

The Leicester Bwana in Botswana 04 October 2003

I've won a goat!

I organised a raffle competition and bought a ticket from a field officer. Don't know what to do with it and am looking for a buyer. Any takers?

For my book, I conducted a questionnaire amongst the Field Officers which has given some alarming results. Over half of the people I am working with are HIV positive. All of them have been to over 20 funerals in the last 12 months. A significant number are females and mothers, but that doesn't mean that their children are HIV positive too. Another Field Officer's husband hanged himself last week. No-one is speculating on the reasons why, but you're probably thinking what I am...

In my last letter I explained that Sandra was moving to Francistown. I recruited her replacement but he let me down at the last minute. His father and sister died on the same day and he is now going to look after his father's cattlepost. In Sandra's area, there were three orphan girls (11, 13 and 15 years old) who were being looked after by their uncle. I first met them about 3 / 4 months ago and spent some time with them to encourage them to stop beating their uncle (they were doing a good job on him) and to go to school. They didn't listen and last month they were thrown out and left destitute. Necessity being the mother of all invention, they started to find people who could give them food and support. The upshot of this is that Sandra is going to look after the 13 year old (Oabile - pronounced "Owe - abilay") and bring her to Francistown next month. I have asked her to find a school, give me an idea of costs and will be contributing (from the money donated) to her school uniform, fees etc so that she can have a start in life.

Despite all of this, the big African smile never dwindles and life goes on. I have bought some chickens which will be used for eggs which can be eaten and / or sold. True to form, the initial reaction is negative, but with a bit of influencing, the Field Officers start to buy into it and are now loving it.

Last weekend was Independence Day (from the British) and I went to a game reserve to look at some animals. Managed to get close (but not intimate) with a giraffe. I am sure that they were keen for more, but I didn't want to stick my neck out. Went on a mokoro ride (wooden boat) into the Okovanga Delta and was treated to a wealth of wildlife. The elephants use this water for bathing, drinking and performing their ablutions. With the sun beating down, the polers were clearly tired and needed to drink. One does not expect, however to see people filling up their water bottles with cloudy water with great piles of elephant faeces floating down the river. No wonder most Africans have a problem with worms!!

I have been to a traditional healer (witch doctor). Anyone interested in some "vuku vuku" (an African form of viagra?). One lady who doesn't need it was in the pharmacy when I was buying a phone card. As I was paying she pushed me aside and clumsily placed a urine sample on the counter. A split second before it spilt, she simply said to the

shop assistant “Am I pregnant?” A split second after she spilt it I had her urine on my shoes. Its OK though as there was an obliging young man who couldn’t wait to clean them for me for about 50 pence (including tip). In another instance in the same pharmacy, I heard a guy complaining that “...the Preparation H cream did not work and he was putting it right inside...”

I only have a few weeks left here and have started the process of succession planning. Sadly I am struggling, but hope to be able to motivate people to continuing some of the projects I have put in place. I was asked if I would be coming back (to which I made no commitment as nothing has been totally confirmed yet). The young lady who asked me then went on to ask “...what happens if your parents forbid you from coming back?” She didn’t want to understand the difference in culture, and was quite happy in her own world.

Next week I am in Lion and Elephant country which is significantly more appealing than the following week when I will be sitting in the office counting registers. A very boring exercise, and one that I cannot avoid. The end of that week, however, is the date for a Troop Action in Nata which will be similar to a school fete. I tried to get the field officers to allow me to have custard pie throwing competitions but they didn’t get it. I didn’t introduce the idea of throwing water at each other in various games as water is so rare and is not to be wasted. The idea of having my goat in the field (divided into grids) and betting on which grid the goat did its business in also fell on deaf ears. “Why does it have to be a goat?” “It doesn’t, it could be a donkey if you want.” “Rreeek, a donkey will just stand there and not move. Come on, lets move on with the agenda. Time is against us...” I have, however, managed to get them to play the game where one turns round quickly with ones head on a stick, thereafter trying to run to an post about 20 metres away. I got my way after the field officers had wasted about 2 hours playing the game and discussing it in great detail.

That’s it for now. I’ll try to send another email before I leave, but if I don’t I will send one from Denmark. I’ve kind of given up with the Internet now as it has become too frustrating. At 40C, its too hot to get stressed. Its too hot to do a lot in fact, but the desire to reward myself from my efforts here keeps me going. Finally, Constable B. Somebody is called Benjamin.

S’dem dem

The Leicester Bwana