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“CHALK WOULD BE A MIRACLE”



The Mara is a beautiful setting for any celebration, this sounds like a line from a travel brochure. Pola and I were delighted when our son Jamie asked if he could join us on our February trip to celebrate his 30th birthday.

Our son William also joined us and it was wonderful to go as a family. We began Jamie's birthday with an early morning game drive followed by a bush breakfast overlooking the hippo pool and ended the day with a candlelit dinner by the Mara river.

Yes it was tough!



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We last went together four years ago and we felt proud to show our sons the new developments, the most significant being the medical centre and maternity clinic and the classrooms and kitchen at Enkereri School. The new kitchen is now in full use, as are the new latrines. The community are grateful and welcoming, again showering us with gifts.



At Mara Rianda Primary School we saw goats entering the dining room to Hoover up any leftovers. Jamie compared this to the days at his school where seagulls would descend into the playground to eat any leftover snacks.



At Enkereri School we were touched by the passion of the then head teacher, Jacqueline, which was reflected by the pupils in their very joyful welcome of continuous songs. Since the development of Enkereri School, it has now been recognised by the Kenya education department and they are paying for a new head teacher. We wondered how Jacqueline might feel about this. She is delighted to have the extra help, freeing more of her time to teach.

William had the opportunity to entertain the teachers and students with magic tricks. It was just fascinating seeing their faces and hearing the laughter as he made red sponge balls disappear. They have never seen such tricks before and thought it was real. And of course it was!



The medical centre and maternity unit continue to be well utilised. From January to July 2015 there have been over 11,000 visits to the medical centre. That is amazing. And in the maternity unit more than 60 babies have been born. Apparently a government incentive for mamas (which is how the mothers refer to themselves) to attend for antenatal check-ups is to offer free immunisation to their babies. Comic Relief have paid for starter packs for new babies, including clothes, blankets, mosquito nets and cream, these are also given to encourage mamas to attend the clinic.



The medics have requested an ultrasound and a Doppler scanner. This is something we need to look into as we have no knowledge of medical equipment.



As you know we have fallen in love with the Maasai community, so it is always sad for us to hear of their difficulties. Too frequently we hear of babies or children burnt in the open fires which are used to heat the home and for cooking. Mamas often leave young children unattended or with another young child. In February we heard of a young mother who went to get some water or fire wood and left her six month old baby alone. By the time she returned her home was on fire and her baby had sadly burnt to death. Often these mamas are barely adults.

It was a delight to see some of our children, who graduated from secondary school in December, assisting at Mara Rianda Kennedy's School. Two were also to be sent to Enkereri. The graduates really enjoy this community work, which is good for their self-esteem. They are well utilised by the schools and the work they do is invaluable. However, they need to be presentable for the school environment and without a salary they struggle to get the basic essentials for personal hygiene and work clothes.



This is something we need to think about. With about 12 – 14 pupils seeking sponsorship each year it will be yet another financial commitment if we were to assist them. We do not have all the answers and would value any comments.

If you are a UK taxpayer a bursary can be funded by a monthly standing order of £30 for four years. With Gift Aid your donations will effectively be the full amount required to fund one child for four years of education. This provides tuition fees, boarding fees, transport to and from school each term and pocket money. If you are interested in assisting a child in this way please let me know and return the attached standing order and Gift Aid form.



Support is always welcome and greatly appreciated. There is always a need for new books, sports equipment and general school supplies as well as assistance with capital projects. Should you wish to give any support please make cheques payable to The Mara Rianda Charitable Trust.

As usual I do apologise if you feel this letter is an intrusion. Please let me know if you do not want to receive any further letters.

Should you ever wish to come and join us in the Mara to see first-hand the work we are involved in please let me know. September is normally the best time to join us as this is the time of spectacular migration of the wildebeest and zebras across the Mara River.

Finally, the following is a touching extract of a letter from Peter, one of our first graduate pupils who the charity supported from 2009-2012 at Sosio Secondary School -

"I am in a position now to say you produced my future and I am proud to go to the field as one of Mara Rianda Charitable Trust products, that truly motivates my tomorrow."

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard".

Richard Long
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And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6 v8 (NIV)