

Celebration of St Elphin's 150th anniversary



Famara - pictured with his father in Gambia

Gambian student receives cash aid from school

FOR a boy in The Gambia, Headmaster Peter Pollard and Patricia Miles (Head of Classics), have become an extended family.

Through them and the school's fundraising efforts, Famara has been able to gain an E and two Ds in his A-levels. This is a remarkable achievement in a country where it is almost impossible to do A-levels at all, and proved his determination to succeed against all odds.

Famara's mother died when he was only three days old and his father was ill throughout his childhood, so it was left to his older brothers to care and provide for him.

He attended a local primary school for six years and was only able to continue and attend a secondary school because of financial assistance from the local council, which paid his school fees.

He excelled at his work and came second in his year. This

To force him to leave school, his brother stopped giving him any fuel or food until Famara would agree to give in to his brother's wishes. In desperation, Famara turned to the young English student who was teaching him history.

FRICITION

His hard work at school was beginning to cause friction at home, as his eldest brother was becoming increasingly jealous of Famara's growing opportunities.

This was understandable, as he himself had never gone to school and was now having to feed and house Famara.

When Hannah Miles heard of Famara's plight, she clubbed together with the other students she was living with, to pay for the things he needed.

Famara's friendship with the students annoyed his brother still further because he did not approve of Famara mixing with white people. Matters finally came to a head when Famara's brother tried to attack him with

a knife.

Famara escaped and fled to the local chief-tain, who protected him from his brother, but he was now homeless and unable to return to his family.

He was able to lodge with a friend, but Hannah and her friends decided to rent a place for him to live.

In fact Hannah was so concerned for him and so impressed with his determination to do well at school, that she pleaded with her mother, Mrs Patricia Miles, to get St Elphin's to help him with his A-levels.

Famara was desperate to continue his education, but he could not afford his dinner, which cost him D.2, never mind the cost of tuition and a uniform which amounted to over D.2,000.

St Elphin's agreed to help him, and by various fundraising events, such as 'home-clothes days (where pupils pay to wear their own cloths instead of uniforms) we were able to send Famara enough money to get him through his A-levels and pay for his living costs.

Famara is now intending to study law in Britain for a degree, and has already found someone who will sponsor him to do this.

He is very grateful for everything he has received, as he says himself: "Mr Pollard, your assistance is of great joy to me...I am thanking all the people of St Elphin's for their help. I wish you look good luck in all your dealings."

S. Clayton

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Many St Elphin's pupils have different international backgrounds

THROUGHOUT St Elphin's you will find many students with different international backgrounds. There are students from Hong Kong, Africa, Canada, France, The Bahamas and Switzerland for example.

I spoke to one girl from Switzerland and asked her why she had come to St Elphin's. She said she wanted to improve her English.

She had looked around five other schools, but St Elphin's was highly recommended to her. Mostly, the girls from places like Switzerland, France and Hong Kong come to the school to improve their English.

Talking with pupils from Hong Kong, I came across one particular student who knew very little about the English language when she first arrived.

I asked her how she had felt: "I was very homesick because there were total strangers all around me and they were speaking a language I didn't clearly understand."

I also asked her what it was like boarding, and if there were many such schools in Hong Kong.

She said there were fewer than five and that she had not enjoyed boarding at first because it took her a long time to adjust.

I asked all the international students about Matlock, and they were surprised at the size of the town because they were used to big shopping centres.

They were fascinated by the little shops and cafes and found local peo-

ple very warm and friendly towards them because they took time to stop and talk to the girls and help those who were lost.

The students from Canada, The Bahamas and Africa all agreed that when they first arrived in England and stepped off the plane into the biting cold, they all wanted to get right back on board and fly home again.

However when they got

to school, the generosity of the other members of St Elphin's and the warm atmosphere soon thawed their first impressions.

Being an international student myself, I personally feel that coming to St Elphin's and settling in with the English way of

life has been a great and joyful experience for me, and I'm sure others would agree.

K. Sands



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