

**Nelson Mandela's Birthday Year.** Nelson Mandela's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was the dominant theme of our activities throughout 2008, running through our normal programme as well as a number of special initiatives. A birthday card was launched in March at a ceremony with Glasgow's Lord Provost Bob Winter and ran throughout the year, providing a focus for other related events and our normal stalls. At the STUC in April Annie White spoke from the platform and the card was signed there by the President and General Secretary (as well as by the First Minister at our stall), and a photo-call at the Scottish Parliament in June attracted signatures from a number of MSPs including senior figures from all parties. At Glasgow May Day Brian Filling spoke from the platform about the birthday and the card was on our stall. Signed sheets received in time were bound and sent to Nelson Mandela just before the actual birthday, and signatures continued to be collected until the end of the year, to be sent on as a supplementary volume. The optional donation column on the sheets generated some £2600 for community projects in Eastern Cape via Community HEART. We are grateful to Ann Nicolson for the use of her artwork in the related posters and the cover of the bound volume.

The 18<sup>th</sup> July birthday itself was marked by the send-off of a container-load of books to Eastern Cape, billed as a birthday present for Nelson Mandela. The send-off ceremony in Glasgow's George Square with the participation again of Lord Provost Winter as well as ACTSA supporters displaying a birthday message attracted unusual press and television interest, including a film-crew from the South African Broadcasting Corporation. That evening there was a reception in Glasgow City Chambers, addressed by Bailie Jean McFadden, followed by an ACTSA Scotland celebration with a variety of performers and more than 200 people.

In October we held a conference "Mandela at 90 – Building Links and Solidarity with the New South Africa", incorporating the annual Mandela/Tambo lecture and hosted by Glasgow Caledonian University, who also agreed to print the lecture for publication. The lecture itself was given by H.E. Antonio Gumende, High Commissioner for Mozambique, on "Solidarity and Partnership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; The challenge of achieving the Millenium Development Goals in Mozambique".

The birthday provided the focus for ACTSA Scotland's workshops at a "Global Citizenship Day" for primary schools in and around Dumbarton, devised and delivered by Judith Martin and John Nelson. Other related events with which ACTSA was involved in some way included a public lecture organised by Midlothian Council, and a meeting at Glasgow's People's Palace museum on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nelson Mandela's visit to the city. The Peter Magubane photographic exhibition on Nelson Mandela, the creation of which we sponsored in 2004 and which had moved on from Scotland to Norway in 2007, returned to South Africa during this year, and will remain a permanent exhibition there.

**Book Appeal.** The Book Appeal continued to absorb a large amount of effort and attention, as well as finance. The large supply of books from Bookdonors Community Interest Company in Selkirk (with smaller quantities continuing to arrive from elsewhere) and the increased number of volunteers coming via Glasgow Volunteer Centre both continued through 2008, and enabled us to dispatch two containers in the year – one in May and the second on 18<sup>th</sup> July as already mentioned. During the visit to South Africa for the Wild Coast Walk we were able to visit five primary schools where libraries had been established with books from the first of these containers, and to see boxes of books from the second being collected by the head teachers of secondary schools. We were also able to send books to Fort Hare University again via the same containers. We are grateful to Amathole District Municipality for handling all these books for us, and also for making possible the visits to schools. We just about managed to cover the shipping costs for the two containers, but this increased scale of operation does strain our personal and financial resources. The principal sources of funds were the Workers Beer Company, for whom we provided volunteers at five events over the year, the Wild Coast Walk, and a legacy from a deceased member.

We are grateful to Hillhead Library for continuing to host our sorting and packing, and to the Scottish Co-op. at Barrachnie for storing our completed boxes prior to shipping after the storage

space we were using previously became unavailable. Our thanks go also to Glasgow's Malawi project for the long period over which they offered us storage space and for all the help with pallets and fork-lifts. The Ubiquitous Chip restaurant supplied us with empty boxes for much of the year.

**Wild Coast Walk.** After several changes of date to suit the changing circumstances of participants, the second Wild Coast sponsored walk took place in September, with five walkers and two others in the group. The two weeks of the overall visit were well filled (outwith the four days of actual walking) with visits and meetings including, of course, to the four projects for which modest funds were being raised, and the inspirational people running them. Building connections is the primary purpose of the operation, and happened in abundance.

**Stalls.** These continued as a regular feature of our work, from a couple of hours at a local meeting to nine full days in a marquee in Edinburgh city centre, and various conferences and Fair Trade events in between. These do reach new people and remind others of our work as well as selling crafts from useful projects in several countries of Southern Africa.

**Events.** The annual ANC anniversary social took place as usual in January, with George Reid and his ceilidh band, and the Burns Supper at the South African High Commission in London was as popular as ever, with the Scottish half of the catering provided again by staff from The Ubiquitous Chip. We supplied speakers to a UNITE school on globalisation (Annie White), to a local political party on Zimbabwe (Iain Whyte), and to a Shawlands Academy parents evening about South African connections (Brian Filling). Iain Whyte was involved again with the Homeless World Cup and we assisted their Scottish office with contacts and publicity for an appeal for the Southern African teams in the competition. David Kenvyn made sure that Southern Africa was well covered at the annual World Aids Day service in Glasgow, and we attended parts of the CIVICUS World Assembly in Scotland as well as having our usual stall there. We took part also in the Scotland-Zimbabwe Group Burns Night, a DfID consultation with NGOs, and in meetings of NIDOS (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland).

**Other work.** Our Ayrshire ACTSA Supporters Group has continued a programme of work this year, but the Edinburgh and Dundee groups have been dormant. We have had a steady flow of enquiries and requests for information to respond to, have continued to be well represented in ACTSA at UK level, have been working on modifications to our Committee structure and procedures following the decision of the 2007 AGM, and followed with concern developments in Zimbabwe. Glasgow City Council has continued to provide the convener and secretariat for Local Authority ACTSA, which made possible the encouragement of local authority activity around the Nelson Mandela birthday as well as putting affiliation recruitment and renewals on a stronger footing. Finally, Brian Filling's appointment as South Africa's Honorary Consul for Scotland is both a recognition of his long and key role in solidarity work during the apartheid era and in the new situation since 1994 and a sign of the continuing strength of our link with the South African High Commissioner and her staff.

**Thanks.** With no staff in Scotland we are entirely dependent on voluntary effort, and could do nothing without the large number of volunteers who contribute in different ways. We are very grateful to all of these, whether sorters and packers and movers of books, servers with the Workers Beer Company, Wild Coast walkers, helpers with stalls, keeper of the website, donors of funds, folk attending events and helping with fundraising, musicians at special events, people who take our concerns and interests into other organisations, or the officers and members of the Scottish Committee. Our thanks go to all of these.

John C. Nelson (Secretary)