

WHAT DOES BOAT DO?

This is the third year that *T&M* has supported the Bicton Overseas Agricultural Trust (BOAT) with its annual tractor raffle.

But the real supporters, of course, are the thousands of readers, and others, who dig in their pockets each year to buy a ticket. And they may wonder "What does BOAT actually do?"

The bald facts are that since its formation in 1991 BOAT has been "training the trainers" in underdeveloped countries and more than 100 of them have been educated in agricultural and management techniques that they have then gone home to share with their countrymen.

As the charity raffles a tractor, Joseph Lewis finds out where the money goes

The latest of BOAT's training courses finished in June at Bicton College in Devon (the shared Bicton name is because BOAT was started by farmers in the Bicton area, not because there is any formal link to the college) and welcomed six trainers from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi.

This course was aimed at senior managers from those countries' training institutes to help them manage their establishments more efficiently and effectively. Participants included a deputy director, representatives of a livestock training institute and a college accountant.

One of the institutions represented was the Interchristian Fellowships' Evangelical Mission, which is located at the foot of Mt Eglon (1692m) close to the Kenya/Uganda border. Its aim is to develop mainly rural communities to become self-supporting with its motto of "holy living and hard work."

The main crops in the area are maize, beans, sunflowers, cassava, sweet ▶

The 2009 BOAT institutional management course students. From left: Ruth from Kenya, Harriet from Uganda, Reuben from Tanzania, Febbie from Malawi, Leticia from Tanzania and Irene from Kenya.





John Russell (left) and Bill Vellacott of BOAT with Harriet from Uganda (left) and Leticia from Tanzania, members of the 2009 BOAT institutional management course.

potatoes, coffee and tea and larger farms have John Deere, Ford and MF tractors – smaller farmers have none.

The Kulika Trust based in Kampala, capital of Uganda, was also represented on the course. It works at a local level teaching and promoting the use of sustainable farming techniques and supports about 60 students a year with higher education in Uganda and overseas.

Another institution on the course was the Buhuri Dairy Training Centre, which was established in Tanzania in 1980 with help from the Dutch Government and works with dairy workers, aspiring dairy farmers and veterinary students. Most of the farmers it deals with have land of between 0.9 and 3 hectares.

The Livestock Training Institute at Madaba in Tanzania was founded in 1990 and attended the Bicton course. It offers a three-year course in crop and livestock production, of which 60 per cent consists of practical work.

The final participant, the Natural Resources College in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, offers courses in agriculture, animal health, environment and nutrition.

All the groups are thriving this year on productive soils but most of the local farmers still use hand tools or donkeys and oxen to cultivate the soil.

Tractors are mainly in the institutions and the college in Lilongwe, for instance, acquired a new Massey Ferguson last year to use in training; but those fortunate enough to have their own tractors face a problem.

Reuben Kombe from the Livestock Training Institute in Tanzania explained: "The availability of spare parts is a big problem. The parts may be 750 miles from the college. Often we request a part and the wrong part arrives or we have a problem with a specific item like a hydraulic pump and the parts company does not stock it.

"The majority of farms are two to five acres, which may not justify a tractor, particularly with the spares issue, and consequently so few farmers own tractors that it is not economically viable for companies to stock a wide range of parts."

Another issue all the colleges have to tackle is over-cultivation by small-scale farmers over many years. Yields go down and this is exacerbated by unpredictable rainfall, which

makes crops more susceptible to pests such as grasshoppers, quelea birds (both of which can strip crops in seconds) and banana and coffee disease. The maize farmer's greatest menace is the larger grain borer, which attacks maize stored after harvest.

Even making agricultural land creates a problem – the loss of trees leads to soil erosion.


The BOAT course at Bicton analysed these issues. The curriculum concentrated

on the aspects of college management which are essential to its operation, including management structure, estate management and marketing. The participants also observed teaching and learning styles, developed IT skills and studied methods of recording farms' performance.

The course also provided participants with the opportunity to develop skills in their own areas of technical or business enterprise.

A busy timetable featured visits to a dairy farm, a cheese enterprise and organic vegetable and poultry producers. The students also travelled to local farmers' markets, the North Somerset and Devon County Shows and two other land-based colleges, Brymore School in Somerset (featured in last month's *T&M*) and Kingston Maurwood in Dorset.

At weekends, the students were welcomed into the homes of BOAT supporters, many of whom are farmers, and now they have returned to their homes with a flavour of British life and the knowledge to help lift their own people out of poverty.

* BOAT is a registered charity number 1017527. 

YOU CAN WIN IT

The tractor that *T&M* bought for BOAT this year is a 1967 David Brown 880 Selectamatic, which has been restored by students at Bicton College and is pictured below.

It will be seen at various events around the country between now and November when the draw will be made but you can buy tickets now.

Simply e-mail bv@woodbeer.co.uk or telephone 01884 277329.

The six tractors previously raffled have raised more than £87,500 for BOAT and this has been made possible by sponsorship so that every pound

spent on a ticket goes straight to the charity and is not spent on buying and renovating the prize or promoting the draw.

Apart from *Tractor & Machinery*, this year's sponsors are:

- Vapomatic, tel: 01392 684000. www.vapomatic.com
- Bicton College, tel: 01395 562400. www.bicton.ac.uk
- Farm Machinery Haulage Ltd, tel: 01327 311484
- Bridgestone Firestone Tyres, tel: 01926 488500. www.bridgestone-firestone.com
- Oakham Treasures, tel: 01275 375 236. www.oakhamtreasures.co.uk



The 2009 BOAT tractor certainly looks better after a restoration. The 1967 David Brown 880 came from local DB collector, Tim Langabeer, and Chris Jarowski of Bicton College, whose team of students undertook the restoration, is pictured aboard it.