

As always, a high proportion of our activity this year has been the ongoing, month-by-month continuation of existing projects. This doesn't make for exciting reports, but consistency is more important than excitement. There have also been some useful special events.

Book Appeal: Our seventh container-load of books was sent off in April, as anticipated in last year's report. It was sent from Barrachnie Co-op. in Baillieston, which had kindly offered us storage space when we lost our previous accommodation, and went this time to Buffalo City Municipality (also based in East London) at the request of our usual partner Amathole District Municipality. There were some hitches and delays with the import process this time, but BCM have been distributing the material and say the value of the books to their local schools far outweighs the aggravation.

Barrachnie Co-op. now needs the use of its space again, so we are urgently looking for new storage elsewhere. Hillhead Library continues to offer us space for sorting and packing, and we are grateful for their help and hospitality. We have had a stream of new volunteers all year, of whom many come only very briefly but others stay involved and some go on to help also with other ACTSA work, especially with staffing stalls and volunteering with the Workers Beer Company. Several have signed up with the Millennium Volunteers certification scheme for under-25s.

Funding for the Book Appeal still comes mainly from the efforts of our volunteer bar staff at music festivals with the Workers Beer Company. We again had teams at Glastonbury, Latitude, Leeds and Reading, and although the funds raised were less than hoped for this year partly due to WBC's partial loss of a contract and partly to some unfortunate last minute drop-outs we still raised about half of the cost of a container plus some funds also towards the obligations of Wild Coast Walkers.

Bookdonors Community Involvement Company in Selkirk continues to be our main source of books with smaller quantities from other sources, not least an annual public appeal for book donations made by East Dunbartonshire Libraries.

Links: The Book Appeal is a major part of our linkage with Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, and we are very pleased that another important part, the link between Glasgow City Council and Amathole District Municipality for which we were the marriage broker goes from strength to strength. Funding for this link via the Commonwealth Local Government Forum was renewed this year for a further period, and delegations have been going in both directions to exchange skills and take forward specific projects. From next year's local government elections in South Africa Buffalo City Municipality will become an all-purpose metropolitan council instead of a lower tier authority within Amathole District, and so within its own boundaries will take on some of the functions on which Glasgow and Amathole have been co-operating. For this reason the Memorandum of Understanding on wider co-operation has been extended to include Buffalo City, and the two Mayors both came to Glasgow recently to sign the new Memorandum as well as to take part in practical discussions. It was good to meet the people directly involved with receiving our latest book container, who were included in the BCM delegation, and mention of the books certainly simplified introductions. Mayor Faku of BCM was particularly interested in ACTSA UK's work for democracy in Swaziland.

Glasgow City Council also continues to provide the Chair and Secretariat for Local Authority ACTSA, which is a major contribution. John McFadden of our Scottish Committee has now retired from work and so also from LAACTSA but Glasgow Council has seconded a replacement, Chris Young. The political and financial situation for U.K. local government has not made LAACTSA's work any easier.

A third element of the linkage with Eastern Cape, our Wild Coast sponsored walk, had to be postponed again this year and is rescheduled for September 2011. The relatively small number involved makes us vulnerable to random hitches arising for individual walkers. A group was ready to go but kindly offered to delay for a year to make the expedition more financially worthwhile. We have maintained our links with the organisations supported by the Walk, especially Masimanyane Women's Support Centre and Blythswood Institution, with both of which we correspond regularly. The funds from our Mandela Birthday Card appeal were finally sent this year to those two organisations and to Samaritan Care.

On wider links, we were pleased to renew our connection with Willie Keorapetse Kgositsile, who spoke at our Writers' Symposium in 2004 and is now South Africa's Poet Laureate and an advisor to the Department of Arts and Culture. He was in Scotland with a delegation to meet the organisers of the

Edinburgh Festivals, who are keen to make strong connections with Commonwealth countries over the period 2012-2014, spanning the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. South Africa intends to play a large part in this. Willie asked also to meet with ACTSA, and we hope to assist with this connection.

Before that, South Africa's High Commissioner Zola Skweyiya made his first visit to Scotland, organised by our Chair Brian Filling who had performed the same service for each new High Commissioner in turn since the coming of democracy to South Africa. This time, of course, Brian was wearing the additional hat of South Africa's Honorary Consul in Scotland. The High Commissioner held a series of meetings about strengthening connections between Scotland and South Africa, with senior business, political, church, cultural and university people among others. He also met with ACTSA.

We played a very peripheral role in the much bigger event of President Zuma's State visit to the U.K., being represented at two receptions in London to mark the occasion. The 300 business people included in the S. African delegation showed that that kind of linkage was very much on the agenda.

Events: Our two major events this year both had a book theme. In April Denis Goldberg launched his autobiography at Glasgow City Chambers, hosted by LAACTSA. A very large turnout of invited guests testified to the huge number of friends Denis has made in Scotland over the years, as touched on within the book itself. We have just received a new consignment of copies and will continue to promote it.

Just this week, our Mandela-Tambo lecture was delivered by Ronnie Kasrils, hosted by Glasgow University. This also served as a launch for his new book about his late wife Eleanor's part in the struggle. As well as an event in Milngavie, Ronnie also paid a very successful visit to Eleanor's birthplace of Kilmarnock, which prompted media and other interest. The lecture itself was well attended, even after the really atrocious weather prevented many from travelling who had intended to come.

A new date was never found this year when Abdul Minty's diary would permit him to come and deliver the lecture planned for 2009 on the history of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but we hope this can still be arranged at some point.

Our regular annual social to mark the anniversary of the founding of the ANC took place as usual in January and was a really good occasion, as always, thanks not only to the excellent catering and good company but also to George Reid and his ceilidh band who freely give us the benefit of their time and considerable talent every year.

Information: ACTSA's objectives include the spreading of awareness and information about Southern Africa, and much of what we do has this as at least part of its purpose, including a lot of what I have described above. Another major information-spreading operation is our programme of stalls at events of all kinds across Scotland, from trade union meetings and conferences to local Fair Trade bazaars and the nine-day Ethical Christmas Fair in Edinburgh each December. As well as distributing information about our own activities, and policy and briefing material on Southern African issues, we sell a few thousand pounds-worth of craft goods from Southern Africa, some from projects we know directly. We are a very small player in this but think that what we do is useful to the producers. We have also managed to wholesale a little more this year, although still on a very minor scale. We are grateful to the volunteers who assist in staffing these stalls – 22 people helped at the last Ethical Christmas Fair.

Other information-giving included speaking to Dundee Blind and Partially-sighted Ladies Club, a resolution to the STUC on Swaziland, a panel discussion at the Africa in Motion Film Festival, sending material on the World Cup to a school in Falkirk, e-mail circulars to our list of some 300 contacts both about our own activities and other people's events relating to Southern Africa, and maintaining our website which must be used because we receive inquiries from people who have found us that way. We have been updating the site's list of recent and forthcoming events more frequently this year.

Other Work: Other bits and pieces include Arthur West's local ACTSA activities in Ayrshire, attendance by ACTSA members at an Albie Sachs lecture, at receptions to mark Namibia's independence anniversary and Africa Day, at the launch of Radio Kilimanjaro for the African diaspora in Scotland, our participation in NIDOS and our active involvement in both the NEC and AGM of ACTSA UK.

We are grateful as always to all who have made this work possible over the year.

John C. Nelson (Secretary)