

Reminding and informing people about where South Africa has come from and about Scotland's role in supporting the struggle for freedom has again been a big part of our work this year, mixed as ever with doing what we can to assist progress in the region. There have been some hectic periods.

History: The funding from the National Archives mentioned last year duly led to the appointment of Julia Wylie to catalogue the archives of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Scotland, held at Glasgow Caledonian University. We hope this work will make the records more accessible, and make possible a further application to fund their digitisation. The website of the British AAM archives held at the Bodleian Library shows what can be done.

The photographic exhibition linked to that website, along with the four Scottish panels created last year, came back in February to the Scottish Parliament, where we held a reception, and then went on to Dalkeith in Midlothian, Aberdeen, Glasgow Caledonian University and Edinburgh University in the Spring, and returned to Glasgow City Chambers in July for Mandela Day and the Homeless World Cup. The other local authority to have given Nelson Mandela its Freedom, Dundee, was unable to fit in a showing this year but will take it another time.

The Glasgow Mandela Story e-book was completed and published online in March, and so is now available anywhere in the world with an internet connection. We need to think further about promoting awareness of its existence and availability.

Mandela Day this year was marked in Scotland mainly through a celebration event in Glasgow City Chambers, where speakers included the South African High Commissioner, followed by a concert and ceilidh. The event marked also the 40th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto shootings and the formal constitution of the Anti-Apartheid Movement Scottish Committee three days later, and all the volunteers who had worked for justice over that time.

The ANC anniversary social in January this year included some of the Glasgow Caledonian University optometry students who had volunteered on the Phelophepa Health Train speaking about their experiences there. Money raised went to a fund established by GCU to assist the work on the Train.

Some discussion has been taking place about the coming centenaries of Oliver Tambo in October 2017 and Nelson Mandela in July 2018. The most progress has been with a proposed poetry collection to mark the Mandela centenary, but other ideas are under consideration.

There have also been substantial discussions about a permanent memorial to Nelson Mandela in Glasgow, and it is hoped an independent charity will be formed shortly to take this forward – in time for 2018 if possible, though that timescale may be too tight to be practical.

Brian Purdie has been doing some research also into the history of the SS Mendi, a Scottish-built ship sunk in a collision in the English Channel in 1917 with the loss of over six hundred black South Africans of the South African Native Labour Corps on their way to service with the British forces in France. The High Commission is planning to mark the centenary so we hope to highlight the Scottish connection.

Visitors: We have had fewer visitors from Southern Africa this year, but have been glad to welcome, apart from the South African High Commissioner from London, South Africa's Minister of Arts and Culture, Nathi Mthethwa, in August and Dwyn Griesel, Founder and Director of Kronendal Music Academy in Hout Bay near Cape Town, who is currently in the middle of a five-day visit to Scotland.

We had a meeting with the Minister and his accompanying delegation, where we outlined what ACTSA Scotland got up to. There was particular interest in plans to celebrate the Tambo and Mandela centenaries, and opportunities for collaboration on these were to be followed up. The delegation was shown the plaque and Mandela bust in Glasgow City Chambers, and taken through Nelson Mandela Place.

Dwyn arrived in Scotland yesterday at the start of a two-week visit to the UK, with a view to raising funds for KMA and making musical connections. She will speak at an open meeting immediately after this AGM, and we have arranged a few contacts during the visit that we hope will be useful to her.

Book Appeal: As expected last year, the Book Appeal had to vacate its space in Hillhead Library's basement in February due to the imminent refurbishment of the building. The STUC very kindly gave us some space to store the books we had in stock, plus our trolleys and flat-pack spare boxes, but the actual collecting, sorting and packing of books had to be suspended in the meantime. The refurbishment has not actually started yet, which means the reopening is also receding further into the future.

Information: We kept up our usual programme of stalls this year, selling community project crafts from Southern Africa and distributing information. Some of these are at delegate events such as the STUC (with which we have maintained strong links) while others are aimed at the general public. This year's Ethical Christmas Fair is moving to Dundee and lasting for sixteen days, which is a logistical nightmare but we hope will be productive. The organisers have had difficulties over venues in Edinburgh recently, so were glad that Dundee offered a solution.

The stalls have been our main channel also for informing people about the human rights disaster that is Swaziland, on which ACTSA UK is probably the principal campaigning organisation. We distributed and collected a large number of their campaign postcards to be presented to the Commonwealth, had an A4 version of the ACTSA/UNISON exhibition on display, and handed out background information material. At street events, a surprising number of passers-by have connections with Swaziland and are keen to discuss the country. We also sell quantities of Just Trading Scotland's range of Eswatini jams, pickles and sauces from an NGO in Swaziland.

The website upgrading has not yet been started, due to the person who offered to do it being unavailable for a lengthy period. Our old site continues, and does serve its purpose in providing basic information about ACTSA Scotland and our activities, but we still hope to establish the new one before too long, and to be able to use it as an outlet for our craft goods and literature.

Community HEART: We have continued to co-operate with Community HEART, with the Board of which we share two Scottish Committee members as well as many supporters. We had a meeting with those two Board members about co-operating more closely, and were glad to be involved in a successful fundraising social in February and their dinner with Denis Goldberg in July. Community HEART is also very supportive of Kronendal Music Academy, and is handling any donations arising from Dwyn Griesel's current tour. The STUC Women's Conference in October had a motion of support for Community HEART, and a bucket collection.

Every year I mention our thanks to all who have helped our work in any way, whether with time, effort, expertise or finance, and it is just as true every year so I make no apology for the repetition. We are very grateful.

John C. Nelson (Secretary)