

The Marakissa Clinic in The Gambia.

As Mint Members know, our interest in this work arises through Stephen Lawsons's connection with Queens College, Taunton which for a number of years has been supporting Educational and Medical work in The Gambia. Over Easter 2016 a party from Queens visited and the following report was received from the school Chaplain, the Rev Robert Blackhall.

"The Easter season is very much about light from darkness, hope from despair, and above all life from death. It was appropriate that we visited the Nourishment Centre at Marakissa in the Gambia during the season of the year when we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. We saw life and hope. The clinic has continued to grow since our last visit 12 months ago. The garden that we started to develop is flourishing. The Banana tree saplings planted 12 months ago are now over 6 feet tall and ready to produce fruit. Cassavas were doing well and a variety of crops were showing signs of growth in the various beds. We are able to prepare more beds for plantation and transfer some of the seedlings to bigger beds so that they could grow in a better environment. But more importantly, the clinic is able to be there for those who need it most. There is now a nurse, Mrs Daba Diouf Grant who is in residence at the Marakissa clinic. We were also able to see the refurbishment of another building for the 2nd nurse. The malnutrition unit continues to grow and develop. The number of malnourished children seen is over 90; 33 were discharged after they gained the normal weight, 25 defaulted and there are 32 that we continue to take care of. With a second nurse in residence, home visiting is in progress and will improve the quality of the service they are able to give. This will ensure that there will not be defaults in the future and there will be more close contact with the patients and their parents. We saw a number of youngsters and their families in the centre on the days we visited. The mothers and babies were checked over by the nurses and the appropriate measurements made. In addition, the children received the food supplements they required. The mothers were also fed at lunchtime. The biggest single thing though is the ongoing education of families about providing the best balanced-diet for their families. This will very much be the focus of the ongoing work of the Nourishment Centre.



