

CHOLE CHANGING

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND
Issue 8

www.choletrust.org

STOP PRESS!
Charlie Coghlan
completes Triathlon.
See below left



THE IRON MAN!

Something about Chole inspires astonishing generosity.

In the last few years benefactors have raced 550km across Costa Rica, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, completed a 3 Peaks Challenge and managed a 100km Thames

Challenge Walk in 24 hours. Now **Charlie Coghlan**, already a very generous donor, has decided that a Triathlon, in of all places Bahrain, in aid of the **Chole Kindergarten** should be added to that list!

As he says, never having run more than 10km, or cycled further than 40km (and that when he was twelve), he must have taken leave of his senses. And with weekend training from 4am, spare a thought for his family and especially Olivia, his wife.

You can support Charlie until the end of January at:

www.justgiving.com/Charlie-Coghlan/

AN APOLOGY

Apologies to everyone, and especially our generous and patient donors, for the twelve month gap since our last Newsletter. The Trust is run by volunteers, and the 'day jobs' have kept us busy recently.

We intend to publish Newsletters twice a year, in the Spring and Autumn.

THE CHOLE MJINI TRUST FUND

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CHOLE MJINI WINS WORLD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM GOLD MEDAL

The success of Chole Mjini, the iconic eco tourist Lodge that partners the Chole community, in winning the Gold Award in its category in the World Responsible Tourist Awards provides a good moment to look back on the Chole Project.



Nearly twenty years ago now Anne and Jean de Villiers decided to open a tourist lodge on Chole designed not only to minimise its impact on the environment, but also to be a true partner with the local community. The success of that commitment was recognised in November 2014 by the award of a Gold Medal at the World Responsible Tourism Awards.

How different today must seem, compared to when the Project started! All those years ago only one child from Chole had ever succeeded through secondary education; in our last Newsletter we reported that **Suleiman Mohammed** and **Athuman Tawakal**, Chole's first two graduates, both had excellent jobs, and that **Risiki Hassani**, who until recently chaired the Harambee Committee, was on a working party set up to ensure that the new Tanzanian constitution properly reflected women's rights.

From the start Anne and Jean set out to do something different from the projects which assist many African communities. A central plank of the concept was to establish a successful business which both operated with as little impact on the environment as possible, and at the same time partnered with the community in which it was located. The vision was a partnership lasting upto 50 years, or about two generations of Chole children. Only if the community was still not self sufficient after 50 years might the approach be questioned!

Minimising the environmental impact was the easier objective, because it could be achieved by making specific decisions. For example, the accommodation is treehouses, built using local labour, materials and skills, and because the Lodge's selling point is a luxurious get-away-from-it-all experience only limited solar electricity is available, meaning no diesel generators or combustion, composting toilets which minimise water use and protect the aquifer from contamination, and so on. Similarly, much of the food, such as fish caught freshly in the bay, is sourced locally.

Building a partnership with the community required patience and restraint, needing formal agreements to recognise the community's rights to its own land and resources, and respect for decisions made in the light of its own priorities and customs. Chole Mjini therefore exists on the boundary between two very different worlds, one outward looking towards the affluence of the West from where the visitors come, the other more inward looking, respecting local customs and priorities, whilst at the same time facilitating the community's access to the benefits that development offers.

Although funding is always important to a very poor community, this organic development could never be achieved simply by providing money. Three democratic, nationally registered Chole Societies (roughly equivalent to registered charities in the UK) were therefore established to build capacity and ensure community participation in decision making and management of funds. The funds themselves are raised from various sources – a US\$10 bed-night levy on guests, day-visitor tickets, donations to the Trust (the biggest source of funding), and other donations and fund raising events. The community itself determines the use of the funds, and in practice almost always chooses to invest in improving the human capital of the community by funding educational bursaries and facilities such as solar power and computers in the Learning Centre, and contributing to healthcare or essential maintenance, such as the new roof on the Kindergarten.

The results of this long term vision speak for themselves. When the project was first conceived, Chole's GDP was about US\$15,000; in 2013 it was over US\$150,000. Over the period 164 educational bursaries have been awarded, and five students have already graduated, with another seven at university. English is much more widely spoken, and employment has been transformed, from only one person in salaried employment at the beginning to probably 200 either employed directly, or self employed providing goods and services within the community, to the Lodge and further afield today. IT skills are burgeoning.

The rôle of the Trust's donors and supporters in this process is enormous. The people of Chole have shown that they have the will and the capacity to build their own future, but nevertheless without external funding even such basic attainments as education for their children would remain outside their reach.



STRANGERS IN PARADISE

2014 has seen two contributions to Chole by visitors from the UK.



First of all Ben Dewfall spent three months living in the village between graduating from Aberystwyth university with a degree in International Politics and Military History and applying to join the Royal Navy. Ben's primary focus was on teaching English and IT in the Learning Centre (see picture) and on helping in the primary school. We hope to have much more about his experiences in the next Newsletter.

Then Anne and Jean went to Australia for a family celebration, and Ann-Mari Beatty, whose husband Ivo Hesmondhalgh is a Trustee, and her sister Karin went to Chole as relief managers. Bede and Landi Hesmondhalgh, Ann-Mari's son and daughter (shown left with Hassan, a secondary school student), took the opportunity to see for themselves the work of the Trust, and decided to assess it by talking to people in the Kindergarten, Primary School and Learning Centre, and also speaking to a secondary school student from Chole who attends school on Mafia. Their findings are attached as a supplement to this Newsletter.



We are very grateful indeed to them for taking the time to obtain this feedback, and are looking especially carefully at their first suggestion that there should be some formal arrangement for graduates to mentor and motivate Chole students, ensuring that they and their families fully understand the benefits of obtaining an education.

CHOLE MJINI LODGE

The Trust is about helping others - but there are many other reasons to visit Chole!

An internet search quickly brings up the virtually unanimous praise for Chole Mjini Lodge as a destination for a very special holiday, but why not see for yourself at www.cholemjini.com which also has many wonderful photographs?

You can contact the Lodge at **Chole Mjini Lodge, Chole Island, PO Box 20, Mafia Island, Tanzania** ♦ Tel: +255 787 712 427 or +255 784 520 799 ♦ Email: 2chole@gmail.com

Good tour operators specialising in Africa can also give you extensive details about Chole Mjini Lodge.

Please also do not hesitate to contact **Anne de Villiers personally about the Chole Project** at anne.k.dev@gmail.com

KINDERGARTEN MILESTONES

2014 has marked a milestone in the history of Chole's Montessori Kindergarten, which has always played a central role in the community's development.

The Kindergarten, which is run on Montessori principles, has become a vital part of the Chole community. In addition to providing infants with a good educational start to life it also ensures they also get a balanced, nutritious lunch every day, and regular health checks for parasites and other common health problems. It also empowers the women in the community, who can develop their own lives, secure in the knowledge that their children are in a safe and secure environment.



The last eighteen months has seen great challenges for the Kindergarten, which is very generously supported by Leon Paul, sponsors of the UK Olympic Fencing Team. A major private donor also contributed substantially, but has been unable to continue her support beyond 2013. However thanks to another very generous donation this autumn and the heroic efforts of Charlie Coghlan (see story, front page) these financial challenges have been met, giving the Trustees an opportunity to secure long term funding.



Leon Paul
London



And then the thatched roof (right) finally needed replacing, and so funds had to be allocated to a new corrugated iron one, which hopefully will mean a better, dryer facility for future generations of Chole children. With the roof mended, further work is now planned in the playground.



But none of these challenges mattered at all at the end of November, when the Kindergarten held its graduation day. Each parent contributed Tshs. 4,000 (c. £1.50 / US\$2.30) to cover the cost of the event, including food and the material for pupils hats.

The only sad note was that Johari R Fadhili, the headmaster of the Kindergarten since it opened, is retiring, so this was his last group of 'graduates'. We look forward to welcoming his successor, and to many more years of the Chole Kindergarten continuing its invaluable contribution to the community.



THIS AND THAT

Earlier this year the Paris Opera soprano Margitta Rosales visited Chole. In addition – we understand – to entertaining guests lucky enough to be there at the same time, she also filmed and edited a wonderful video, featuring interviews with some teachers and others involved 'on the ground'.

We plan to include the video on the new website (see below), but in the meantime we strongly recommend that you take a look at http://youtu.be/C0yit_y68As

The **Chole Booklet**, which was republished about two years ago and includes some of the wonderful oral histories collected on Chole, has become a very useful additional source of income, with nearly US\$1,000 raised this year, about enough to fund two Form V/VI bursaries.

We are re-writing the Chole Trust website, and hope a new one will go live in 2015. The overall look will not be much different, but there will be much more information, including the full text of Chole Mjini's entry for the World Responsible Travel Awards.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Chole Trust's objective is to become redundant as the people of Chole achieve self sufficiency. However the road to self sufficiency is challenging, needing a level of investment, especially in education, healthcare and facilities, beyond the capacity of a poor community, however hard it tries.

You can help in any number of ways:

- By becoming a monthly standing order donor. Regular donations are especially valuable, giving children entering the schooling system confidence that they will be able to complete their education.

Just £25 / month funds an annual Form V+ secondary school bursary for a child.

- The Trustees will be happy to discuss specific projects for larger commitments. For example, two long term donors generously fund the Kindergarten.
- If you - or perhaps a family member or friend - is planning an adventure such as climbing Kilimanjaro, then doing it on behalf of the Trust can be a very effective way of fundraising.
- Practical help; for example, a few months teaching on Chole can be rewarding and can contribute a great deal.

If you would like to help the Chole Project then please contact us at:

**chole@rech.co.uk
+44 (0)20 7228 9864**