

My Trip to England – Victor Ongola

Monday 14th April 2014, 8.20am – Arrive Manchester Airport

I arrived in England on the 14th of April at Manchester Airport where I was well received by Patrick and Judy Roper. It was the first time I had ever travelled outside East Africa leave alone Africa. Mrs. Roper was quick to offer me a coat which I quickly rejected as I thought I was warm enough only to be shocked by the cold which hit me the minute the automatic doors at Manchester airport to the roadside opened. It was then that it hit me that I was truly in England and miles away from sunny Mombasa. I spent the rest of the day exploring my new pleasant surroundings and even had a chance to go up the hills with Pat and Judy where they had taken their dog Max for a walk.



My first night in England went without incident apart from the 2 duvets and pair of socks I needed to keep me warm despite the central heating being on. Tuesday 15th could not have arrived any sooner and by 7.00pm I was able to get a glimpse of the people who have helped shape for the better the lives of many unfortunate families in Mtongwe. Everyone at the committee was very friendly and warm which made me even more relaxed. The meeting proved to be one of the highlights of my visit as I was able to see firsthand the level of commitment and hard work which the committee puts in-order to see the school progress, all of which they do without pay but pure want for a better tomorrow for all those disadvantaged children.



I spent the following days trying to get some work done for school with Mrs Roper but I was given a well-timed ride across the country side on Thursday 17th May where I taken around the countryside by the Ropers through the hills and had lunch at the Stanley Arms Pub. It was a wonderful experience as I was in admiration of the beautiful scenery that England has. Later that evening I had my first ever Teleconference of any sort with Sam Gardner in Lisbon where I was able to share information on further education for class 8 and BFSS outstanding grant supplied.

On Friday 18th April, we were invited for an evening meal with Pat and Judy at DGS Supporter's, Deb and Colin Townend where I was treated to a great meal and took my first steps in learning the card game of Bridge. I was shown around their small farm and was pleased to learn that people in the UK keep chickens and grow their own vegetables. I really enjoyed my time there and was also pleased with meeting their dog Doodle who is probably the smartest dog I have ever met...bar Max or maybe not.





Easter Sunday on the 20th April was a unique day for me as I was able to have lunch with the Ropers' family in the shape of Mark and Steph in Manchester. I was pleasantly surprised when I got there to be given a donation for Destiny Garden School which had been raised by Luke (Mark's Son) and his friends while at school. I was also able to eat my first ever Turkey which I had always wanted to eat but never had a chance to.

The following day which was Easter Monday, I was able to do something which I had only ever dreamed of before but never thought it would actually ever happen which was to visit Anfield stadium in Liverpool. I was in the good and knowledgeable company of Pat and Alan for the Hillsborough Charity Match between Liverpool England legends and International Liverpool legends. It was a very special and sacred moment in my life which I will never ever forget. I was in football heaven.



The very next day on the 22nd, I was given a very wonderful and factual tour by Val and Chris Aggersby of the city of Liverpool which made me fall in love with the city even without trying. I was first taken to Anfield



for an official stadium tour where I was able to go places which only few people get to experience like the changing rooms, conference room, players bench by the pitch side and the famous KOP end. After the stadium visit the tour of the Liverpool began. The city being a coastal town draws a lot of similarities with my own hometown of Mombasa in Kenya. Its history, Modern Museums, Scouse wit and Georgian buildings easily made it my spiritual home while I was in England. I almost wished the sun did not set that day.

Wednesday the 23rd of April gave me an insight how into a local Macclesfield organisation better known as Food for Macc. We were hosted at the excellent Macclesfield College with Pat and Judy where we were treated with meals from trainee chefs who gave demonstrations while they cooked. I also had my first taste of rhubarb which I had so many people mention in England before but never actually seen until that day.



On Friday 25th I had an early morning when I was picked up by Mr. Adrian for a wonderful train ride to Manchester for an early Rotary Club of Manchester breakfast meeting. I was able to give a talk about the school and the charity which the members seemed to take to heart. The rest of the day I spent it going around the city of Manchester where I was amazed by the trams and bus network within the city. Thanks to Adrian I had a tour of the Museums which I was able to learn a lot from.

Most people in Kenya that I know always dream of attending an English Premier League match no matter the teams involved. The 26th of April was exactly that type of day for me. Alan Slater and his Chris took me for an evening kick off match between Manchester United vs Norwich at Old Trafford. I was in sheer amazement of the beauty, size and number of people in the stadium. It was an awesome experience but nothing quite like Anfield. We later had a wonderful dinner with Alan and Stella at their house where we managed to have a good laugh to finish off the day.



The following Sunday on the 27th April Damien who is also a Liverpool fan invited Alison, Barry, Val, Brian, Pat and Judy for a Delicious buffet lunch where we had a glorious lunch before watching the match between Liverpool and Chelsea. This was also a good experience for me as i was also able to talk to DGS supporters in a lot more depth.



Having loved the City of Liverpool so much it was inevitable that I would go back again which I did on the Monday 28th of April. Judy was kind enough to allow me to go despite all the work that we still had to do for charity. Chris Aggerbsy spared her precious time once again to take me where I was able to visit the Historic Cathedral, Liverpool one, Crosby Beach, the Maritime Museum amongst other sites of interest. Like all good things, this day too had to end.

On Wednesday 30th to 2nd May Pat and Judy where invited to Guildford to stay with DGS supporters Mike & Audrey Galloway where we were warmly welcomed. On Thursday May 1st Judy and I took a train ride to London where we quickly embarked on a London tour where I was able to marvel at such historical sites like the Big Ben, Houses of parliament, Westminster Abby, St James Park, Buckingham Palace, walked down the Mall, Trafalgar Square, went up to Arsenal via the London underground and then had a tour of Emirates Stadium, Tower of London and Covent Garden. The day ended in spectacular fashion as we were later joined by Pat in London who then accompanied us to go watch 'The Lion King' at the Lyceum Theatre in Wellington Street which was awesomely done. This was a really proud moment for me as most of the cast were of South African descent.



We then had to say our goodbyes on Friday 2nd May to the Galloway's but went back via Windsor Castle where I was astonished at how wonderful it was and how tourists mingled around the entrance for a chance to get in. Later that evening I was able to have dinner at the Viceroy Indian restaurant where I met Sharm and Enam who had previously organised Bollywood events for the charity.



The weekend of 3rd & 4th May was also truly special moment for me as I took a train ride to Lancaster where I stayed with Kathy James for the weekend. I was able to meet her very good friends whom she had invited specially for a barbeque that Saturday. We did have a brilliant time at her home and later Lancaster town centre where I was able to make some new friends. The next day Kathy took me around Lancaster- the parks and hills which is a very picturesque place. Time flies when you having fun and by evening I was on the train ride back to Piccadilly, Manchester.

Monday 5th May – on this day I was able to meet the rather charming Sponsor Nick Burton and his daughter Madeline who had come specially to deliver a letter to me to give to her pen pal at DGS Mwanakombo. Nick who had previously spent 6 months in our neighbouring country as a volunteer expressed interest to meet the committee of DC and assist in any way possible in future.



Tuesday 6th May was the beginning of many eye opening school trips for me. I was lucky enough to be invited into Vikki's daughter's school where I was able to see the art work done based on the African savannah and then had it narrated to me by some of the children. I was truly flabbergasted by the technology used in the classrooms at that school and how much learning materials they had at their disposal. I was later invited to Vikki's home where I was able to interact with her family.

The following day on the 7th of May I was off to Rochdale to the Holy Trinity School. I was together with DGS sponsor Janette at the school where we well received. I then made a brief PowerPoint presentation to the whole school in the hall about DGS and the charity. I was taken around the school where I was able to get a better insight on how schools in the United Kingdom operate. Just like the previous day, what stood out for me was the amount of resources schools here have in comparison to the ones in Kenya. We later had lunch with the teachers in the staffroom before being driven back by Pat who had waited for me selflessly since morning in Rochdale.



On Thursday the 8th May I had an interesting and informative Photoshop session with Macclesfield Camera Club President Brian Law. I was able to learn a lot from him which in future should translate into better photography from me for the school.



Later on that day I had a presentation at the Macclesfield golf club for the Rotarians which was chaired by Adrian. It was a very warm and pleasant event which gave me the confidence to talk about the charity and the school. The experience to me was truly priceless and I thank Adrian for the opportunity.

My last official engagement in England was yet another video conference call with Judy and Samantha in Portugal. It proved to be an encouraging discussion with Judy and Sam which only went to prove what I had already known before; that DGS's future is in good hands.

Saturday 10th May – 5.55am Manchester Airport and home



A tourist in the rain in London with Judy!