



NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity No. 1102057 Issue no. 18 : August 2020

From the Chairman

James Mark

Dear supporters,

It seems like a lifetime ago that we presented our last newsletter to you, and although it was only in February, how the world has changed since then. At that time, we had no real concept of how serious COVID-19 was to become and what the impact across the world would be.

Unquestionably, the virus has taken a heavy toll on our lives, our communities and our economies and still we remain with so much uncertainty about what the future holds for us at a micro individual level, as well as at a macro global level.

During lockdown, many of us took some solace from warming stories of Mother Nature reasserting herself and the dramatic reduction of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions resulting in cleaner air. There is, unfortunately, little evidence to show that this will be maintained as time goes on unless we are prepared to make fundamental changes in our approach to life.

Humans make up just 0.01% of the Earth's biomass, and as a species, we are entirely reliant on the natural world for survival. If our planet does not thrive, neither can we. We need to embrace reciprocity in our relationship with the planet and understand our relative place within it – not one of dominance, but one of mutual care, respect and responsibility. We need to have a Reverence for Life.

It strikes me that given the last 6 months, and particularly for the +50% of the world's population that live in cities, if ever there was a time for this message to resonate, it is now. And maybe this can lead to a glimmer of excitement that lasting change can happen, through the understanding of our need as humans to be connected with nature because we are part of it.

Of course, COVID-19 has also impacted our friends in Tanzania, creating an ever more challenging environment for many people, particularly those living in poverty and VALITA have been doing what they can, in difficult circumstances, to continue to provide aid, shelter and care to those they support.

On a personal note, it is with great sadness that we also report the passing of the Chairman of VALITA, Mr Elias Kibela on 22nd March 2020, at the age of 56. Elias was returning from a meeting at the Mbopo school, where he had been assisting in the final stages of the water project, when he was tragically hit by a car. He was a wonderful and kind man who went to great lengths to help others. He will be sorely missed by his family, friends and the many people whose lives he had positively affected.

Finally, I am really delighted to say that the water project was completed in April at the Mbopo Primary School and water now runs freely for over a thousand school children and teachers. Our thanks to everyone who donated so generously towards that project and also towards my marathon effort in April (see story later on). A glutton for punishment, I'm having another crack at it on the 4th October in the 'Virtual London Marathon', and donations will still be possible and gratefully received through the Virgin Money Giving page. We are continuously bowled over by the generosity of our supporters and we thank you most sincerely. We send love and best wishes and hope that you and your families remain safe and healthy through this torrid period.

Tanzania, like the rest of the world, has been adversely affected by Covid-19. However, VALITA and all the people at ByB (Bustani ya Binadamu : The Garden of Humanity) have tried to carry on as best they can. So far there have been no cases of Covid-19 at ByB; they have been following all the government guidelines with extra cleaning, wearing face masks, washing their hands and using sanitizer, and by limiting unnecessary travel. This has had a knock-on effect meaning that the house and garden are effectively in lockdown and can no longer be the centre for the community that it had become. They hope to start their community activities again as soon as it is safe to do so. Just as small businesses have been particularly badly affected, the VALITA Co-operative Group has been unable to meet and they have found it difficult to trade. This has meant that they have been unable to repay the loans they have taken on and, in May, VALITA decided to temporarily halt the repayment of loans until the businesses can trade safely again.



Maize ripening up nicely

Agriculture and farming are still continuing at ByB as can be seen from the accompanying recent photos. They are successfully growing mangoes, lemons, cassava, sugar beet, bananas and sweet potatoes. In June they were able to harvest some sweet potatoes and cassava, which they are using to cook breakfast for the residents of Kaya.



A variety of vegetables including cassava, sugar beet and sweet potatoes growing successfully at ByB

Kaya, meaning 'home' is located at ByB and was established in the spirit of Albert Schweitzer to provide a home for families where they can care for each other and work towards self-sufficiency through small-scale farming and agriculture.

ByB are giving serious consideration to the following projects this year for which fundraising will be needed:

- Fencing around ByB, to protect the area from squatters and intruders
- Terracing below Kaya to protect the crops from flooding and to collect/store more water in the rainy season
- Chicken rearing for eggs and meat
- Bee keeping
- Construction of a fish pond for the rearing of fish as food for Kaya and for sale at market

Despite the recent challenges, the residents of Kaya are thriving and living well amongst the local community. The local government is planning to start a local football league and have asked Kaya to help organise a team and help them raise money for football kit and goal posts.

At the beginning of the year RfLUK set up a subcommittee called the Tanzanian Action Group. They have been tasked to look at the needs, benefits and requirements of VALITA for ByB and the outreach programmes. They will also help to deliver the next projects in the most sustainable way whilst respecting the needs of VALITA and the principles of Reverence for Life.

How the Rediscovery of the Permaculture Movement may help realise Dominic's ByB Dream

Percy Mark

If you google 'Permaculture' you very quickly find this paragraph:

Permaculture has three guiding ethics: People Care, Fair Share and Earth Care — or at least this is how they've become popularised. The original ethics, outlined by Bill Mollison, went along the lines of; Care of the Earth, Care of People, and Setting Limits to Population and Consumption.



Vreni and I met Bill Mollison in South Africa in the 1990s. We were there to give talks on Harmonics in Architecture and he was there to talk about his 'new way' of growing fruit and vegetables for his eco-village in Australia. He called it 'Permaculture'. When we heard him speak, it seemed to us that what he had developed into a 'new philosophy' was what we had learnt from our parents as normal (pre-chemical) gardening. But they were doing it out of necessity. He was doing it by choice in the face of alternatives which were being promoted as easier, more efficient, cheaper and better. However he had recognised that in the long run the opposite would be true.

When Emilie, our granddaughter and first junior member of RfLUK, - without knowing any of the above - came across a film about Permaculture projects in the USA a few weeks ago, she sent it to me as a 'must see' item. And this was the 'rediscovery' I refer to above, because I recognised the opportunity this whole subject could now hold for our work in Tanzania. I sent the film on to our whole committee and it was enthusiastically received all round.



When we then discovered that Permaculture courses were being offered all over East Africa and that there even was a 'Practical Permaculture Institute' in Zanzibar - not far from Dar es Salaam - it was clear that the potential for a significant step forward towards the realisation of the dream, the vision, which the Garden of Humanity represented, was very real. A helping hand towards making the ethic of Reverence for Life a reality in the practical daily lives of the occupants of Kaya is on offer.

VALITA are now checking out this Institute in Zanzibar. If it turns out to be promising, and Covid-19 permitting, we will sponsor two of VALITA's people to take one or two of their courses as the next step.

The photographs show two examples of permaculture in Tanzania

Bringing Water to Mbopo School

Kathrin and Paul Cockhill

The RfL team arrived in Dar es Salaam on the 22nd September 2019 and as always, we had a full reception group waiting for us. The city has a new airport terminal and we immediately noticed that there had been considerable road building since our last visit.



Meeting the School Governors and Parent Teachers Committee



The RfLUK team meet with the VALITA team and Mr Khalil Ibrahim of CWD Water Drilling



Drilling equipment arrives on site and the contractors begin to sink the borehole for the pipes

Following an initial visit to Kaya, the VALITA team took us to Mbopo to meet the School Governors and the Parents and Teachers Committee. We were all introduced by Mr Manyama, manager of ByB, as he had been dealing with the initial enquiries and submissions to the local councils relating to the proposed project. We were officially welcomed by the School's Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher who explained the background to the current school situation and why the number of children at the school had increased so dramatically since our last visit. At the end of 2015 the Tanzanian government had decreed that all children could attend their local school at no cost to their parents. Unfortunately, no additional funds were given to schools for new classrooms or equipment, hence the resulting overcrowding. This became very obvious when we were then taken on a tour of the school and grounds to meet the children and to gain a full understanding of what the current situation regarding facilities was like.



The RfL team with VALITA, the School Governors, members of the Mbopo School PTA and student representatives

It became clear that although water tanks had been placed within the grounds at one time, no borehole had been located or drilled and no pipes laid. The lack of water made the toilet and hygiene situation desperate and we became more and more determined to resolve this situation for the 1200 children and their teachers.

Following a rigorous agenda and with a detailed list of criteria, we worked for many hours over the next three days with the Mbopo Governors and school management team to investigate and understand the needs on the ground before interviewing two local contractors who then placed bids for the required works.

It was agreed that if the school took responsibility for this water project, RfLUK would fund-raise for it, whilst the decision-making process, leading to the appointment of a contractor, would be run by the School. Consequently, the RfLUK team were present in an advisory capacity during all the meetings, and we were delighted that following a competitive bid from Mr Khalil Ibrahim of CWD Water Drilling, the Governors appointed him as their contractor.

Having completed a successful water survey, the funds were duly raised and forwarded to the VALITA team so that equipment orders could be placed and the project could begin as soon as possible. In October 2019 the first drilling began onsite.

After several months of work the project was completed in March 2020 and the School now has running water supplying the main tanks, the teachers' accommodation tank and the toilets. The school has just reopened following closure for the Corona Virus pandemic, and we look forward to seeing the children return to their education and benefit from the new facilities.



Frank Ngulwa of VALITA and some of the Mbopo School children filling the water troughs

How to run a marathon – even when it's cancelled

James Mark

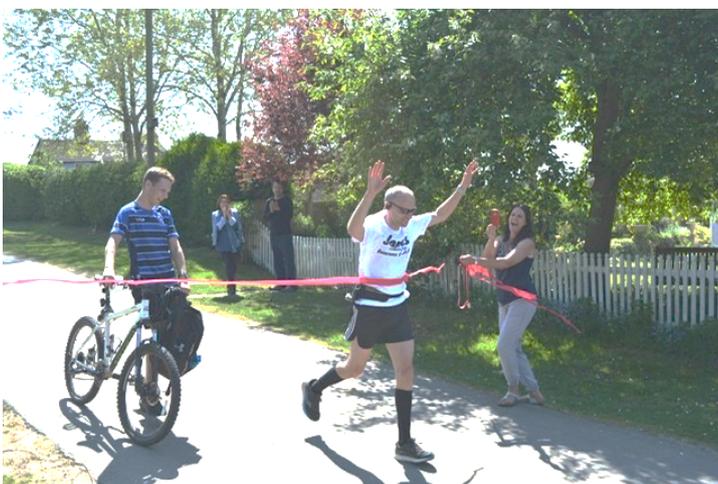


The story of my marathon journey goes back to 2018 when we managed to secure 2 places in the 2019 London Marathon for our then Treasurer Paul Cockhill and myself. We were so elated to have that amazing opportunity and training for me started in earnest in the autumn of 2018. Things were progressing really well and then just before Christmas, disaster struck as I damaged my Achilles tendon. Despite physio sessions and rest, it became clear that my marathon was not to be. I was able to defer my place to 2020, whilst Paul cracked on and successfully completed the 2019 race, raising **£2,500** for the charity.



Determined to have an injury-free lead up to the 2020 marathon, I took my training more cautiously and all was going well until disaster struck again, this time in the form of Covid-19 and the London Marathon was postponed to October.

Given the training I had already put in, the generous donations I had received and also being somewhat cynical as to whether the postponed race would in fact take place at all, I decided to run my own, socially distancing marathon around the countryside where I live, on the original London Marathon date of Sunday 26th April.



It turned out to be an absolutely amazing day, with many local friends and family coming out to support me at various points along the route. My family were an incredible support team, with my wife Felicity, promoting the run locally and sharing my route and location so people could cheer me on, my daughter Elicia, providing hydration and nutrition stops to keep me going (it was a very hot day), and my son Ben, kept me company by cycling alongside me the whole way and really pulled me out of some dark moments! I am so grateful to everyone who supported me and donated so generously.

With gift aid, we raised **£4,691** which is just tremendous! Thank you all so much.

An update on Annamaria and her Batik Course



Some of Annamaria's work

In our previous Newsletter we told you about Annamaria Mbasha, who had been working with VALITA as a volunteer – the latest news is that the course started very well and Annamaria was really enjoying the experience. She had sent us these initial photos and was looking forward to moving on to the next stages of her training when Covid-19 came to Tanzania and all the colleges were closed. Prior to this time, Annamaria had been able to stay with a friend of hers whilst she was training and her board and lodgings were covered by the funds we had raised.

Unfortunately, this situation has changed post Covid and she has had to move into the college lodgings so that she can complete her training. RfLUK has sent her the additional funds needed as she would otherwise have had to leave the course - we look forward to receiving further photos of her achievements in the coming weeks.

If you would like to help us in supporting Annamaria and others like her who are trying to make the best of a very challenging situation, please donate either as a one-off payment or by setting up a regular monthly donation.

You will find the links that you need on our website and at the end of this Newsletter.

www.reverenceforlife.org.uk/donate

NESt Publications completes its first Trilogy under the title: “Towards Humanity’s Next Evolutionary Step”

A translation of major sections of Albert Schweitzer’s last philosophical work: ‘Volume III of his *Philosophy of Civilisation*’ has been completed and published in February 2020 as NESt Book Two under the title of: “*The World-View of Reverence for Life*”.

NESt Book One is called “*Lanya's Journey*”, published in 2019.

NESt Book Three bearing the title: “*My Path with Albert Schweitzer*”, was published in June of this year.

All three books by Percy Mark form an integral part of an educational programme called: “*The NESt Initiative*”, and are now available on Amazon both in digital and paper formats.

Website News

We are excited to announce that although we have been unable to maintain our usual level of activity, due to Covid-19, our marketing team have made the best of the intervening lock down weeks by taking up the option to move our Website to a new and significantly more flexible platform. This has enabled us to reduce our monthly costs in this area by half and has meant that we now have a site which is much easier to update with improved functionality to help us tell our stories and keep all of our supporters up to date more easily. We are constantly adding news and photos to the site. Please tell us if there is anything that you would like to see or learn about on our resources page but have not been able to find. Let us know what you think by subscribing at www.reverenceforlife.org.uk/subscribe



This is a happy second instalment...or nearly so - as you will see.

In August last year we related the story of our little flycatcher family. This year from the end of May onwards we gazed daily across to the ugly-looking electricity cables outside our cottage, hoping to see a new amorous pair sitting there. Our hopes were dwindling, when two volunteers from the British Trust for Ornithology came to our garden, as they had done in the previous year. With their small mirror they looked into the basket, hidden in the profusely growing clematis, and to our great delight reported that there were four warm eggs in the nest. We were over the moon! From then on we again felt very involved in the flycatchers' world and every spare minute our eyes were riveted on the little parents' busy feeding activity, though we kept our distance as we did not want to approach the nest unnecessarily.

During the morning on which the volunteers returned to ring the birds we had seen both parents, but they saw only one, which, when caught, they told us was the male. They successfully ringed this little bird whilst we and a neighbour watched attentively, but the remaining three babies were not ringed this time. The father weighed a healthy 13.1 grams. There was concern as to whether feeding three hungry babies would be difficult for the father alone, but we saw him during the next days flying around catching insects and white butterflies dashing from the telephone wire into our flower border and back.

After a few days it was suddenly very quiet and we thought that the fledglings had probably left the basket. So Percy brought the stepladder to have a look. As he straightened up from ducking under the clematis, with his back to the nest, three little birds swished over his head - had he had any hair, they might have got entangled. As it was, they fledged successfully at that moment.

The birds were still around on the cables next day. After that we could only wish them a safe journey back to Africa, and hope that the same or another family of flycatchers return to our garden next year. (Though we were told that in all the time that ringing had taken place, no fledgling had ever been found to have returned to the nest of its birth). I could never have imagined in 1963, walking through the leper village in Lambarene buying that basket from a patient, that it would become so important a player in the attempt to help save these birds, whose numbers are in sharp decline - a true 'Reverence for Life Basket'.



And finally ...

We would like to thank all those of you who have donated by electronic transfer and by using Virgin Money Giving. Unfortunately, we cannot thank you personally but we are very grateful and hope this newsletter gives you a flavour of some of the projects we are supporting with your help.

May I remind you that if you wish to **make a regular or a one-off donation** to any of our causes, please use one of these methods:

- **Virgin Money Giving** - using this link:
https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/donation-web/charity?charityId=1017367&stop_mobi=yes
- or send a **cheque** made payable to Reverence for Life UK to Paul Neale, 10 Highfields, Saffron Waldon, Essex CB10 2AD or to Vreni Mark at Kenwood Cottage, Croydon, Royston, Herts SG8 0DR
- or **direct** to our bank account: Triodos Bank, a/c name: Reverence for Life(UK), a/c no. 04141201 sort code: 16-58-10

And a date for your diary: Reverence for Life Awareness Week: 12-20 September 2020.

Joy Sheppard

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