

Friday, October 28, 2005

I awake to discover that the worst part of my cold is behind me. The group is to visit a handicap workshop, but despite feeling better, I decide to opt out and to use the time to catch up on what you are reading here, my travel logs. In 2002 I had no trouble keeping up with writing these travel logs, but in 2005 our trip is so packed with events that there is literally no time to diary.

Tandy comes for the rest of the group about 10 a.m. and I am told to be ready at about 11 a.m. to be picked up for the rest of the day's events. I take that with a LARGE grain of salt. I'd bet the ranch that they won't be back for me before noon. I have a successful time catching up on my diary and downloading picture from my camera to my laptop. At about noon I'm asked if I'd like some tea and biscuits. I of course say yes. It is after 12:30 that the gang returns for me. They had a great time and made many purchases. Given the time of their return, past noon, I guess I would have won my bet.

Our destination is the Lower Ngqwara Congregation, which was our first stop in 2002. We are very late as this was originally meant to be a mid morning gathering. In Eastern Cape this is not a big problem, in fact it isn't even a little problem.



Tandy greets the group and then Larry and I give a greeting from Donegal Presbytery. I mention that this is special place for me, as it was the first place we visited in 2002, and was therefore my first chance to here the wonderful rhythms and hospitality of the congregations of the Mthatha Presbytery. The minister her is Rev. Sidel. He speaks briefly about the land that the church is about to purchase for the garden project.

In 2002 the plot the Lower Ngqwara Congregation thought their garden plot was to be build on a piece of land across the road from the present site. They believed that the land would be easily obtained and developed. It was already cleared, was by a good stream, and electricity for an irrigation pump was close by. In fact, of the two sites, here and Sommerville, it looked like this would be the more favorable site to get as started as there was a old, very knowledgeable member of the congregation we met who was and is a commercial farmer. Unfortunately the land was snatched away by the municipality and they have been scrambling ever since to obtain another piece of land.

By mid November the hope is that this new piece of land will be leased to them, with a possible option to buy down the road. We drive the short distance to an area near the land of 4.2 hectares. We there we have to hike a bit, and cross a small stream to be able to walk and view the land close up. It soon becomes apparent that this land is nowhere near as nice as the land we looked at



in 2002. It will take a lot of work to clear the trees and brush from the field before it can be farmed. The soil appears to be fairly fertile, but most of the 4.2 hectares lies on a large slope. Probably no more than 1.5 hectares is anywhere near flat. Also there will need to be built an access road for equipment to be brought in to plow, maintain and harvest the field. Another problem is that the nearby stream is not anywhere near as large as the one at Sommerville. I don't think it can be assumed that it will provide enough water for irrigating crops during the dry season. On the positive side, Percy informs me that the old, commercial farmer we talked to in 2002 will be involved again this time. In fact, he has offered the church the use of some of his fields and would plant, tend and harvest them for the church providing half the profit from the crops to the church.

Later in the evening when we are alone Percy mentions to us that he is somewhat skeptical about the viability of this piece of land, and does not want project money to be used for things like clearing the land and building an access road. He really thinks the church should take the commercial farmer up on his offer to use some of his land.



After our visit, we head to the nearby town of Mqanduli and the home of Rev. Sidel's mother, I believe her name is Muma Jezile. There we are offered the usual banquet of a multiple course meal, starting with a plate of fish, following through with various meats and chicken, potato and rice, greens and finally dessert. The dessert looks beautiful, a multi-layered pudding masterpiece. I take several large scoops and take a bite to discover it has a strange, dare I say, burnt taste to it. I struggle to eat it all, Sarah looks less excited to eat it. I tell her that pretend you are on Fear FactorIts all about you!!!.... Don't you quit!!!1..... that's what I'm talking about!!! Amazingly Aaron goes for seconds!



The evening ends with a leisurely evening in our home, which includes our friend Victor. We have a late supper at 8:00 p.m.. During the evening Percy, Larry and I talk about the garden project (reference my comments earlier in this travel log), and Victor joins us later to talk about the Computer Project. All in all a good day, made even better by my cold going to a stage where I feel much better.