

# *You are most Welcome*

In 1859 the Scottish missionary David Livingstone reached Lake Nyasa and so began the link between Scotland and the country we know as Malawi – a link which has been reinforced recently by the First Minister, Jack McConnell's visit to Malawi last summer. In March this year a group of Scottish teachers, both primary and secondary visited schools in Malawi to explore and compare approaches to citizenship while gaining an insight into the life skills and social subjects curriculum. The programme included visits to urban and rural schools, meeting with educators, policy makers and teacher trainers.

The visit began with discussions with the Minister for Education, Mr Kuthemba Mwale and two of his colleagues who were very honest about the educational system in the country.

With the introduction of free Primary Education in 1994 a greater number of children are going through the educational system which has led to a higher demand for teachers. There is currently a shortage of about 5,000 in primary and 80,000 in secondary.

Children go through eight stages and then sit an exam – the Primary Leaving Certificate, the results of this determining whether the young folk continue with their education. All secondary schools are boarding and a fee must be paid.

Along with a lack of teaching staff there is also a lack of basic resources, with large classes of 80 plus children in a class sitting on the floor.

The long term aim of education in Malawi to us appears simple and achievable this being a safe water supply, toilets, one teacher to sixty pupils and a text book for every child but to achieve this will require organisation and finance.

Our group saw Malawi's challenge in adapting to universal education. We saw the difficulties facing the teachers but most of all we saw their enthusiasm and that of the pupils some of



*Malawi has a strong bond with Scotland.* whom walk ten km each day to get to school. Everywhere we went we were greeted by great kindness and friendship and we were all enchanted by the beauty of the country.

Schools in Argyll have recently sent a quantity of classroom equipment to Malawi through Raven Trust, a Christian Organisation based at Strachur and having seen the lack of resources in the primaries we know that everything that was collected will be put to good use.

In every classroom the children greeted us with 'You are most welcome' and we all felt the warmth of this greeting. As the First Minister reported when he spoke to the Scottish Parliament the challenges are enormous, but the scale of the problems must not prevent us from helping.



*Mr. Kuthemba Mwale receiving the quaich of friendship from Argyll & Bute.*