



Tom Swinley

Physiotherapy

During my trip to Malawi I developed a better understanding of their culture, witnessed some incredible things, which came with a variety of emotions.

The initial drive from Blantyre airport to Fisherman's Rest was a real eye-opener for me. Seeing so many poor, thin people walking along the side of the road was quite shocking and not something I had ever seen before. I remember feeling like I was on a different planet as there were so many people living their lives just inches from where we were driving past. At Fisherman's Rest the barren, desolate yet beautiful landscape which could be seen from the swimming pool was also intriguing. Behind me as I stood there, were lush green trees yet in front as far as the eye could see everything was dry, dusty and burnt. I was told the burning of trees was what was destroying these people's livelihoods. As the trees burning in coordinated lines, which could be seen at night, went up in smoke, so did the chance of eco-tourism, business, food and shelter.



Tom and Dan off to play ball

However aside from the poverty and naïve destruction there was also great happiness to be found in the people who lived there. The children, whilst exceptionally poor gave us a royal welcome wherever we went. To each place we visited whether it be a clinic, school, nature reserve or shop the people were kind, courteous and considerate. This was not what I expected from people who had so little. The school teachers and members of the community were exceptionally grateful for all the work we did even though we only completed a fraction of what needed to be done to give the children a basic education.

Teaching has never been anything I have thought of doing, not even for a second. So when I was catapulted into the role of a teacher for 80 or so kids I remember feeling very anxious as well as the usual determination for a new task. When I did finally start teaching the Malawian school children I was struck by how readily they took the information on board and how some of them were genuinely keen to succeed. Despite the lack of resources the teachers were very good at working with what they had. It was definitely one of the more rewarding things I have done. Seeing the realisation on one kids face as he finally understood the word “chicken” was a real highlight.

Even if he kept pointing at the cows on the pages.



Travelling with such a diverse group of people truly made the journey better. Pooling our collective expertise in a variety of fields we managed to maximise our understanding of the country, its people and its culture as well as maximise the Malawians knowledge in a way which would not have been possible for just one person.



Chantelle and Tom with a group of children after a lesson



Team DASH get dirty making mud bricks