

Our activities over the past year have reflected as usual our dual remit to remind and inform of the apartheid past and of Scotland's campaigning history in that period, and to work and campaign now for continuing solidarity with Southern Africa in its efforts to overcome the legacy of that past.

Nelson Mandela International Day brings these two strands of work together each year. We knew (and hoped) that the scale of the Day in 2014 was a one-off, and our celebration this year was rather more modest and manageable though still quite labour-intensive. The key event of the Day for ACTSA Scotland was the loading and send-off of our 10th container-load of books for school libraries in South Africa's Eastern Cape, bringing the total number sent in the 20 years we have been running our Book Appeal to some half a million. The books to be loaded had been collected, sorted and packed through the course of the previous three years, including special collections around Mandela Day each year. Because of concerns about storage space, the special appeal this year was concentrated on Glasgow libraries, though extended to include a dozen secondary-school libraries in the city, but books were collected from across Scotland throughout the year.

On the Day itself the loading operation involved 60 volunteers moving the 1000 boxes of books by human chain up two flights of stairs from the Hillhead Library basement to the container-lorry in the lane behind. A formal send-off from George Square with a reception and recital in the City Chambers completed the Day, with substantial media attention. We have heard that the container reached Buffalo City safely, without any of the problems with permits and customs that have arisen several times with previous containers.

Ayrshire ACTSA supporters' group also held a celebration in Ayr to mark the Day.

Mandela Day will continue as an annual celebration in Scotland as elsewhere, and preliminary approaches are being made already for the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth in 2018.

History and Archives: Scotland's history of support for Nelson Mandela and the freedom struggle more widely has been quite a big area of work for us this year in other ways also. Funding was received from UK-South Africa Seasons to produce an expanded version of Brian Filling's pamphlet "The Glasgow-Mandela Story" as an e-book. After a great deal of effort by Brian on the updating and then especially on the technical aspects of conversion to an e-book, this will be published shortly.

The Scottish Parliament's annual Festival of Politics had a well-attended session on Scotland's anti-apartheid history, with Bernard Ponsonby, Jean McFadden and Brian Filling, with representation from the South African High Commission. The exhibition on the history of the British AAM, produced by the AAM Archives Committee, was put on display in the Parliament for that weekend, along with 4 new panels on the Scottish AAM specially produced and now a permanent asset. The whole exhibition will return to the Parliament in February 2016, and then tour Scotland. Work on this has started.

Funding has been secured also for the cataloguing of the Scottish AAM archives held in Glasgow Caledonian University, which should begin early next year. We are indebted to Carole McCallum, archivist at GCU, who has had the care of our archives since they were lodged there, and who was mostly responsible for the successful funding application. To have the records catalogued will be a great boon, as there is steady demand for access to the archives but they are not easy to use in their present form. One notable visitor this year was Steve Biko's son, who was keen to make a connection between the Biko foundation and the archives at GCU.

Our annual social in January to mark the anniversary of the founding of the ANC really fits in this section of the report, since its purpose is precisely to mark the importance of the past and link it to work for the future, as well as providing a boost to people's spirits in the post-New Year depression.

Book Appeal: As well as the particular high point of Mandela Day, the book appeal goes on all year round, with books collected from across Scotland, from Ayr to Dunfermline and Melrose, and many points in between. Sorting and packing has continued weekly, with a big push before Mandela Day to get

the surge of donated books processed in time to go in the container. As well as a number of individual volunteers we had work groups from Glasgow Volunteer Centre and Lloyds Bank, who both made financial contributions also.

Hillhead Library where the project is based is closing for 12 months for a major refurbishment, so we will need to suspend operations for that time, unless we can find another venue that would give us the space for sorting and packing as well as storage. Uncertainty about the closing date is a bit unsettling, as we need to empty our space before it happens, but we have been assured we will be welcome back when the library reopens. The Oxfam bookshop has been very helpful in taking away books that are unsuitable for our purpose.

Visitors: We have hosted a series of Southern African visitors over the year, making use of our connections here to build links that can assist our colleagues in the region.

South African High Commissioner Obed Mlaba brought a delegation for a visit in March. Brian Filling arranged a very intensive programme of meetings and visits (don't we always?) relating to the High Commissioner's priorities and the specialist interests of his team, including the "ocean economy", skills development, the sports industry and building student accommodation. Educational institutions with relevant specialisms, tidal and wave-power companies, several of the Edinburgh Festivals and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, plus contacts in Scottish and local government were all included, and the delegation also met with several ACTSA activists.

In April we brought Peter Bailey of South Africa's National Union of Mineworkers to the STUC Congress again, this time in Ayr. He renewed connections with the Scottish trade unions and updated them on the campaign for justice for miners with silicosis as well as on the political and trade union situation in South Africa more generally. We were pleased to be able to help slightly in funding his visit to Britain, arranged by ACTSA UK to enable him to attend the Anglo-American AGM, as well as the extra leg to Scotland. The Congress programme front cover sported one of Brian Purdie's photographs of the Mzansi Choir at our Mandela Day 2014 event in Nelson Mandela Place, and Annie Shanahan had written inside about ACTSA Scotland and our book appeal so, with our usual stall as well, there was again a strong ACTSA presence at Congress.

Later that same week two South African writers, Lebo Mashile and Niq Mhlongo, came to speak at Glasgow's Aye Write! book festival in a visit we helped to facilitate. David Kenvyn was also deeply involved in ensuring the visitors met with a lot of useful contacts here.

In June we welcomed Vincent Ncongwane of the Swaziland TUC, who was brought to Glasgow by UNISON for their UK national conference. He spoke at their International Rally as well as to a section of the conference, and we were able to introduce him to the STUC General Secretary as well as arranging for him to speak to the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on International Development. Our stall at the conference distributed material about Swaziland. Later in the year we began distributing ACTSA's campaign postcards on Swaziland, and we hope to host a tour of the UNISON/ACTSA photo exhibition about the country.

Information: We have continued with our programme of stalls at all kinds of events, distributing material about our work and also selling crafts from community organisations in Southern Africa. These events vary in size and length, but the number of days in the year when we have a stall running somewhere in Scotland is quite substantial.

We are often asked at events if the goods are available to order online, which they have not been, so we hope to be able to start distributing small items in this way by upgrading our website to include this facility as well as taking card donations. We will put out word about this as soon as the upgrade is up and running. The website will, of course, also continue to provide information about what else we get up to. The Book Appeal page in particular on the present site generates offers of books throughout the year from people who haven't heard of us otherwise. This has included two very large donations of brand new children's books from a publisher in Edinburgh. A Facebook page has also been set up.

As every year, sincere thanks are due to all members and supporters who helped in any way to make this programme of work possible.

John C. Nelson (Secretary)