



Visit to Africa

A Summary Report by Oliver Maurice 12 December 2010

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the main findings arising out of my recent visit to four INTO members; in Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Fuller details of my time spent in each country can be found in my 6 blogs on the INTO website (<http://into.nthp.webfactional.com/into-action-2/#Secretariat>) and ideally this report should be read in conjunction with those blogs

It is fair to say, as I concluded after my visit to Taiwan earlier in the year, that no amount of e mail exchanges can replace the value of face to face meetings and seeing the issues that our members are facing first hand. It was also a huge learning experience for me witnessing what all the countries are currently going through or have been through in the recent past.

The Findings

1. Ethiopia – Addis Woubet – 15/16 November

Overview

The CEO is Princess Mariam Senna Asfa Wossen (Princess Mary for short!) who works on her own with occasional short term assistance either paid for out of her own pocket or voluntary.

They have one property, transferred from the government but with no security of tenure, the Mohammed Ali house named after an Indian salt trader who set up in Addis Ababa. It is currently being restored with international financial support including the Ambassadors Fund. There are a number of other historic buildings that Addis Woubet would like to take under its wing in three separate areas of the city, given the necessary finance.

Many of the older buildings in Addis are being demolished in the interests of progress and development.

As mentioned in my first blog, Addis Woubet and the Ethiopia Home Gardens Project (EHGP) have established a mutually supportive joint venture which not only increases the sustainability of the tangible natural heritage, the agro-biodiversity, and the intangible cultural heritage, the gardens are the expression of the multiplicity of differing rural cultures, but also will directly benefit the sustainability of the tangible cultural heritage, the Mohammed Ali house, which will benefit from the sales of produce from the proposed shop

Two good examples of best practice were:

- A new use for an old building - for the headquarters of the organisation and to include a library, shop and café
- The sustainability that results from the link with the Home Gardens project above

INTO follow ups

- Assist with sourcing funds for the outstanding costs of restoration (€120,000)
- Encourage Princess Mary to secure a legally binding agreement on the Mohammed Ali house
- Encourage Princess Mary and Natalia Hirsch (EHGP) to present a paper at 14 ICNT
- Subject to (Ethiopian) funding, prepare to speak about INTO at conference in Addis Ababa in April on Heritage Conservation and Development.
- Try to find voluntary support for Addis Woubet
- Establish the feasibility and cost of purchasing up to 300 delegate bags from EGHP made from fibrous plant material for 14 ICNT

2. Uganda – Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) – 16-21 Nov

Overview

CCFU is a not-for-profit ngo that is effectively the 'voice' of culture and cultural heritage in Uganda. It is dedicated to promoting culture as essential for sustainable and equitable development. With a full time staff of 5 they focus on specific programmes which promote the positive aspects of culture including: indigenous knowledge, cultural values, tangible heritage and cultural products in all their diversity.

Their three programmes are: Culture in Development, Cultural Heritage and Managing Diversity.

It is as well that they exist since the lack of prominence of culture in the government's portfolio is woeful. Culture comes under two ministries, Trade, Tourism and Industry, and Gender, Labour and Social Development. In the latter case the Ministry has seven functions of which culture is but one.

We were told by the Senior Principal Cultural Officer that culture tends to be taken for granted, not reflected in planning or budgeting and lacking political will!

The recent fire at the Kasubi Royal Tombs World Heritage Site has however given the cultural heritage and the need for heritage protection rather more prominence.

In all the discussions that I had, both with Ministers and government officials, and representatives of other ngos, the idea of the 15 ICNT being held in Uganda was very warmly received and expressions of support were offered from a number of quarters.

I firmly believe that INTO should do all it can to ensure that this happens. To hold the Conference in a developing country can do nothing but good, not only, by raising the profile of the importance of maintaining and conserving cultures and the cultural and natural heritage, in this case of Uganda, but also for the greater credibility of INTO itself, drawing it away from the perceived northcentric stance.

The facilities are there in the context of conference facilities, hotels and accomodation, Uganda

having played host to CHOGM as recently as 2007. Furthermore the potential optional tours following the conference are enticing in the extreme!

INTO follow ups

- **Final decision re ICNT 15 being held in Uganda needed by Executive Committee**
- Listing process to be sent to Ministry of Gender
- Consider Leadership and Conservation Organisation for membership of INTO
- Send Joseph Walugembe, Director of National Cultural Centre Theatre a copy of my talk

3. Zimbabwe – Zimbabwe National Trust (ZNT)– 22-26 November

Overview

The ZNT was founded 50 years ago. It has no management staff and has been run by a Committee, the Council, based in Harare. Recently a new local committee has been formed, based in Mutare, to look after the specific properties in that area, 300 km to the east of Harare and close to the Mozambique border. The main property, La Rochelle, has been under-resourced for a number of years largely due to the political and financial situation.

During my visit I met with both Committees and was also taken many of the ZNT 's portfolio of properties, including La Rochelle, the Rhodes Museum and World's View

Whilst in Africa I wrote a report with recommendations for the Council and local committee following the visit to La Rochelle: I extended my brief by recommending that there needed to be a CEO in place to further the aims of the organisation and promised to help find a suitable candidate at least in the short term, possibly as a secondment from the NT EWNI

INTO follow ups

- Establish from NT EWNI whether there may be staff available to help at CEO and Property Manager level
- Look at possibility of a partnership with English Heritage at Eltham Palace (the Courtauld's London home)
- Support ZNT by helping to source funds
- Possible approach to Courtauld family in Jersey regarding contents being returned to La Rochelle

4. South Africa – Conservation Trust South Africa – 26 Nov-1 Dec

Overview

The visit was in two stages, the first in Johannesburg and the second in Capetown. Mike Moriarty, who set up the Conservation Trust in South Africa and is the prime mover in establishing a National Heritage Trust for South Africa organised my visit which was co-hosted by Laura Robinson of the Cape Town Heritage Trust. The main purpose of the visit was to meet representatives of some of the heritage organisations and to visit a number of heritage sites. These included some associated with Nelson Mandela; from the farm, Liliesleaf, where he was captured; the fort (prison) in Johannesburg where he awaited trial; his home in Soweto, now a museum; to Robben Island prison where he languished for 18 of his 27 years in prison.

There are a number of heritage trusts operating in many of the major cities in South Africa. Plans are already at an advanced stage to establish a National Heritage Trust for South Africa, effectively a coalition of all those in existence who are willing to sign up. A steering committee has been formed and it is planned to launch the Trust next year. My main concern is that all the members of the steering committee are extremely busy in their own roles and it will probably require someone in post full time to take it forward to the launch. I offered to help with finding such a person, again, possibly from the NT EWNI ranks of recently retired Directors.

INTO follow ups:

- Establish whether the NT EWNI is able to help with temporary staffing.
- Assist with sourcing potential funders

Overall Conclusion

Others from the countries that I visited must judge whether my visit was a success. From my perspective it was enormously worthwhile not only in learning about the specific issues that our members are facing but also showing how INTO may be able to help them to overcome some of those issues. It was also a great opportunity to spread the word about INTO to a far wider audience.

Postscript

When I was in Cape Town, I was given a book entitled 'The Historic Monuments of South Africa'. In the Foreword by the one time State President, JJ Fouché, he writes:

"The material heritage of a civilised people symbolises its spiritual growth and content. The indiscriminate and deliberate destruction of our tangible and visible cultural heritage is equivalent to the obliteration of our historical traditions which should form the essential background of our understanding of the present and our planning of the future"

Maybe that is the message that should be transmitted to every government intent on "progress"!