

RUTH FIRST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Charity No. 1019975

Trustees: Christine Cumming, Barbara Ewin (Treasurer), Cheryl McEwan, Lotte Shankland, John Tierney, Michael Thompson (Chairman).

Patrons: Bill Bryson (Chancellor of the University of Durham), Prof. Christopher Higgins (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durham).

School of Modern Languages & Cultures, University of Durham, Durham DH1 3JT
m.p.thompson@durham.ac.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2008–2009

The aims of the Trust are:

- To enable southern African students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Durham.
- To educate and inform students and staff at the University, as well as residents of the area, about educational and development issues in southern Africa.
- To raise funds to support these activities.

Southern Africa is defined for this purpose as comprising the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This report gives details of activities undertaken by the Trust in the year ending 31 July 2009 in pursuit of these aims.

The Studentship in 2008-09

The Ruth First Scholar this year was Nomazile Chicho. Nomazile is from Botswana, where she gained a BA in Sociology & Environmental Science at the University of Botswana, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. At Durham she successfully took an MSc in Public Policy & Health. She was the first Ruth First Scholar to be based at Durham's Queen's Campus in Stockton, and the School of Medicine & Health was delighted to have the opportunity to support the Scholarship. She wrote a dissertation comparing rates of HIV infection in Botswana and the UK, for which she was awarded an outstanding mark of 80%.

Noma was a member of St Chad's College. She did voluntary work with the Student Community Action group, and performed with Ngoma Vuma Uropa, the African vocal and percussion ensemble formed by Peter Okeno Ong'are, the 2007-08 Ruth First Scholar. In September 2009 she returned to Botswana and is currently looking for a job in which she can make the most of her enhanced skills, knowledge and experience.

The Studentship in 2009-10

Once again, a large number of applications were received from all over southern Africa. All the applications were made available to the shortlisting committee electronically, which allowed Bongani Ndimba and Owen Manda in South Africa to contribute to the process. The shortlist was considered by the full executive committee at a selection meeting in June 2008, and the Scholarship was offered to Mr Simplicio Bhebhe from Zimbabwe, who will take an LLM at the Law School. Simplicio arrived in Durham at the end of September 2009 and moved into St Chad's College accommodation at Trinity Hall. Further details about Simplicio can be found on the Trust's website:

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/thisyear.htm>.

Past Ruth First Scholars

The 2007-08 Scholar, Peter Okeno Ong'are, returned to Durham in January 2009 to study for a PhD in the Music Department. His topic is the role of music in processes of reconciliation and healing after conflict in Africa, which has involved fieldwork in Rwanda. He has reformed Ngoma Vuma Uropa, the vocal and percussion group based in St Chad's College, which performed at the Banquet in February 2009 and in various venues around the University and the City.

No major changes have been reported by other former Scholars, though several of them have been keeping in touch. Information about all of them can be found on the RFET website: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ruthfirst.trust/former.htm>.

Events

The annual banquet organized jointly with the Durham Palestine Educational Trust was held on 14 February 2009. Delicious food was prepared by various volunteers from both Trusts, local businesses donated prizes for a raffle, and the auction of skills and services was deployed again with great success. Music was coordinated and led by Peter Okeno Ong'are, featuring a talented jazz quintet during the meal, followed by an uplifting performance of African songs by Ngoma Vuma Uropa. The event was a great success, raising over £2000 for the Trust.

During his term of office as Mayor of Durham, Grenville Holland continued his invaluable support for the Trust. The highlight was a civic reception held in November 2008 in the splendid surroundings of the Guildhall, attended by Trustees, Committee members, the Ruth First Scholar and representatives of the University departments that have recently hosted Scholars (Music and Medicine & Health).

Cheryl McEwan once again took part in the Great North Run and raised funds for the Trust. Bill Bryson continues to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Trust, and the Vice-Chancellor of Durham University, Professor Chris Higgins, agreed to become a Patron.

Finance

The accounts for the year 2008-09 will be tabled at the AGM by the Treasurer. It was decided to provide partial support for Peter Ong'are's doctoral studies in the form of half the cost of his accommodation at St Chad's. This, together with a fall in one-off donations and an increase in travel costs, has contributed to a deficit for 2008-09. However, there is still a reasonable reserve and determined efforts will need to be made in 2009-10 to increase income. A studentship for 2010-11 has been advertised.

Annual grants are received from Durham County Council (now £2000 per year) and the Durham branch of the National Union of Mineworkers (£500 per year). We are very grateful to both bodies for this continuing support, to Grenville Holland for his advice and timely interventions, to the University of Durham for its commitment to awarding tuition fee scholarships to Ruth First Scholars, to the Departments that agree to provide teaching and supervision, and to St Chad's College for its valuable contribution to supporting and integrating the Scholar each year.

The commitment of the University to the Scholarship has been strengthened by a new arrangement whereby the Trust makes a Gift Agreement with the University (which can claim matching funds from the Funding Council), and payments to the Scholar and to St Chad's are made through the University account.

22 January 2010

Mike Thompson

Chairman of the Trustees