

Day 1 : Rusumo to Murukurazo - 14km

We arrived in Rwanda at Kigali airport, and took the bus to the border with Tanzania. It was a hot, noisy, dusty, uncomfortable drive, so we are very pleased to be out in the fresh air.



There's a great bustle at the border with trucks, fuel tankers, cars, buses and people, all moving together with little regard for safety. Trucks are going to and fro as goods are transported from the seaport 1000km away in Tanzania to landlocked Rwanda. There are young men offering to change money and other youngsters selling fresh roasted peanuts. Some local families clearly have an eye for business. You can buy a paper bag full for 2000Tsh(60P). You rub the nuts between your fingers to remove the skins and are treated to the most delicious peanuts you'll ever eat! You don't walk along the road drinking your bottled water or snacking though. You're in a very poor country and may well be passing people who haven't eaten that day.

After half a kilometre we come to the River Ruvuvu where we take a little chain ferry across. It's big enough for a few cars and passengers and we pay 200 shillings each (6p) – for a child it's only 50 shillings (1½p).



There are a few houses as we trudge along the dusty road. Every time a vehicle passes you need your scarf to shield your face from the red dust which envelops you. Luckily there are not many cars so this doesn't happen often. We see goats and cows usually accompanied by a small boy of perhaps 5 or 6. There are scrawny chickens near the houses you'll pass, and small plots of land where people just grow enough food to eat – if the rains come at the right time.

We arrive in Murukurazo to a great celebration...not for us, this time. It's the Send-off party for a village girl who'll be married in a couple of weeks. This is her good bye from the village where she was born. We are ushered into a large tent made up of cloths draped over poles. The whole village seems to be packed in, several hundred people. There are long speeches, then processions of people bearing gifts – pots and pans, mattresses, cloth, money, even a goat. Then the feast – dustbins full of rice, beans, stew, vegetables and fruit, all washed down with soda. What a privilege to be welcomed here. It would be polite to drop a little money into the basket as your gift. Just join the procession and dance up to the front with everyone else – hamna shida, no problem. Enjoy the party – we'll be out walking again tomorrow!



Day 2 : Kanyinya to Rulenge - 10km



Kanyinya is a remote rural area where homes are basic and the agricultural life is hard on account of the hilly environment. The walk to the well for water is a three hour round trip down what we'd call a mountain.

After training from the Church and Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP) Pastor Tito mobilized his community to build a rainwater tank for the village. To raise the necessary funds for the project they used land round the church building to grow crops to sell at market. After some years of planning the villagers collected enough materials to build a 45,000 litre water tank. Praise the Lord. Bwana asifiwe! After breakfast in Pastor Tito's house and prayers we set off for Rulenge.



We walk through small villages where we are welcomed warmly and invited to share food. The paths are dry and dusty but the views wide. The local language is that of the Bushubi people. Across Kagera there are three different tribes and people are proud of their tribal heritage.



Pastor Manase and family meet us in Rulenge with a large enthusiastic congregation. Their church was small and falling down so they've started to build a new one. The work started in 2017, and by 2019 the walls were up and Bishop Darlington dedicated the foundation stone. – no roof or furnishings yet, but they worship there, giving thanks to God for his faithfulness. We're welcomed to a delicious meal in the home of Pastor Manase – rice, beans, meat, cassava. As guests we're provided with a spoon to eat, though of course eating with fingers is the norm.



Day 3 : Djuraligwa to Nzaza, near the border with Burundi - 10km

In Djuraligwa we're warmly welcomed by Pastor Anceth, who visited St Eds and Ips in 2019. In his church the growing congregation clearly love their young priest. Although we don't understand all he says to them in Swahili we see that he inspires them. They have built him a grand new house and before we leave he presents us with a cash gift of 10,000 Tanzanian shillings (around £3) which the congregation has contributed for our journey. Somewhat embarrassed we thank them all for their generosity. The people in Kagera have so very little but like the poor widow, they give their last coin. We eat breakfast with Anceth and local dignitaries and set off for the border.



This is a rather easier day. It's not quite so hilly round here, though of course the hills in the near distance give the chance for many photos. On the way we pass through a village and see piles of bricks ready for someone to build a new house, and children playing with discarded bicycle tyres.

Near Kabanga we're welcomed by Gadi. You can see over the border into Burundi from here. When Bishop Martin and Jutta visited Gadi's farm, they learned that Thomas, the CCMP coordinator, uses this farm business as a model of good practice to inspire local leaders and farmers. Gadi is a bit of an entrepreneur and when he saw the trucks bringing goods to Burundi from Dar es Salaam, 1000km across Tanzania returning empty after dropping their loads, he had an idea. He set up an avocado farm and now truck drivers collect the fruit by the sackload from him to sell further afield. The avocados he grows are huge – he gives us one weighing 1.5 kilos to eat tonight. It will be delicious.



Gadi grows bananas as well, and has expanded into animal keeping too so he has manure for his crops. His family are well fed and he's been able to pay for a good education for his children.



Day 4: Ngara to Chivu - 8km



It's market day in Ngara. By the time we're ready to set off, many have already walked from the valley in Chivu and from further afield to set up their stalls on the hill. They come pushing bicycles laden with bananas or carrying woven goods and fruits and vegetables on their heads. The market is vibrant, noisy and colourful. 'Hello sister. Hello brother.' rings out as we take it all in. We buy some sun ripened mangoes for our lunch.



Today there are big hills to contend with. We start on the tarmac road to Murgwanza, the home of the Diocesan Headquarters. This road was built at the time of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 when an airstrip there served the many refugee camps in the district. We drop down 500m before the long haul back up to the top. On the way we pass a group of women washing clothes in the muddy stream. Then it's a scrambly steep path down again on the dusty road to Chivu.



The first thing we notice in Chivu is that praise the Lord, (Bwana asifiwe), there's a village water tap. Children are chattering and cheerfully filling their 20 litre plastic containers. The lucky ones have come from within the village but others may have to trudge several kilometres up and down the dusty tracks to their homes.



Round the corner people are queuing for the medical centre. A few years ago the

Diocese of Kagera fitted solar panels and battery operated lighting to clinics across the diocese so that they could remain open in the evenings. Young and the old, pregnant women and children wait patiently ready to see the Community health worker, who probably trained at Murgwanza School of Nursing, run by Kagera Diocese. If someone needs a doctor they'll have to climb back up the path we came down, to the hospital in Murgwanza. But many couldn't afford that and have to rely on traditional medicines. Steaming with boiling water was recommended as a treatment for Coronavirus. The clinic encourages people not to trust local witch doctors. Not for the first time, we thank God for our own NHS.



Day 5 : Mukarehe to Muruvyagira – 12 km



Today our walk starts in an inspiring little parish, like many in Kagera. Here Pastor Nathanael leads a team of evangelists and their church is growing. We wonder at yet another new church being built for the growing congregation. It's not finished yet but it's already full every Sunday. When Bishop Martin visited he asked how they grow their church. 'We visit people in their homes' was the simple reply. There are lots of evangelists here so lots of visiting and the growing congregation is testimony to their hard work. These evangelists, men and women, aren't paid yet they play a vital role in their parish.



After

looking at the church we're taken to the parish tree nursery where, inspired by CCMP they are growing 400 tree seedlings for planting out later in the year. These will be given to churches and local institutions to help reforest the land.

At the end of our visit we are of course invited into the pastor's house for food. Let's hope we're not treated as VIPs and given a goat's head like Bishop Martin!



After our large meal we feel rather less like walking, but soon we set off. The terrain here is slightly more wooded than in most parts, though there are still sweeping areas without vegetation. Hopefully the new trees will soon alleviate the problem. Every time it rains on these bare slopes the soil simply washes away, taking crops with it in places.

After a partially shaded walk we arrive in Muruvyagira to another thriving little church. We're ushered in to give thanks for our safe journey and to a short service (2½ hours) where the choirs praise the Lord too. A collection is taken and we notice that not everyone can afford to give cash so bananas, beans, an egg and some coffee beans are given. These are



auctioned off at the end of the service and the money given to the church. Perhaps we'll be brave enough to bid for a bowl of delicious avocados. The coffee beans are a clue to how this church has learned to be self-sufficient. After the service we're shown the small plantation. The leaders realized that the land round the pastor's house was lying idle so they planted coffee. They show us the storeroom in church and we see a good harvest, waiting to be sold in lean times.

Another tiring but heartwarming day.



Day 6 : Ngara Anglican Primary school to Kagera Christian Theological College, NAPS to KCTC - 5 km

From school to college, our prayer is that some of the children at NAPS will take this route in their life - not simply as a walk.



NAPS is run by Kagera Diocese to provide a good quality primary education in English. All secondary education in Tanzania is in English, so NAPS children will have a head start when they move on. St Eds and Ips has supported building projects at NAPS over many years as the school has grown. The school is thriving academically - in 2018 it came 1st in the region and 12th in the country. In 2019 Bishop Martin opened the new dormitory block and boarders started soon afterwards. The dining hall has walls but no roof and they still need a library, computer room and a new kitchen.

The children give us a wonderful welcome, reciting their numbers in English and singing. We stand for some time admiring the views from the ridge over acre upon acre of deforested savannah. When 500 thousand refugees fled to Kagera from Rwanda during the genocide of 1994, all the trees round here were cut down and used for shelter and cooking. To recover from this devastation,



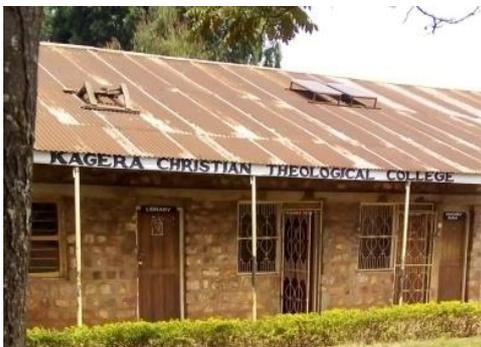
Kagera Diocese has planted 5000 trees on the rocky slopes at NAPS and the children care for them and learn their value for combatting climate change.



We walk up to Ngara town, along the main road with big trucks thundering by on the way to Burundi. We pass the shops, so very different from our own, and down through a steep narrow path to the Diocesan tree nursery by the river. This is where the NAPS trees started their life as seedlings, watered by local people in exchange for a few



trees for their own land. Now a steep climb to Murgwanza and the Bible College, accompanied some of the way by a chattering band of youngsters, fascinated by the mzungu, the white people.



KCTC has recently appointed a new acting principal, Phocas. He arrived when all colleges in Tanzania had been closed down because of coronavirus, so he set to refurbishing and updating. The Government demanded improvements in the kitchen, a large pit was dug for the latrines, the library was updated, mattresses replaced where necessary and mosquito nets bought. New courses are being started and the good work which has been going on for a long time seems to be secure for the future. St Eds and Ips are happy to support KCTC with student bursaries through the Friends of KCTC scheme.



Day 7 : A Sunday stroll

Today we are going to relax, by strolling round Murgwanza, the home of Kagera Diocese. Bishop Darlington lives and works here, along with the leaders of CCMP, the MU, KCTC and many others. The Diocesan Hospital is here and also the Nursing school. And of course the Cathedral, the spiritual centre of the Diocese. There are two services here every Sunday to accommodate the number of worshippers from the surrounding area. We go to the 8am service - we know it will be relatively short because the next service starts at 10am.



up to shake hands and exchange greetings with everyone else.

Although we may not understand Swahili, the format of the service is very familiar, like Anglican services the world over. Along with other visitors, we're called to the front to bring greetings from our own churches. Two choirs sing to loud backing tracks and there is plenty of energetic dancing, like a wonderful holy disco. After the service everyone lines



and 3 doctors. They are often short of drugs and the facilities are basic. Occasionally there will be a visiting specialist.

In the afternoon we wander over to see the hospital, past the football pitch which is next to the cathedral. People are buying food for their loved ones at the gate and groups of pikipiki (motorbike taxis) drivers are waiting for a fare. Many people have walked here, perhaps from many kilometres away.



We then walk down through the more fertile side of the ridge, through the banana trees. Bananas are the staple crop of the region but many are now affected by disease so often the crop is small. Through CCMP, the diocese is encouraging people to diversify and grow beans, cassava, maize, avocados and other vegetables on their shambas.



As evening comes we finish our walk out on the ridge. We are 6000 feet above sea level, and there are wide and stunning views over the Kagera river and Rwanda in the distance. On a clear day you can see Burundi and the volcanos in the DRC too. In the treeless valley we see small pockets of vegetation where people have their farms.

As we stand and admire the view, taking in the wonder of God's creation, we give thanks for all we've seen and for all those we've met, and praise God for all that we have. Our brothers and sisters readily give glory to God for all that He has done for them. Let us learn from them to do the same.

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