

Mark and Junko's Visit to Destiny Garden School – October 2017

One thing leads to another. It started with a search for sponsoring a child with the maximum benefit to the welfare of a child and his/her community for my donation. Destiny Children came out top in my audit so I made my small commitment and a little girl was assigned to me. Time went by.... discussions happened. Next thing I'm half way through designing a new dining shelter and office for the school and nervous about the unknowns of the site, local methods and the reliability of local contractors. Good governance sometimes needs a little push, and we needed to make sure the donors investment will be soundly built. After much prevaricating, I decide to visit Kenya with my wife Junko, who could be persuaded only by the promise of seeing a giraffe in the wild. Little did she know how much she was to enjoy our working holiday.

Jacob and Boaz picked us up from the airport and we quickly gained an insight into what great guys they are. After dropping bags at the hotel in town, we made for the ferry and the drive to the school. Arriving at the site was exciting after months of remotely modelling the buildings from photographs and rough measurements, it all fell into place: a collection of simple buildings compressed into a small campus next to a delightful village green (actually brown). The scene was animated by an abundance of activity: There were kids all over the place: gorgeous happy kids running, playing, sitting in groups, doing recitations in classes and queuing for the wash trough. Grinning little ragamuffins, cheeky chappies and dough eyed cuties, they all oozed charm and delight. It didn't take long for Junko to realise she was going to enjoy the visit.



'Right you lot. Pose for the camera'



'Come on... look at the camera'



'OK, let's do high fives then'



'Yes... and you too'

We popped into class 6 to say hello, and on inquiry as to if there happened to be any Chelsea fans present, the class erupted thus:



Kenyans are mad about Premier League.

Time to start work: interview the first contractor.



The site survey was next up. Of course this necessitate the assistance of at least 50 extra pairs of hands.



Junko's team working on levels



My team at the other end of the water pipe



Everything needed careful verification by my quality assurance team

Next task was a quick workshop with the future architects, builders and urban planners of Kenya: designing a dining shelter.



160 kids were divided into 7 teams to create their designs in 30 minutes. Judging was by popular vote and the winners were announced and sweets handed them.

Then, a chance to meet our sponsored child, Elizabeth. She is so calm and confident... if a little bemused by all the fuss and photographs.



We had a few moments with the school's dedicated staff, who were rather focused on marking homework as it was approaching exam time.

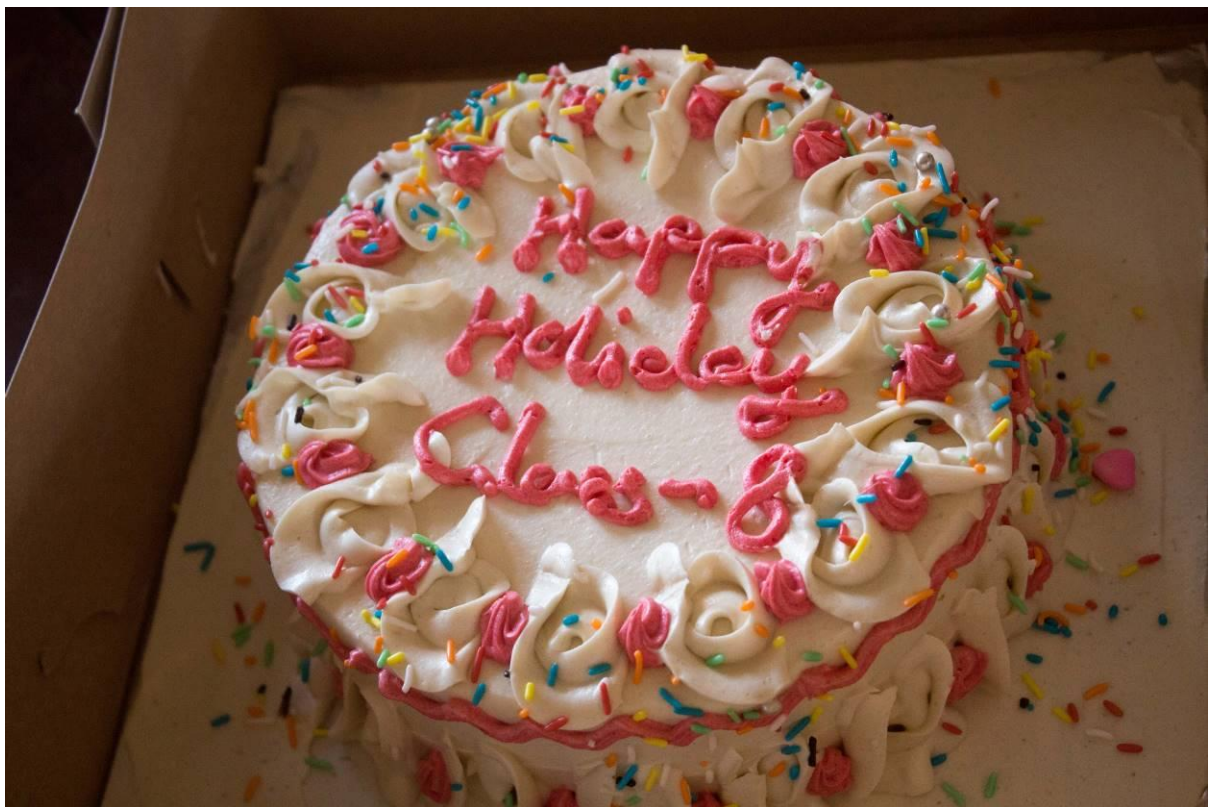


All this hard work needed a break, so we headed for Diani beach and Shimba Hills... and the search for a giraffe. To Junko's delight and my relief, we found one of the three giraffes that live in Shimba Hills reserve.



Mission accomplished! Phew

Back at the school there were more meetings with contractors and then the chance to share cake with all the kids, so Boaz took us on a goodbye tour of all the classes.



The excitement spread... as did the cake, some of which ended up as cosmetic decoration to take home and show the family.



Our time in Kenya was over in a flash. What an absolutely wonderful week! Now we eagerly await the outcome of the dining shelter construction...

Mark Taylor

London