre run by the Anglophone Franciscan 'Shisong'' sisters. Mercifully, the air-conditioning, though antiquated and noisy, did function.

Tuesday 15th January

After 6 am Mass and breakfast, we set out on the very cramped 5½ hour journey from Douala to Bamenda. For me it was a nostalgic journey. Memorable sights include: a pink coffin on a pick-up, motorcycle taxis carrying up to three passengers at once, a compound crowded for a death celebration, banana plantations, and roadside markets selling exotic foods; later on Eucalyptus trees and the pink dust haze of the Hamatan. We passed through Bonaberri, over the River Wourri, onto to Bonjongo, Mbanga, Loum, Nkongsamba, Dschang, and Mbouda into the North West Province at the new Parish of Santa. Then came Akum, Bamenda Station, and finally Bamenda Town (for information on the Town, c.f. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamenda>), the Seat of Archbishop Cornelius Esua, Archbishop of Bamenda.

THE ARRIVAL

Welcomed at Archbishop's House by Fr Gregory Ngwa, the financial secretary, and after drinks in the Archbishop's parlour and a good supper of salad, mackerel and plantains etc., we were shown to our simple but adequate rooms. At supper we met Fr. Ignatius Nkwain, the Bishop's secretary. The Archbishop was on duty out of town in Bambui.

1. MEETING THE ARCHBISHOP & HIS COMMITTEE Wed 16th January 2008 Docs. 01, 02

After Mass in the Archbishop's Chapel and breakfast, at 9 am we met the Archbishop and the members of his Bamenda Portsmouth Committee. Their Committee consists of Fr Engelbert Kofon VG, Fr Ignatius Waindim - Archbishop's Secretary, Fr Gregory Ngwa - Financial Secretary, Fr John Ambe - Diocesan Education Secretary, Fr Ben Nsom - Principal of Pope John Paul Catholic Comprehensive Wum, Fr Maurice McGill MHM - local Society Superior, Sr. Dorothy OFM Brixen, and Ephraim Nkwain - Senior Catechist.

They expanded and made some small changes to the detailed programme already circulated to us (see docs No I and 2). Each day we would taken to visit different places and people both those we were already supporting plus some new places too.

2. BAMENDA PRISON 16th Jan 08 doc No.1

We went to visit Bamenda Prison (about 4 km away) with Fr Ignatius and Sr. Dorothy, the current pastoral leader there. We were met at the humble main door by the Prison Governor, who welcomed the longstanding pastoral and material help that the Church offered the Prison, and welcomed us to tour the prison and speak to the inmates. Sr Hedwig who has worked in the Prison for years and knows the people there also joined us.

There are about 500 inmates in the prison including 40 – 50 teenagers and 8 women.

We met many of the prisoners both in the prison yard, and in the Chapel, and saw the poor conditions where they lived and slept. There is a school for the young offenders, and basic craft shops. The latter however lacked materials and needed ongoing support. The Church also supplements the prisoners' meagre diet with money raised both locally and through ourselves.

It needs fund for the support it gives to the humanitarian work of giving food, medicines, clothing, bedding, didactic materials, and basic sport materials to the Prisoners. It also helps prisoners to keep in contact with their families. Many of the inmates are kept for long periods on remand without trial. The Church sometimes arranges legal aid for prisoners without means. *For those wishing to adopt specific projects, we have been given written details of their requirements for all these items.*

An amusing item: in the Governor's office hangs a dilapidated colour picture of Prince Philip and Diana!

3 CHAPLAINCY TO FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER 16th Jan 08 doc No.2

We met Fr George Ngalim from Bayelle who works with Sr Dorothy organising days of recollection and seminars for members of the armed forces and the Police.

For those wishing to adopt specific projects, we have some written information.

4 ACAT (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture – B'da. e-mail: acat-ngo@yahoo.com) 16th Jan 08 Doc No.3-3A

Sr Hedwig is the main Catholic member of this institution. It is an ecumenical international Human Right Organisation, functioning in Bamenda since 1994. Its office is in the Tower of Bamenda Cathedral. Although primarily to defend people from direct ill treatment, its function includes a wider ranger of justice and peace issues.

It works by organising seminars for local leaders, women leaders, college youths, Nkambe prison officers, a Radio Programme 'New Vision'.

For those wishing to adopt specific projects, we have been given written details of their requirements for all these items (See Docs 3 and 3A)

5 FAMILY LIFE ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE 16th Jan 08

We went to the Archdiocesan Family Life Office in Mankon, to meet the leaders of the main movements engaged in the support of family life. *There include: Marriage Encounter, Natural Family Planning Association, the Pro-Life campaign; the Christian Family Movement (CFM), Marriage Enrichment, and Counselling for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.*

5A ME operates in the same way as in the UK. It is active. A cultural difficulty is that married couples do not normally appear together in public. There are 11 cells with 105 couples. They have Encounter Days, an outreach to the Kumbo Diocese; a newsletter etc. Although they try to be self-finances, not all couples can afford it; transport costs are demanding too.

5B CFM is a well established family movement upholding family values by regular parish meetings, arranging for the preparation for and celebration of group weddings at parish level etc. The Diocesan team tours the Parishes.

5C **Pro-Life** seems to be less organised, though active in Mankon and led voluntarily by a Catholic lady pharmacist.

5D NFP is well equipped with literature etc, but it presumes a level of literacy and sophistication beyond that of many people. The team have trained 8 couples to teach NFP and there is an NFP week in July.

5E COUNSELLING FOR HIV/AIDS VICTIMS AND AFFECTED PEOPLE.

Doc. 3A Led by Sr Sheila McElroy, she has a large group of local people whose attitude and response to AIDS has been transformed through her programme. 78 people are attending the present programme. She also offers other support (school fees for children etc.), home visits, and a primary school sexuality programme. This is a functioning and worthwhile project.

6. St. BLAISE'S CLINIC Mankon

16th Jan 08

Quite recently built with funds from a retired MHM priest, it was in the hands of the Franciscan sisters, and was the centre for a number of HIV/AIDS support groups. The latter are now centred on La Verna. Last year it was closed for a while, and in October 07 was re-opened, now managed by Sister Cecilia and another sister of St. Therese, a new Cameroonian Religious Congregation founded by the Holy Rosary Sisters. It has still to gain its former number of patients.

6A ARCHDIOCESAN DRUG DISPENSARY

16th Jan 08

Adjacent to though not part of St. Blaise's is the Archdiocesan Dispensary, under Mrs Rebecca (at present officially assistant to Sr. Chiara, Archdiocesan Health Coordinator). This dispensary makes available drugs to the various Catholic Health Centres throughout the Archdiocese. I am not clear if the drugs donated by Clinicare are stored here or sent direct to designated hospitals / health centres.

7. St. EDMUND'S MULANG (outstation of Azire [Small Mankon] Parish, in the outskirts of Bamenda Town). Thursday 17th January 2008

docs No.4 and 4A

We met Fr Engelbert Kofon VG the Parish Priest of Azire, John Achuo President of the Mission Station Committee, and the catechist who also runs the Diocesan printing press. We were taken to Mulang, where we were warmly welcomed and presented with gifts including a live fowl who later managed twice to escape from its basket into our vehicle!

They have a large Church seating at least 1000 people. I said Mass there one Sunday and it was filled with Mass goers. The cost of the foundations and first footings were paid for in part by Portsmouth Donations when I was Parish Priest there in the early 90s. The building was completed under the direction of Fr Cornelius Oprins MHM, who died in Holland the day before we visited.

There is no other building on site and the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved due to lack of anyone resident to ensure security. They have had prepared detailed plans for a Hall and have appealed for funding.

However at a recent Confirmation ceremony the Archbishop pointed out that the first priority is to build a house, for a catechist and perhaps in due time for a priest. The Community have taken this on board, and appealing to the Parishioners to contribute towards this. This is a project we should consider supporting.

For those wishing to adopt this project, ask for further details.

8. NTARINKON – A PROPOSED NEW MISSION STATION of Azire 17th Jan 08 doc No.5

We are accompanied by the PP, Mr James Ndi (PPC Chair) and other Azire and Ntarinkon Christians, to a site which has been purchased (at a cost of £6,000) for a large new Church (to seat approx 800 – 1000) to take the pressure off Azire (see their typical Parish n/letter Doc. No 5A), where the three Masses are overcrowded.

£9,000 has been collected locally, Fr Oprins donated £1,000, and Rome has given a £13,000 grant. However another £50,000 is still needed to complete the project.

For those wishing to support this urgent need, a more specific breakdown can be obtained.

9. AZIRE PRIMARY SCHOOL

We went to meet the schoolchildren of St. Theresa's Parish Azire. About 600 were paraded in their yard. They sang and danced for us. A speech highlighted the need to refurbish their ageing school buildings, and to help children unable to pay school fees (because HIV/AIDS, etc.).

Those wishing to support this school in some way should ask for more details.

10. FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC YOUTH CENTRE - Mankon doc No.6

Mr Walter Nsoh, Archdiocesan President of the Youth Federation, along with about 40 young members of local branches, welcomed us to their Hall, a large but dilapidated building, with a considerable site adjacent. The Chaplain Fr George Ngwa was out of town.

Portsmouth priest Fr. Tony Gatt had been a founding chaplain of the Federation, and Portsmouth had previously given money which had been used to built a security wall around their site, and to provide chairs and tables in the hall. However the wall, though substantially in place had not been completed, and repairs to the hall promised in 2005 had not been carried out.

The Address informed us that the Federation organises annual youth camps, leadership seminars in cooperation with the British Council leadership Programme. Local groups meet weekly for prayer, reflection or formation. Fr George visits the parishes to promote Youth work.

They appeal for funds to complete the fencing, to purchase farming implements, to set up small income-generating projects, like rearing pigs, tailoring and haircutting etc. This appeal for farm implements is not entirely convincing these are widely available and owned by the poorest families.

Advice and details are available to those wishing to support the youth.

11. Sr Chiara – HEALTH WORK COORDINATOR. 17th January 2008

We met with Sr Chiara Archdiocesan Health Work coordinator (for all the hospitals and health centres in the Area). She has recently been elected onto their Provincial Council and will have to be replaced as coordinator.

However she is still to continue with that work within her Order. For the moment she is still the link person with medicines donated by Clinicare International, and she is in touch with Peter Hatcher in Southampton.

Her work as an organiser of groups promoting micro businesses for those infected or affected by AIDS, previously centred at St. Blaise's Clinic, is now transferred to La Verna, although the groups meet in various places, notably at Bayelle (*see No.12*).

12. AKUM HEALTH CENTRE Friday 18th January 2008 doc No.7

We met Sr. Veronica, a Holy Rosary Sister, who with another sister bursar, runs a well-established and busy health centre. They have a doctor, but he is soon to move on and she is arranging for a replacement. Building is in progress to offer better housing incentive to doctors. They are in sore need of equipment. *A written list (doc 7) of items of medical equipment which need to be adopted are available on request.*

13. BAMBUI WATER PROJECT Friday 18th January 2008 docs No. 8a – 8g

The main construction of this water project is now completed and the water is now supplying Bambui and its surroundings (including the Major Seminary etc.).

Fr Bibi drove us first to Bambui 4 corner, where Sofa Stanislaus Lord Mayor of Tubah Council, the able Project coordinator Mr. Fornimoh Chrysanthus, and a delegation of the local community were waiting to welcome us. The Lord Mayor gave a speech (8A) in which he warmly acknowledged our contribution of £10,500 (not including £3,000 from Oaklands).

The group then continued some distance into the Bambili hills, where we trekked for about an hour, inspecting the various catchment tanks. The work is well done. Finally we reached the functioning main reservoir, where the Fon and His Council awaited us.

There Mr Chrysanthus gave a speech (8B) giving details of the project. It serves a population of 25,000, including a large number of educational establishments (Catholic and not - c.f. doc. 8E) in the vicinity. The project had been begun in 2005. The total cost had been approx. £88,000m of which approx. £19,000 had been raised by the local community, £55,000 by two Italian charities based in Padua and Milan, and the rest from the UK. There are now 25 public stand taps.

However a problem has arisen from the number of people who, having paid for pipe extensions to their compounds are wasting the limited water supply. Consequently there is the need for two supplementary projects: a management and maintenance office and equipment (costed at £15,000), and a system of metering to control private use (£15,000). *Written details are available (docs 8c and 8d for those who may wish to help toward this project.*

(We lunched at Bambui Major Seminary where we were received by the Rector Fr. Agapitus Nfon. We met the Parish Priest Fr Oliver Gam, and an old friend Fr Joseph Ayeah, now retired.)

(As Sr. Catherine of the Sisters of Christ Convent, who had first asked us and Oaklands School to support the water project was absent, on Thurs 24th we went again to visit her in their convent. She showed us that she had meticulously kept records of monies received, but there was no real reason why she had not given previous feedback to Oaklands School and to our Committee. Also present again was the Project leader Chrysanthus, who is a better contact).

14. LA VERNA HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUPS Fri / Sat 18th/19th Jan 2008 docs No. 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, 9e

Adults of the local 'La Verna' [named after the local house of retreat run by the Franciscan Sisters] support groups numbering well over a hundred people came together on the Friday in a Hall of Bayelle Parish to thank the Portsmouth Delegation for their ongoing support.

On Saturday a great number of children (there are 510 on the books) met us in the Bayelle Parish Hall, to dance and sing for us, while one read a formal thank you (see Doc 9E).

Though led and motivated by Sisters Hedwig* and Chiara, these groups are based in the local community, embrace those affected by AIDS whatever their Faith, and strive by local fund-raising and small businesses to support AIDS victims and their (often orphaned) children.

We were given 2 moving DVDs (docs 9a and 9b) of the Bamendankwe Branch's efforts. In addition a written report (9c) appeals for continued support for medicines, food, income-generating projects, and school fees for the children.

This project is very practical and every little contribution makes a difference. For rates for school fees, see No. 19 below, the report of visit to Education Secretary.

* Re. Sr. Hedwig. For many years she has done great work in the prison and serving the social needs of the Bamenda area. Now she is to be given a 3 month sabbatical at the Redemptorist House at Hawkstone Hall in the UK. She has already partial funding.

The total cost is £5,400, and she is urgently seeking £2,700 from us (see Doc. 9D).

15. NTASEN (Nkwen) HEALTH CENTRE / Hospital 18th January 2008 Doc No. 10

This project began only October 2005 in the poorer further outskirts of Bamenda Town, where the population is still scattered, though growing. It has capacity for 100 beds with basic x-ray, ultrasound, medical and maternity facilities, and at present there is a resident doctor. It is engaging actively with the community in the care of those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

There is a long list of equipment still needed, including an incubator for premature babies, laundry equipment etc. However, the road to the Centre is bad, even in the dry season, and often impassable. Also there is a severe water problem, and when we visited they had had to send away all their patients.

More details are available from the Health Centre's Annual Report (Doc. 10).

16. ARCHBISHOP PAUL VERDZEKOV (retired) 18th January 2008

Archbishop Paul lives at Ntasen in a small house adjacent to the sisters who run the health centre.

17. HOLY ROSARY CONVENT & OUR LADY OF LOURDES SEC SCHOOL 18th Jan 2008

The Delegation was invited for supper.

This community is partly Irish, and partly Nigerian. It is that of Sr. Sheila (see No. 5E above) and Sr. Colette McCann (member of the Diocesan Pastoral Formation Team – see No. 18 below).

The other sisters are mostly involved with their Girls' Secondary School which is first class and prospering. It is able to give financial help to new secondary foundations, like the one in Wum.

18. PAUL VI PASTORAL FORMATION TEAM 19th Jan 2008 Docs. 11A, 11B, 11C, 11D, 11E, 11F

Situated at the Pastoral Centre in the Station Area some 3km outside Bamenda, it is led by Fr. Anthony Bangsi [anthonybangsi@yahoo.com] (who is also Director of the Pastoral Centre from which the Team operates), along with Sr. Colette McCann mshr and Ephrem Nkwain (a longstanding catechist, still working in Bayelle Parish, and a member of the newly formed Archdiocesan Bamenda-Portsmouth Committee). Four Franciscan sisters run the Centre itself (see brochure Doc. 11F).

Its mission is the implementation of the Provincial Pastoral Plan, inspired by the Lumko Institute (in S. Africa) and drawn up by the 640 participants, and at the 1999 Catholic Convention (see Doc. 11A).

At weekend it leads in-house seminars for lay leaders of the Mission out-stations, families, parishes etc. In addition, working out in the parishes, it has already involved more than a thousand Christians in seminars on Small Christian Communities and formed teams of leaders in 24 parishes (see Doc 11B). In addition they have given 2 seminars in each deanery to the catechists, using a Lumko Programme, to clarify their role in the Plan (see doc. 11C) and introduce them to the R.C.I.A. model of catechesis.

Although the Centre provides premises for pastoral courses and seminars, and they do ask some contribution from the Parishes and Deaneries when they work with them, there is no overall diocesan financial plan. Consequently for the past three years the team has not been paid. This affects in particular the lay member of the team who finds difficulty in sending his four sons to school and college (see Doc. 11E). Similarly there have inadequate transport and funds for stationery printing etc (See Doc. 11A). The Centre has no chapel and makes do by using the refectory. Lastly they suffer with water problems but lack the funds to deal with them.

This is a highly committed and well organised team who are doing good work and a details programme of future activities (see Doc.11D). They deserve good support from us.

19. CATHOLIC EDUCATION SECRETARY 19th Jan 2008 Doc. 12

Fr. John Ambe, the Catholic Education Secretary, has responsibility for the funding and management of all the Catholic primary and secondary school in the Archdiocese. His office is situated in the Cathedra compound in refurbished buildings previously occupied by M.H.M. brothers.

There are 127 Primary schools with 565 for nearly 26,000 children, while there are 11 secondary schools with 251 teachers for over 5,000 students. To support the schools there is a well established mobile R/E team. In addition there is a team of mobile catechists instructing many Catholic Children in Government and Private schools.

Despite a very good academic and moral record, Catholic schools are facing a massive challenge. Built by the people and staffed by the Archdiocese, the Government used to pay a subvention to help pay the teachers. For years the Government has failed to give anything, and at the same time have planted 'free' Government schools, with inadequate staff.

School fees are not excessive but beyond the means of many orphans and those affected by the HIV/AIDS endemic in some 20% of the Population. While in some areas support Groups and parochial initiatives strive to help needy children, recently the Archbishop has set up a special *Scholarship Fund to spread similar help to Schools throughout the Archdiocese.*

The current annual School fees (inclusive of necessary books) are approximately: £15 (Primary in urban areas); £10 (Primary in rural areas); £30 (nursery schools); £100 (typical Secondary School).

20. FREE DAY - KUMBO DIOCESE - SHISONG HOSPITAL Sunday 20th Jan 2008

Sunday, we were free of official commitments, so after early Masses and breakfast, Fr Bibi drove us for about 3 ½ hours to Shisong Hospital, not far from Kumbo Town in the Kumbo Diocese. This road is tarmacked only as far as Ndop. From then on, in the dry season, it was dusty, bumpy and slow.

Kumbo was split off from Bamenda about 25 years ago, and its first Bishop was Bishop Cornelius, who was translated to Bamenda Archdiocese only recently, on the retirement of Archbishop Paul Verdzekov. It was the latter, who in 1974 first arranged our twinning with Bishop Derek Worlock. Many of our priests have worked in what is now Kumbo Diocese (in Nkambe, Tabenken, Kumbo Town etc.).

Sr Rufina, the matron received us warmly. Also present was Sr Ermelinda who had nursed me when I was patient there in the 70s and later in the 90s. Shisong Hospital was the first in the Diocese, and the original Mission of the Franciscan Sisters from Brixen. Over the years it has developed into one of the best hospitals in Cameroon, with its own school of nursing. The Order's novitiate is there also.

A number of English medical students and others have worked or stayed there for a while – including Christine Haffner (Father Paul Haffner's sister) and Vincent Harvey's brother. Dr John Hughes had visited there before on previous occasions, and was pleased to see them continuing to flourish.

21. ST. JOHN VIANNEY PRE-SEM. FORMATION CENTRE Mon 21st Jan 2008 Doc. 12

Led by their rector Father Anthony Yilaka and spiritual director Fr Antoninus Tantan, we met the 35 pre seminary students from 6 dioceses, following the one year programme of formation and discernment. Jude Thaddeus Wanki, a senior student, gave a written address (see doc 13).

This centre was founded in 1993, and is principally for the Ecclesiastical Province (the 4 dioceses of Bamenda and Kumbo [NW], Buea and Mamfe [SW]), though at present there are seven from the Central African Republic.

Their main material needs are for a chapel (presently they conduct their liturgies in one of the classrooms). Also, the students feel the lack of an up-to date computer and on-line facilities.

22. ST. PATRICK'S MISSION STATION NJINTEH-BAFUT Mon 21st Jan 2008 Docs. 13, 14

We were welcomed at the School by the Parish Priest of Bafut, Fr Cosmas Ndom, a large group of local Christians, led by their Chairman Mr Ndikum Barnabas Chi (see doc. 13), and the teachers and pupils of the Primary school, who entertained us with excellent songs and dances.

There is a good church, and a new priest's house built by the contributions of the local people. Njinteh (cmnjinteh@yahoo.com) was made a eucharistic centre in 1995. This is a predominantly non-Catholic area, just one part of the huge Bafut parish.

They have some real needs: Most of all they need a priest. If Njinteh were to become a Parish it would include 14 of the 40 missions stations in the Bafut Parish. *Their Church has no ceiling as yet and lacks other basic equipment; the school needs four extra classrooms and a staff office. More urgently they need support for the Samaritan scheme to help many poor families to pay school fees.*

There was a good community spirit here, and real felt need to support the Church in difficult circumstances.

23. ST. THERESA'S MEDICAL CENTRE MAMBU-BAFUT Mon 21st Jan 2008 Doc. 15

This is a well established, busy Centre, founded in 1961 and well run by the Franciscan sisters. There are usually two resident doctors. Their services include major consultations, maternity, surgery, care of the disabled, and a girls vocational school (see brochure Doc. 14). Over the years they have accumulated a number of benefactors, among which they include our own Clinicare UK,

24. ST. JOSEPH'S CHILDREN & ADULT HOME (SAJOCAH) MAMBU-BAFUT Mon 21st Jan 2008 Doc. 16

St. Joseph's is under the direction of Sr. Cecilia. Adjacent to St. Theresa's Centre and under the care of the same sisters, SAJOCAH rehabilitates children & adults with physical disabilities & provides temporary home and education to visually impaired children. It works in collaboration with St. Theresa's and refers patients to Njinikom Hospital for operations. It offers all kinds of physiotherapy, boasts an orthopaedic workshop, makes its own false limbs and crutches, and has a working farm. (See brochure Doc No. 16.)

This is an exceptional resource and is well established.

25. MARYVALE CATECHETICAL INSTITUTE BAFUT Mon 21st Jan 2008 Docs. 17 - 21A

This Institute is named after and linked academically with Maryvale Birmingham, where Fr Bibi the Director was himself trained in catechetics. Catechists play a crucial role in Bamenda, where most parishes have a good number of Mission Stations. Every Church has at least one catechist, often several. Some are full-time trained leaders who are paid (though a very modest sum).

A representative number of catechists who have taken part in the course assembled to welcome us and present us with Thank You letters / cards (see docs 19 and 20). An informative speech was presented by Elizabeth Nomasse, assistant to the Director (see Doc. No.17).

The programme consists of a two year distance-learning course approved by Rome in 1989. At present there are 33 students enrolled in first year and 21 in second year, an increase on the previous year (see doc. No. 18).

Portsmouth has supported this institute not only by funding Fr. Bibi's training, but by helping with books, equipment and fees. Recently we had allocated £1,000 to the purchase of the Echoes Packs*.

The Centre has no exclusive premises, and uses the Parish Hall at Bafut as classroom and refectory. They have one dormitory for all students and have to rent out near-by accommodation for Elizabeth Nomasse. They appeal to us to continue to support their Echoes programme, and if possible with other improvements to their plant. A formal plan for a Chapel was presented to the Delegation (see Doc. 21). *However, the Archbishop at our final meeting with his committee, indicted proposals to move the Centre to the site of the Pastoral Formation Centre.*

** Note: Exchange rates and commission charges had reduced the amount credited to Maryvale Bafut to approx. 850,000 francs. This would be further reduced if UK bills were to be paid from Cameroon. Consequently, it was agreed that the current credit would be frozen, to await allocation to another project, and that I would pay invoices from CTS in UK, for amounts of approx £1,000 which had been previously allocated. Similar procedures would be followed for any future allocation of funds for Echoes Packs. (See Doc 21A)*

26. NJINDOM COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE Mon 21st Jan 2008 Docs. 22 and 23

A large section of the local community, including Christians of other denomination, Muslims and traditional religionists, gathered to welcome us to this comparatively rural and poorer area, which is in the Mbengwi admin. District. Father Chrysanthus Tim (P.P.) was at first absent in hospital, due to a sudden attack of malaria, but though in fever he did join us later and invited to his simple house for refreshments.

Njindom health centre is a community project adopted by the Archdiocese. A speech was read to us by its Chairperson Mr Lucas Mujang. He thanked us for supporting the building of the centre, which now has a staff of seven, and is busy serving approx. 7,000 people in nine villages and a number of schools (see Doc No.22). The centre had made encouraging progress in what is a poor area.

They presented written details of a project (in eight sections) to extend and improve the centre building. Each of the section costs between one and two thousand pounds, totalling about £12,000 (see Doc. No. 23),

27. JOHN PAUL II SECONDARY SCHOOL WUM Tue 22nd Jan 2008 Doc. 25

This is a new Catholic boarding College, with only its first year of pupils. We were welcomed by the pupils and staff, under their principal, Father Ben Nsom, who had studied in Southampton. We joined them for Mass. At present they do not any premises of their own, They have repaired are temporarily using old council buildings. The children's sleeping accommodation is extremely cramped with many sleeping on simple bunks in one room. They have no chapel and use a classroom. Due to lack of accommodation, intake for the first year had to be restricted to about 50. It is estimated that the yearly intake could easily be double this. Despite this it was evident that there was a good spirit of discipline and cooperation. The students look after their own school cleanliness and hygiene, and work a small farm to help with the diet.

Fr Ben is working hard to build a proper school. A nearby 55 acre plot has been allocated to them, and he has used some funds donated by other established diocesan colleges to have thousands of cement block made, and to order timber. The overall cost could be £30,000+.

28. St. MARTIN DE PORRES HELATH CENTRE WUM Tue 22nd Jan 2008 Doc. 27

Sr. Pamela, the matron, with Sr. Paschal, the resident doctor and 16 staff members welcomed us to this working Centre which have helped in the past. It has 63 beds.

They appeal for funding for the following: the completion of a security fence; an operating theatre for major surgery (!), a laundry machine, an ultra-sound machine, a sonic aid etc. (see Doc. No. 27).

29. St. MARTIN DE PORRES PARISH WUM Tue 22nd Jan 2008 Doc. 27

Fr. Victor Forgho, Parish Priest, and members of his Parish Council welcomed us for lunch. Frs Muscat, O'Kelly have worked here in the past. Even with the recent detachment of Benakuma and Esu parishes, it still counts 14 Mission stations, and many other inaccessible areas. The total population is about 70,000 of which 70% are children or youths.

30. WUM NORTH SCHOOL. Tue 22nd Jan 2008 Doc. 28

1,230 children are enrolled in Wum Parish's six primary schools (See Doc. No. 27). Many children in this poor area do not go to school due to poverty, and the schools themselves are in a poor state.

In particular St. Thomas' School in Wum North desperately needs two classrooms, the cost of which is calculated approx. £5,000 (see Doc. 28)

31. BABA 1 HEALTH CENTRE.

Wed 23rd Jan 2008 *no documentation*

Fr Franz Mulemans MHM, currently residing in this mission station of Ndop Parish, met us, along with the Matron Sr. Rebecca and Sr. Emerentia, Cameroonian sisters of LSU. Fr. Joe Mbindzenyuy, PP was also present to welcome.

There were no representatives of the local community on hand to show support and no formal welcome. We understand that the local people often take for granted the sisters' work, and at times tamper with their water supply, without wishing to pay for its extension into their village quarters. When Rebecca took over the centre it was not paying its way day to day. Now it has been put on a viable footing.

We saw first the old stone dispensary building, still partly used as a laboratory. The big new Centre building, though smartly finished on the outside, appeared badly designed (by a previous sister matron) and gloomy. It was by no means fully occupied, and it would appear that Fulani tribes people use the facilities more than the local people.

Some of the lack of community cooperation may be due to the insensitive building nearby of a magnificent postulancy building, housing nine postulants and their formator.

Sr. Rebecca reported difficulty with obtaining drug supplies from the Archdiocesan dispensary, and sometimes buys from the market. This difficulty was not raised as a problem elsewhere. John received a list of drugs particularly difficult to obtain – there have been passed to Clinicare.

32. SS. PETER AND PAUL MISSION NDOP

Wed 23rd Jan 2008 **Docs. 29 and 30**

We received a warm welcome from Fr Mbizenyuy PP. Fr Dominique Mbarta curate, and the Parish Pastoral Council, a number of whom were known to me from the seventies. There was a formal speech from the chairman Raphael Afungchwi Ndofofor (see Doc. 29).

The new large Parish Church is still unfinished. Timber has already been ordered, and the Committee are anxious to roof the Church to avoid deterioration of existing concrete walls.

We were thanked for the last donation of over £3,000, towards the roofing (est. cost £20,000). Timber has already been ordered, and the Committee are anxious to roof the Church to avoid deterioration of existing concrete walls. The total cost of other works will be about £45,000, of which over £7,000 are in hand, with a major fund-raising campaign in the offing.

Fr Dominique made a special request for funds to buy a new Monstrance for the Blessed Sacrament, and a computer for this pastoral use. Costs are not known (see doc. 30).

33. SS. PETER AND PAUL MISSION HEALTH CENTRE

Wed 23rd Jan 2008

The sister's compound in Ndop is filled with buildings: a) the convent, b) the little used buildings of the original mother-care and subsequently secondary school (now transferred to magnificent new buildings outside Ndop Town), c) the new partly completed Health Centre.

Sr Cecilia LSU is in charge of this Centre, which appears busy and well organised.

Again there were a number of necessary drugs which are difficult to obtain – Clinicare have been informed.

34. SS. PATRICK'S HEALTH CENTRE BABANKI-TUNGO

Wed 23rd Jan 2008 **Docs. 31 & 32**

We received a warm welcome from Fr John Berinyuy (P.P.), his curate Fr. Derek Che Choh, the PPC, the schoolchildren, members of the CWA and other Christian leaders. This Parish includes Bamessing.

A formal speech was presented by the Chair of the PPC Mr Chenyi Joseph (see Doc 31). In the past we helped build the Bamessing Church, and more recently St. Boniface's Shirley and our central Fund have contributed to the still unfinished new Centre Buildings. The Centre is being supported not only by Catholics but by the whole community, who are collecting week by week. The Fon too has given his full support.

At the moment half the Centre is roofed and plastered, but equipment is still incomplete. The other half has walls only. Although there are no detailed costings of this, we were given a detailed breakdown of expenditure to date (see Doc. No. 32). The Plan is to complete the first half as quickly as possible and to put a roof on the second half, to avoid deterioration of existing construction.

34. BUKOW – BAMESSING HEALTH CENTRE

Wed 23rd Jan 2008

Within Babanki Tungo Parish, on the main provincial ring road, it is not far from St. Theresa's Mission Station Bamessing, where the Christians have built a priest's houses in the hope of being declared a separate parish.

This community-based health centre has the good support of the whole population, crowds of whom turned out to welcome us. Recently founded, and staffed by lay nurses employed by the Archdiocese, it currently serves about 90 patients a month.

It needs a lot of equipment, but most of all it suffers from the lack of mains electricity. There is no clear reason why it has not yet been connected. We should endeavour to help them make a success of this project.

35. ST. MARTIN DE PORRES HOSPITAL NJINIKOM Thurs 24th Jan 2008 Docs. 33 – 34A

Sr Xaveria, with her staff, and members of the local community warmly welcomed us. A formal address was given by Robert Mbang, a staff representative (see Doc. No. 33). It paid special tribute to the contributions of St. Colman's with St. Paul's Parish in Cosham, who have sponsored this hospital's projects for many years. Among the focuses of support have been: the purchasing of anti viral drugs for AIDS patients, help towards the building of the maternity theatre, the painting and completion of the laboratory floor, the roofing of the laundry, and support for Project Hope.

The delegation were impressed by the positive and well organised structure of the hospital, which is popular with both local people and strangers. While serving patients of every need, it specialises in orthopaedic operation. They also run a small orphanage under Sr. Ada.

Project Hope in particular (see Docs. 34 and 34A), led by Augustine, is exceptional in its degree of careful organising and systematic outreach to the population. Still nearly 17% of the local population is infected with AIDS, and more especially pregnant women and the under twenty age group. They have a team of 38 volunteers and reach out to 700 orphans and their carers. Working with the Parish's pastoral care of the you're the focus on preventive medicine and social care, including supporting children at school.

Worthy of special mention is their pharmaceutical production plant, under the direction of Mr Valance. Started with overseas help and expertise, they now are producing medicines (like Quinine Syrup, saline drips, etc) not only for themselves but for the wider market.

Main request is for continued help for the new maternity building – St Colman's are informed.)

Also some contribution to help give some remuneration to the Project Hope team activists was requested.

36. ST. MARTIN DE PORRES PARISH HALL Thurs 24th Jan 2008

Father John Bintum the Parish Priest welcomed us for lunch.

His main request, echoing a point made in the Hospital speech (See Doc. 31) was for the extension and equipping of his Parish Hall, better to cater for the youths of the area. They judge that a modern communications unit would be an organ of education and enlightenment in the fight against AIDS, and be a focal point for Christian formation.

37. ST. MARY'S KEZON - BAMBUI Thurs 24th Jan 2008

Fr Oliver Gam, from Bambui, with a good number of his Christians who had walked for some distance, welcomed us to this mission station Church, which we have helped to construct. Now that the roof is secure the Church is secure and in use.

However there is a sore need of help towards benches and other essential equipment. They also hope to build a priest's house. There is no detailed costings, but any help will be used as it comes in.

38. WOSING - BALI Fri 25th Jan 2008 Doc. No. 35

We met Fr Joe Akem, PP of Bali (Balinyonga), at this small mission station of less than a hundred people. We saw his half-finished Church, with no roof.

A small group of parishioners welcomed us and Mr Sam Ephraim Foncham, acting Committee Chairman, gave a speech (see Doc. No. 35).

They are asking for 3.5 million francs (approx £4,000) for the roof, and approx. another £5,000 to complete the project.

39. SS. PETER & PAUL SCHOOL BAWOK Fri 25th Jan 2008 Docs. No. 36-37

This is part of another mission station of Bali Parish. We met a numerous representation of the local population including traditional elders, including the Presbyterian Pastor.

A speech was presented by Samuel Cungai, chair of the School P.T.A (See doc. No. 36). This area had recently been the scene of inter tribal conflict. We saw lines of burnt out traditional houses. We saw a sound school, built originally in 1954 but rebuilt in 1999. They remember Fr Michael O'Kelly's contribution here too (see also the speech made at Bali central - Doc No. 39).

The J & P Commission of the Diocese has produced a good report on the tribal conflicts here and elsewhere in the Archdiocese (see doc 37).

No specific request was made except to repair the old stone building and make nursery provision (very rare in the NW).

39. ST. SEBASTIAN'S PARISH BATIBO Fri 25th Jan 2008 Doc. No. 38

We were welcomed by Father Cletus Amah Ashu P.P. and the members of the Parish P.C.C. led by their Chair, Madame Mowoh Beatrice Enjei, who gave an address (See Doc No. 38).

She thanked us for the sum of £20,000 (?) already donated toward the huge unfinished new Parish Church, begun in the time when Fr O'Kelly was P.P. there. It had suffered a collapse of the roof, but this had all now been restored, and it was already used on special occasions, since no other building was large enough.

The Church needs a ceiling, windows flooring and benches, not to mention other fittings. Written Costings were attached to the speech, but the figures are open to debate. What is certain is that when it is completed the Church will be one that will comfortably hold 2000 people.

There was a supplementary letter (see Doc. No 38) from Tembeng David Tela, chair of the Church Committee of **Enyoh Mission Station** within Batibo Parish

He, requests a large Church Bell, to call Christians in the eleven villages of the Nyang area. No costing is given. If we wished to support this project, it would be for the Archdiocese to arrange and tell us the expense.

40. ST. FRANCIS XAVIER'S PARISH BALI (Balinyonga) Fri 25th Jan 2008 Doc. No. 39 -41

Father Joe Akem the P.P. (whose ordination I had attended 30 years previously) was joined by members of his P.P.C. whose chairman, Feh Gregory Adolf presented us with an address (See Doc.No. 39). He also presented us with copies of a History of the Parish and of the speech given on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Parish held in November of last year (see Docs. 40 – 41)..

It highlighted the following requests for assistance:

*The renovation of the **Parish Presbytery**, now antiquated and too small for two priests;*

*The completion of **Wosing Church** (See No.38 above)*

*Improvements and equipment to help the Franciscan sisters who run the **Bali Health Centre***

*Renovation of the **Bali Parish Primary school** constructed in 1953.*

No Costings were given apart from the Wosing Church.

41. MILL HILL FORMATION HOUSE DR FONCHA STREET NKWEN Fri 25th Jan 2008

We were given lunch by the Mill Hill Fathers. Fr.Maurice McGill, previously Father General of the Society, now Regional Society Superior welcomed us.

This is large house, which would be suitable to receive guests staying in Bamenda. His e-mail address is: mcgillmhm@yahoo.com The number of European Mill Hill Fathers in the Region is now in single figures. However a number of Cameroonians are being trained for the priesthood. Last Year Fr Damien Fuh MHM, a Bafut native of Mubang-Nkwen, whom I had baptised, was ordained priest, and is now working in the Sudan.

42. ST. PAUL'S COLLEGE MILE 3 - NKWEN Fri 25th Jan 2008 Doc No. 42

We arrived on the College's Feast Day (The Conversion of St. Paul), and the students had been competing in sports. We were met by Father Bonaventure Ndong, the Principal, who has spent some time in our Diocese. We were shown to an open walk-way above a large assembly area. There the entire student body assembled. After prayers there was an address which affirmed the School's recently inaugurated link with All Hallows School in Farnham, and acknowledging the more than £1,000 for the purchase of equipment to begin an electronic link between the two schools. There followed some

excellent traditional dancing, (including the firing of guns !). We were shown round the various teaching blocks. Although St. Paul's had started out as a day school, public demand has meant that an increasing number are boarders. Accommodation is very cramped, but efforts are afoot to increase dormitory accommodation. In particular, we visited the IT room and met its coordinator Mr Richard.

They hope to increase links with All Hallows. Mr Sean Tucker head of RE at All Hallows, hopes to visit the school in May, under the auspices of the British Council. Also Mr Giddeon, a native of Bambui, is one of the R.E. teachers at All Hallows.

ARCHDIOCESAN COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER On another occasion we met the chaplain to St. Paul's School, Fr Humphrey Tatah, who is also the Communications Officer for the Archdiocese. He has links with 'L'Effort Cameronais' the Catholic Newspaper and Website (Anglophone as well as Francophone) centred on the Douala Archdiocese under Cardinal Christian Tumi.

Fr Humphrey accepted my gift of a digital camera, and undertook to use it to gather visual information which he would send back to the UK.

43. EVALUATION MEETING WITH THE ARCHBISHOP AND MEMBERS OF HIS BAMENDA-PORTSMOUTH COMMITTEE. Friday 25th January

Mutual appreciation of the visit was expressed by all. We hoped the Archbishop would himself come to visit us in Portsmouth in not too distant future.

Some points that came out of the meeting,

There was a realization that the Portsmouth-Bamenda Link had evolved over the years. At first it had been focussed on our priests working in Bamenda, and the Fund had been there to support them and their work. Now, although those past links (with some Parishes and Religious Institutions) remain, the Bamenda Link and its Committee is more an organ of mutual cooperation between two dioceses, in a spirit of equal partnership.

While the Committee's allocation of funds has to respect the will of the donors in the Parishes and schools of our Diocese, it would strive to function at the service of the Archdiocese as a whole, and work always in collaboration with its policies and structures. We would endeavour to keep the Archdiocese abreast of our decisions, and channel all monies to Bamenda through the finance Office of the Archdiocese.

The Archbishop hoped that there could grow a custom of exchanging priests between the two dioceses, for their mutual benefit. While this was seen as a good idea, care should be taken that the exact length, purpose and nature of such exchange take into account the individual priests in question.

The Delegation hoped that communication, through our website and e-mails would be so improved that we could keep well up-to-date on the progress of projects with which we were involved.

THE RETURN

After early Mass, we travelled down to the S.W. Province to Bishop's House Buea, where we left messages on behalf of Fr Joseph Awoh, presently working in Tilehurst Reading. After lunch, there was a short visit to the old coastal Mission at Bota, Limbe (formerly Victoria). We then continued on to Douala, where we had supper with the Shisong Sisters, before going to Douala Airport.

We checked in at 8 pm for the 11.35 pm flight to Paris. It finally took off at approx. 2.15 am. We were put on the 10.30 flight to London, which arrived at approx 10.30 am English time.