



**Marlborough Brandt Group**  
*Linking people for a fairer world*

**All of us working in MBG would like to wish you a Happy Christmas  
and Very Best Wishes for 2016**

### **New Director for MBG**

Reference was made in the last newsletter to the appointment of a new part time, paid Director for MBG. Following advertisement locally and nationally we are delighted to have received numerous applications for the post many of whom come with very strong cvs and a lot of experience in international development. All will be revealed soon after 17 December when interviewing takes place.



In the meantime, the work of MBG continues and since the last newsletter, Nick Maurice has been back to Gunjur this time with Trevor Kearley our new trustee and Andrew Mallinson, volunteer Marketing Director for MBG. It was an opportunity for Nick not to say "Goodbye!" but "Au Revoir! " to colleagues and friends in Gunjur in his capacity as Director of MBG. It certainly won't be his last visit!



Anita Bew was in Gunjur at the same time 30 years after her first visit and both Anita and Nick were given certificates of appreciation for their work and generous presents.

### **FGM is banned in The Gambia!**

Our arrival in Gunjur coincided with the very welcome announcement by President Yayha Jammeh that he was banning FGM. We would like to think that our quiet conversations with people both at local and national level and with Gambian friends in Bristol may have influenced this decision. At a long private conversation on the subject in August with the Alhagie Lamin Touray, Senior Imam in The Gambia, Chair of the Supreme Islamic Council and Imam to the President during which we discussed the medical consequences and human rights aspects of FGM he told us that the Holy Quaran clearly states that “Thou shalt not harm another human being”.



But the work of Dr Isatou Touray, Director of Gamcotrap, the leading NGO working in this field, who spoke on and graphically illustrated FGM and its consequences at our AGM in Marlborough Town Hall last July will have undoubtedly played a highly significant role. It was an opportunity for us to visit her and congratulate her on their work. She thanked MBG for the contribution that we had made.

### **“The Back Way”**

A major topic of conversation during our visit was the number of young men who are taking “the back way” to Europe, some dying in their attempts. We were told that in some communities in the East of The Gambia “there are no young people left!” In Gunjur it is clearly a major problem and the work we are doing in providing training opportunities for young students at the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) and the provision of loans to young entrepreneurs to create wealth and encourage employment, has got to be a part of the answer.



We have also discussed with our partners TARUD mounting a public education programme through local radio and other means, led by young people who have failed in their attempts to travel across the Sahara to dissuade young people from making this perilous journey with absolutely no guarantee of a prosperous future ahead.

## **Students at the GTTI**

We spent a morning with the 15 students that we are supporting through their studies at the Gambian Technical Training Institute and were delighted with the enthusiasm for their courses that they demonstrated. These range from computer studies, secretarial work, plumbing and electrical work, construction and architecture.



Entrepreneurial activity in Gunjur continues to be supported through loans, and is making a significant difference within the community. Not least with the arrival of electricity in Gunjur, and, we are delighted that the loans are being repaid on time and in some cases more is being repaid than scheduled.



## **Chinese Fishing on the beach at Gunjur**

As any visitors to Gunjur will know, there is a thriving local fishing industry at the beachside which employs many men and women who sell fish locally or smoke the fish to be transported to other parts of the country. We were very concerned to hear that the Chinese have moved into Gunjur and will be building a pier off the beach where 25 trawlers will be parked up and fishing to provide raw fish and fish products in the form of fertiliser to the people of China. It seems likely that there will be no fish off the coast of The Gambia within five years. We were told that this has already happened in Ghana, Ivory Coast and Liberia. This will have a huge impact on poverty and the nutritional status of women and children whose diet is largely dependent on fish.



**MBG has a vital role to play as advocates on behalf of the poor in a Gambian context** and to this end we have written to Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for International Development copying in Claire Perry MP and our Patron Lord Judd, onetime Director of Oxfam and Minister of Overseas Development, both of whom have visited Gunjur and will understand the context, expressing our concern, and in the hope that she might be able have influence on the Chinese.

### **Visit to Gunjur by The President of the Gambia**

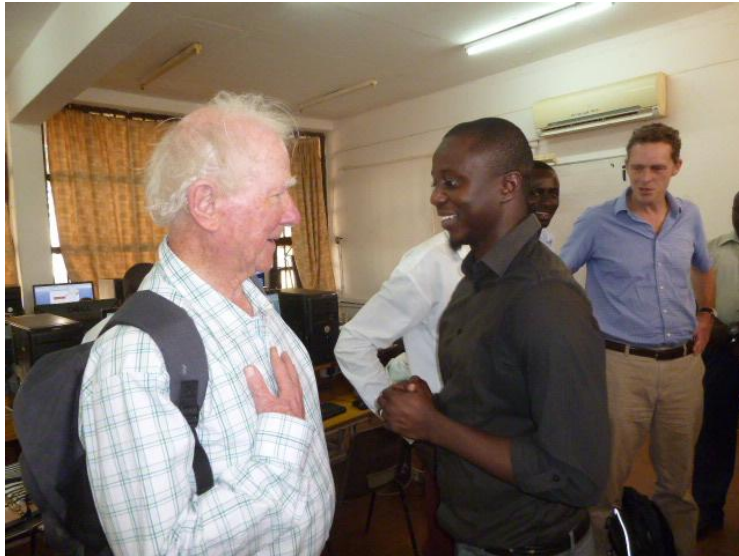


While, Nick, Trevor and Andrew were in The Gambia, President Yayha Jammeh visited Gunjur as part of his “meet the people” tour of the country. Nick was singled out to speak to the crowd of between 10-20,000 people with the President sitting at his left hand. Nick used the occasion to highlight the strength of the 33 year partnership between the people of Gunjur and Marlborough and the contribution that it had made to the lives of young people in both communities. He drew attention to the kindness, hospitality and generosity of the people of Gunjur. In his reply the President said that the Gunjur Marlborough Link was the best and most long lasting international partnership in The Gambia and expressed his gratitude to MBG for the contribution they had made to development in Gunjur and The Gambia.

Watch video footage of Nick and the president on our website [www.mbg.org/blog](http://www.mbg.org/blog).

## **Reflections after a first visit to Gambia as a new MBG Trustee - Trevor Kearley**

I had travelled to and stayed in a dozen or so countries in the Dark Continent, including West Africa, before - on business and as a tourist visiting relatives or friends. So my first visit to Gunjur as a new MBG Trustee was not entirely novel. The totally different visual environment, the searing sun, bustling dusty towns and shanty villages and the brightly dressed women were familiar. This, though, was my first in depth visit. I was to stay with an African family in their compound - albeit a fairly upmarket one.



I am ashamed to say that in the first 48 hours I found myself thinking “I’m not a celebrity but get me out of here”. No running water, flushing loo, electric light, drawers or hanging space. A thin patchwork foam mattress on a vast bed that collapsed under me at 1.15 am on the second night. The not so hot food. A cockerel outside my net window, his raucous and unpredictable squawk from 3.15 am onwards piercing the other sounds of an African night.

Read Trevor's account in full [on our website](#).

## **Impressions, Reflections and Revelations!**

### **Andrew Mallinson**

#### **Fears & Hopes**

How easy would it be to slip into the African way of life, where time has a different meaning, where levels of hygiene and comfort often fall short to our Western/European norms, where poverty is all too visible and sometimes uncomfortable to view, where illness and malnutrition are so evident, where issues which to the ‘Western eye’ are so solvable are yet so unsolvable in the African context...how could/would I adapt to all this?



### **Initial Impressions**

Introductions, lots of smiles, cries of 'Hello Dr Nick' from all corners, dust everywhere, grubby hands proffered, heat and glorious sunshine, sense of community, children playing in the street with no fear, life being lived 'day to day with little security for many, mutual respect for different faiths, cries of 'toubab, toubab' from the children, sense of ritual and the sound of Muslim prayers being echoed through the streets by dated megaphones, importance and respect for the 'elders'...

Read Andrew's account in full [on our website](#).

### **Fairtrade Marlborough Hot off the Press!**

MBG has been a member of the working group looking into Marlborough becoming a recognised Fairtrade Town. This fits with our aims to bring issues around poverty and development to as wide a constituency as possible.

Following a presentation to the Marlborough Town Council in September outlining the five criteria which have to be achieved in order to gain recognition, the ***Town Council at its meeting on Monday 14 December agreed the proposal that Marlborough should become a Fairtrade town.***





We are delighted that **Harriet Lamb** until recently the Director of Fairtrade International and now the Director of [International Alert](#) will be our **Annual Marlborough Brandt Lent Lecture on Thursday 10 March at 8.00pm in Marlborough Town Hall.**

### **Dates for diary**

- **MBG Christmas Party**, *Thursday 17 December, 7pm*, Nick and Kate Maurice's house, 42 London Road, SN8 2AA
- "Brilliant Young Pianists at St Peter' Church", **Chris Graves (cello) & Alison Rhind (piano)**, *Sunday 21 February, 7.30pm*
- **MBG Lent Lecture, Harriet Lamb**, *Thursday 10 March, 8pm*  
Marlborough Town Hall
- **MBG Quiz**, *Wednesday 27 April*, St John's Academy

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