

Last November, Jo Hiscox gave a fascinating talk to the Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association (NBKA) about her work as a Bees Abroad volunteer, managing the Akwaya project in South West Province, Cameroon.

I was amazed to hear how the charity aims to relieve poverty in developing countries through beekeeping. Fundraising is essential to help get a project off the ground and sustain it throughout its course, which may last several years. With that thought in mind, I asked Jo if she would like me to raise money for her Cameroon work – she almost snapped my hand off!

This is how I came to be invited to attend the Volunteers' Information Day on Sunday 13 April at the National Beekeeping Centre at Stoneleigh. This was an ideal introduction to Bees Abroad and an opportunity to meet the inspirational team of dedicated workers, who are fewer in number than perhaps I imagined, considering the scope of their work and that they are almost all volunteers, except for the administrator and fundraiser, both part-time employees.

Background

The programme for the day included a brief history of Bees Abroad (BA), which has run numerous projects worldwide over the past 15 years.

Each project starts with a request for help which might come from a local community or farming association. A member of the BA team will then visit the area and meet interested parties to explore the possibility of establishing a new project, before making a report for consideration by the

BA committee. If successful, the project is registered and a project Manager is appointed to ensure that funding is in place and to oversee the project's development and progression.

Ultimately, the aim is for each project to become self-sufficient. Local people will train new recruits, local materials will be used for the needs of the beekeepers and practical help given to make sure that the honey and any beeswax products are sold at the best prices possible for the benefit of the communities involved.

Currently, BA has 19 registered projects. Roy Dyche and Pam Gregory explained how their projects, in Hoima, Uganda, and Nkhata Bay, Malawi, respectively, have developed and where further work is needed before they can become independent of the charity's support.

Help at Home

For those wishing to volunteer for BA who might not want the challenge of leading a project, there are plenty of opportunities for home-based contributions. These include not only fundraising, but other valuable practical support with the charity's website, accountancy and/or administration. To raise its profile with the public and gain further help, BA supporters have stalls at some of the big country

fairs or shows and I am looking forward to assisting at the Lincoln Show on 18–19 June.

Ambassadors

Another suggestion of how supporters can help is to have BA 'Ambassadors' throughout the UK, perhaps as part of local beekeeping associations. This seemed to be the kind of thing I have already started doing, raising awareness of the charity's work alongside my fundraising, so I have offered to take up this role in Nottinghamshire.

Fundraising

To date, I have raised over £500, mainly through making and selling small knitted items on a bee or stripy theme.

Rob (my husband) and I recently spoke to a local youth club about bees, beekeeping and Bees Abroad, for which we received a donation to the charity, and the committee

members of Beeston Wildlife Group have also given us some money in return for receiving a bee bookmark each!

At the Volunteers' Day, I picked up a range of soaps, lip balms and creams as well as cards that BA has produced and I will be selling these and Jo's honey at future NBKA meetings.

Finally, Rob and I take part in the annual Beeston and Chilwell Garden Trail and this year all the monies we raise will go to Bees Abroad. We will have a plant sale, refreshments and activities for families. Alison Knox and Alec Thomson, fellow NBKA members, will be on hand to answer questions about bees and beekeeping, with Jo manning a Bees Abroad stall.

Thanks

Thanks to those who have supported my fundraising so far – you never know what an interest in bees (and Bees Abroad) will get you into! 

VOLUNTEERS ATTEND AN INFORMATION DAY

What's Bees Abroad About?

Anne Mason (Nottinghamshire Beekeepers' Association)

Volunteers hear how they can help Bees Abroad at home and overseas



Claire Waring