

# From rat race to mud hut

In March this year, radiographer Lisa Brown left the material comforts of her London job to embark upon a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) post, teaching radiographic assistants in a developing country, thanks to sponsorship from The Society and The College of Radiographers. Here she gives Synergy her first report from Tanzania.

When I announced to my family, friends, and colleagues that I was going to Tanzania to teach radiography I received all the usual jokes about living in a mud hut with no electricity or running water, and having to develop my films in a bucket.

But I was looking for new challenges, so decided to take a VSO job teaching radiographic assistants at a medical centre in Mwanza, Tanzania's second largest city, situated on the southern shores of Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake.

Bugando medical centre sits on the top of a large hill overlooking the lake. It is an 800-bed referral and teaching

hospital, and contains a wide variety of schools including a medical school, a school of nursing, one for pharmaceutical assistants and the school of radiographic assistants.

This school has three members of staff, including myself, and about 11 students in each of the two years. It is quite well equipped and I have the use of a computer, overhead projector, TV and video, and a fairly wide selection of teaching aids such as anatomy posters and skeletons.

The school's main problem is that the curriculum has not been updated for the past 15 years. This makes it impossible for the students to upgrade their qualifications, as the



*The general X-ray room with two of the students.*

assistants' course no longer coincides with the radiography course run at the Muhimbili Hospital in Dar-es-Salaam. The problem has arisen mainly because it is very difficult to find radiographers who are willing to teach, or for those who are, to hear about the jobs available or gain the training experience they require.

Part of my job description is to help upgrade the syllabus and bring it in line with the

radiography course run in Dar-es-Salaam. I have also to think about setting up a new course, to enable assistants to upgrade to radiographer without having to do another three years study.

Unfortunately, this all takes time, and before it can be started the hospital needs to employ a radiologist to help with the training as well as interpret X-rays and carry out ultrasound examinations. There are rumours that a radiologist is coming but no-one seems to know how or when, so at the moment we can only hope.

The X-ray department is fairly well equipped. The machines you need to use a drip stand to hold the tube at the right height, but generally they do work, and the film quality is of a reasonable standard. I am told that the department used to be a lot busier, but since they raised the cost of an X-ray (a chest X-ray now costs 800 shilling, or 80p), people cannot afford to have them taken until their situation becomes urgent. The average wage of a radiographer is £45 per month.

After two months, I am now beginning to enjoy the teaching.



*Lisa's office – a far cry from the streets of London.*

The students are great, despite the language barrier. I know that I have a lot of work ahead of me, the first being to give English lessons to the students, but I am looking forward to it.

I feel that, given time, I will be able to achieve something more here than I ever would have in the UK.

As for the living conditions that were such a source of

amusement to friends and family, I share a two-bedroomed house with another volunteer and we have power and running water most of the time, save a few technical

hitches. I get to live in one of the world's most beautiful countries with amazing sunsets and views of the lake, and on top of all that I am doing a job I enjoy.



Chest stand in the fluoroscopy room.



The viewing room.

**Sponsoring radiography**

The Society and The College of Radiographers are sponsoring Lisa £1000 for each of the two years of her VSO posting. GSCE Stephen Evans said, "We saw it as an opportunity for The Society and The College to contribute to supporting radiography in all its forms, to help another community, and, of course, support a member in her endeavours. I have no doubt that Lisa will gain great experience, personally and professionally. She will be keeping us up-to-date with her experiences, radiographic and cultural, throughout her time in Tanzania, and I hope it will encourage other radiographers to use their skills for the benefit of others – there is no doubt that UK radiographers are amongst the best trained and highly skilled in the world. Thanks to a generous donation from an anonymous member of The Society, we will be able to sustain this support in future years." (As reported on Synergy News, August 98)

**Royal opening for Lister Harmony**

His Majesty King Constantine has officially opened the Siemens Magnetom Harmony MR system at The Lister Hospital in Chelsea. Various guests attended the event, including the Kuwaiti Ambassador, Mr Khaled Al Duwasan, and Chairman of St Martin's Healthcare, Christopher Fielder.

The Lister Hospital is the first to have such a system in the London area, and since commissioning it in July, has been working at full capacity of 50 patients per week.

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*Right: King Constantine, seated in the control room.*



**Head and shoulders above the rest**

Did you covet the giraffe mobile generator on the Siemens stand at Med X Ray this year? Now your new generator can be the same for free. Siemens is giving away the giraffe stickers and giraffe soft toy with every new order for the Mobilett Plus M.

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**History in the making**

The 500th SLi Linear Accelerator from Elekta is being installed at the Medical Center West, New York, USA.

The 500th SLi is one of two systems chosen to equip two new oncology centres, and demonstrates that the vision needed in 1985 to go to a digital Linear Accelerator is still advancing medical technology today.

The new SLi Linear Accelerator, for example, now incorporates MLC control systems.

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