



**■ Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November Servas Social: ‘Thyolo Fireworks’**

The night commemorates ‘Remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, gun powder, treason and plot’ when in 1604 Guy Fawkes tried to blow up parliament in England and kill King James to replace him with a Scottish Queen. The plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes caught, hung drawn and quartered. If the parliament had blown the amount of gunpowder would have created quite a visual spectacle as the building blew apart. Hence the fireworks today.

**Fireworks!**



We left Blantyre at 520 – no one was waiting for a pick-up at Petroda. We drove to Limbe & hooked up with Henry and his family and then drove onto Thyolo managing to miss the turning!! It was a big event and as you entered the club there was local kids throwing nuts at the cars. Maybe over 150 people were there - certainly the 200bread rolls went! We sat out on our cushions watching a bonfire burn. We sat and watched the fireworks blow – they were great – pretty – awesome and wow! We ate burgers and salad and chatted to friends – everyone seemed to be there. **Attending: Benbows, Scutt, Shamaela, Kamwendo, Ramona families. Ruth Thompson Aged 13.**

**WHO WANTS TO GO TO ITALY ON A SYLE IN 2014?**

From: "Bruno Manfredi" <bruno.manfredi@yahoo.it>

Date: Wed, 1 Jan 2014 01:12:00 +0200

Subject: happy new year!

Happy new year, dear malawian Servas friends!

Think about a Syle project with a malawian girl/boy here in Turin, Piemonte, Italia! CiaoBruno Manfredi

**SERVAS AUSTRALIA SEND \$? TO PAY FOR THE X16 MATS WE BOUGHT; Extra note books are bought so they have something to write in during prison school lessons. Outstanding money is put towards the building of x2 benches for the AYISE ‘Albert Khowa’ peace garden.**

**■ “Letter from a Malawi Prison”, as told to Marian**

**THE SMUGGLED WRITTEN WORD’** 

Life in a Malawi prison is very hard - I think. The Prison Day starts at 5am as the prison warden opens the cells. Once they open the cell, everybody has to go out, then they count us. After being counted we have to prepare the hostel,

sweeping around the cells and when everything is in order we may have some food to eat. The food you eat though has to be prepared by yourself and mind you, the breakfast you make is your own, not given by the prison. If you don't have anything you have to wait until the lunch is being served.

We prisoners organise two people to cook for that particular day, food is cooked only once a day. If the food is made and ready the inmates are called to come get the food. This is done around 11am and everyone has to take the food for lunch and supper. We don't have food warmers to cover the food and keep it warm until dinnertime, so we put the food in plastic paper then cover it with a blanket so that by the time we eventually take it - its still a bit warm. The food which is meant only for prisoners but all the staff eat it as well. For example there was a shortage of flour and when they prepared the food only the people who were there got to get some. This meant that some prisoners got no food for almost 4 days as they were allocated to work somewhere else. Things got worse when we decided to write to the newspaper to highlight this issue. We managed to do it in secret as prison wardens won't allow us to speak to visitors or members of the public coming in from the outside.

We sleep on the floor without mats – which is the normal – but the concrete is VERY cold. We are given 2 blankets, so due to the coldness 1 is used as a mat and 1 as a cover. We have no mosquito nets at all. In the Male Side, things are even worse. The cells are made

to accommodate 500 inmates and have 2000 in them!

Those people who are rich can buy a place to sleep at mk500 a month, if you are lucky you can actually lie down right tight next to anyone otherwise you have to sleep sitting up the whole night because there is no space.

When a warden calls one of us, we are supposed to go and kneel down. They can call us and ask for the sugar relatives have brought us and take it from you to use for themselves. You have to give it although you know its your last and when someone is rude the prison wardens remembers and punishes them for challenging their authority, whether right or wrong. They shave her hair, make her roll in sand while her clothes are wet. After rolling in the sand, she is given 2 weeks to prepare food for the others.

When you are under 'punishment' the prison warden will fight you and they usually leave you unconscious. Maybe to work in a prison you have to be like a prisoner – but that level of violence is frightening to see. Sometimes you can even die – I don't know how anyone explains those deaths – vulnerability and impunity. Its frightening for me, if you have been brought up in a good family to see what you have never seen before - we are left to mourn that the person who has died.

Most of the prisoners haven't attended school to the end or primary level, so they are always fighting in cells especially with those who have had schooling. Those who have schooling normally want more and will try to get to school whenever there is a chance. They are the one who enter the class. At least now they have put 1 TV screens up in each section, maybe we all can learn from that and be kept better amused and busy.

Things like soap, sugar clothes come from well wishers from relatives and different churches. They usually come on Sunday we have also people from the UK who come twice a year with some gifts.

Here in Malawi prison we lack a lot of basic things like food, blankets even sanitary pads. If you've got money you are ok, because you can use the money to buy food others wise life is hard.

WHEN YOU ARE CONVICTED YOU ARE GIVEN A UNIFORM AND YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO PUT THAT UNIFORM ON DAILY. And most of the uniform are not in good condition. For the people who know how to knit and sew they can do knitting and sewing, but the material is not enough. Next time if someone is coming to Malawi and to the prison bring some clothes or reading books in basic Chichewa or advanced English for us to read – we need to keep busy.

Our day ends at 330pm. They call us and count us in after that we are locked in the cell up to the morning. It is hard for a prisoner when you fall sick because they don't take you to the hospital or to see a doctor. You are only given aspirin – aspirin for everything. The food that is given is of low standard and beans throughout the year. Mostly we lose weight and get malnourished. Many of us in prison haven't been to court - we are on remand waiting for court, and, we are waiting a l-o-n-g time!!

Of course when you get out and are released, tried or not, people outside think we are all criminals and they reject us in society. If I was given a chance to say what is needed to improve the prison, my list will go on endlessly.

Once after 2 months they conduct a search. They usually did it around 3am. They open our cells and search us, everywhere. If they find something valuable they take them away, gold earrings, necklaces, expensive shoes, even a handbag and any money they find. We cannot go and complain about this, they don't even bother saying its being stored in our name so I doubt they will give them back to us – they are just stealing and being thieves themselves – sad. When someone visits you, they call you and you have to be with the prison warden and your visitor is allowed only 10minutes. There is no need to be so harsh with time, we have a lot of time doing nothing in prison but they like to make it only 10minutes to be harsh – I think it gives them a sense of power to be so mean.

You are not free to tell a person who visits you what is really on your mind and if you give them a letter its is read and checked. There is certainly no privacy in prison or self dignity encouraged.

As of June 20<sup>th</sup> there is a total number of prisoners:- Remand 522 Hard labour = 1361; children=3 totalling = 1886 prisoners.