

# BrassTacks

Issue 77 - 2025



Alan and new apprentice Tonya

Serving those who serve...



The workshop - remember thou shalt not covet! (Sakeji school)

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# Editorial



Alan and Sheila

## **Alan & Sheila Park – An Appreciation, by Sam Phillips, Chairman**

Most of you will know that Alan and Sheila Park, our Executive Director and Administrator are retiring in June this year after almost 13 years of faithful service.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and myself, I want to publicly thank Alan and Sheila for their sterling service over their tenure. Their work to plan and organise Brass Tacks' many projects, both overseas and in the UK, has been vital in keeping Brass Tacks running smoothly. In addition, Alan has been actively involved on site on many of the projects, as well as regularly doing deputation work to report on Brass Tacks' activities.

We are pleased that Alan and Sheila will remain in contact with Brass Tacks and be available to consult as the need arises. We wish them and their wider family every blessing in the years ahead, God willing, and trust that they will enjoy a fulfilling retirement.

## **Looking forward**

Our new structure will be rather different, with the role of Executive Director being supported by an Operations Director. More on these appointments separately in this magazine edition. During Covid years, there was a focus on UK projects. In future, UK projects which support cross-cultural mission will continue, with a goal of doing at least 70% of our projects abroad. We also hope to provide more consultation advice in advance of projects, and in some cases, design input and advice may be all that is required so that local skilled people can complete the task.

Our Team Leaders and volunteers will continue to undertake projects where this is needed, and so anyone interested in offering their practical skills or design and consultancy experience should contact the new Executive Director.



# Two New Appointments at Brass Tacks

## Meet Colin Haxton our new Executive Director



Colin lives with his wife, Morag, in Kirkliston, near Edinburgh; as a couple they played a key role in a new church plant in that community in 2007. Colin was a founding elder and now serves as deacon with responsibility for building maintenance and technology. They have three adult children, all of whom are involved in serving God.

Colin has been working in the commercial sector since graduating in 1988 and is currently a major account director at GAP Hire Solutions – the UK’s largest privately owned plant hire company where he has been for the last 23 years. He will leave the company at the end of June to take up the role of Executive Director with Brass Tacks, having served as a Board

Member of the charity for the last 5½ years.

Colin says, “I am really excited to be taking up this role with Brass Tacks, as I am keen to devote my time to do what I can to see God’s kingdom grow as a result of the practical ministry that the charity can offer. We are seeking the Lord’s help at this time, to identify more volunteers to assist our skilled Mission Partners, as well as prayerfully seeking additional skilled workers who might be able to join us and commit to serving God in a practical way for the years ahead.”

**“I am keen to devote my time to do what I can to see God’s kingdom grow as a result of the practical ministry”**

Colin will establish a new office base for Brass Tacks in the Edinburgh area, and looks forward to travelling to projects overseas and meeting up with local Christians and missionaries.

Please pray for Colin and Morag as they respond to God’s call to serve with Brass Tacks.

## Introducing Lawrence McCleery our new Operations Director



Lawrence and Monty with little Carmen

Lawrence lives in Comber, Co Down with his wife Monty and their one-year-old daughter, Carmen. Lawrence and Monty are both deeply involved with the work of Carryduff Gospel Hall, where they lead Sunday School, Holiday Bible Clubs, and one-off evangelistic events. Lawrence also serves as a deacon and trustee and has been responsible for leading outreach programmes such as Christianity Explored and Discipleship Explored.

Lawrence studied architecture at Sheffield University, completing his master's in architecture in 2008. After working in professional practice and being qualified as a Chartered Architect, he moved to the family business, Ray McCleery Independent Remedial Consultants, which he now runs as a sole practitioner. The business specialises in inspecting and advising on damp, decay, and timber problems in buildings. His role with Brass

Tacks will occupy 50% of the working week, and for the other 50%, he will continue with his consultancy business.

Since joining the Brass Tacks Board of Trustees in 2023, Lawrence has been involved in surveys on buildings in Rome at IBEI Bible College and in India at Hebron School.

Lawrence is delighted to be taking up this new role: "The Lord Jesus Christ began a new life within me on 24th July 1998. It has been my desire that He would use me in a much greater capacity to see this new life planted within others. I have therefore been seeking a vocational role that would benefit from the skills and abilities developed through my education, employment and experience to date."

Please also pray for Lawrence and Monty and their little daughter Carmen, as they have responded to the call of God to serve with Brass Tacks.

### Give Thanks

As a Board, we are delighted to have both these brothers taking over the management of Brass Tacks and its projects in the future, in the will of the Lord. They have complementary skills, and we believe that this is an answer to prayer for which we give thanks. We would ask for your ongoing prayers for them as they take up their duties shortly.

**Sam Phillips**  
Chairman

# A Week in Provence

Colin Haxton



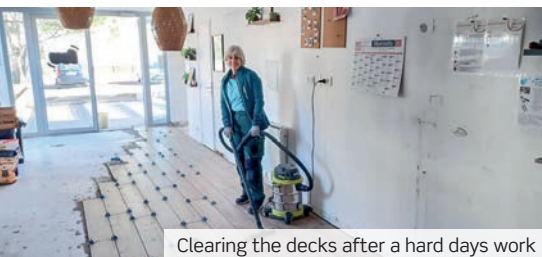
The author Peter Mayle and his wife ventured to the beautiful South of France in the late 1980's and he penned the best-selling book, "A Year in Provence", with the spin-off TV series giving us an insight into this very special place. In February of this year, my wife, Morag and I had to go for the abridged version and spend just one week in the wonderful city of Aix-en-Provence. We were there as volunteers to lend some assistance to the Brass Tacks team. All three of the charity's skilled Mission Partners (Paul, Phil

& David) were there to assist the local church with a project to expand and refurbish their main meeting space in order that the growing church could accommodate everyone who wanted to worship together.

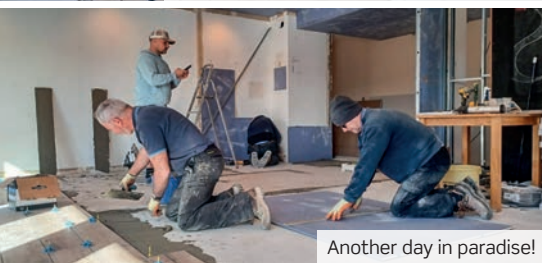
## Aix-en-Provence

Several years ago, a new church outreach was planted into the university city of Aix and the Christians there established a café with support ministries which largely catered for the burgeoning student population in the city. The café premises doubled up as a church meeting place and Brass Tacks was able to help construct the original building set-up for the church back in 2017. Eight years later, the church has grown so much that the meeting place cannot accommodate everyone, so they are having to run two separate services on Sundays and the





Clearing the decks after a hard days work



Another day in paradise!

church leadership was keen to find a way for the whole group to meet together. So, they called on Brass Tacks once again.

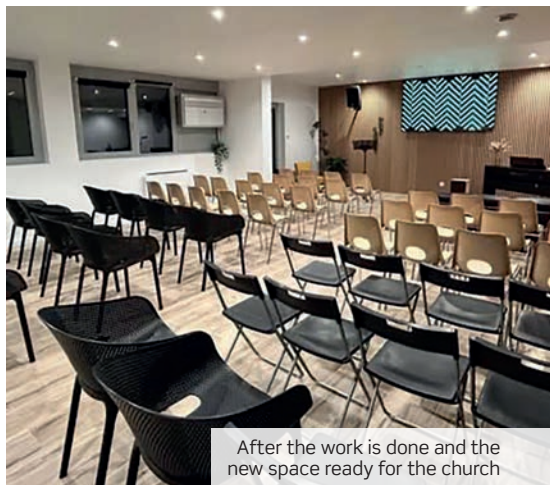
Our team was able to knock down a wall between the two largest rooms in the building and realign the meeting space to increase capacity by over 50%. We also spent a considerable amount of time putting down a brand-new tiled floor throughout the whole building which enhanced the look and feel of the space tremendously.



Workers at their best - at tea break

It was a joy to work together and learn some new skills, assisting the team with the project, as well as experiencing the loving fellowship and hospitality of the local Christians in Aix. We had some truly special times together and formed and strengthened friendships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We also had the opportunity on one of the days to experience something of the natural beauty of the vicinity which was really special.

The result of our efforts is that the church now has a fabulous meeting space which also serves as a café and support centre for the students, who truly value all that the local church is doing. Please pray that the outreach ministry into the community in Aix will continue to flourish and that many more will come to Christ. Maybe we will need to go back in a few more years to help them expand further?



After the work is done and the new space ready for the church



# Miles of Tiles - Sakeji School, Zambia.

Alan Park

For 100 years Sakeji school has provided primary schooling in the northwest of Zambia. Its location, bordering three countries of Angola, DRC Congo and Zambia provided access for missionary children whose parents served the Lord in what was then known as “the beloved strip.” Our own three children completed all their primary schooling at Sakeji, and we have many happy memories, as well as owing a great debt to the staff for their dedication.

With changing circumstances there are fewer missionary children, but the same ethos continues. Currently around 70 children from ten different nationalities benefit from quality education in a beautiful rural environment. The multi-cultural staff seek to train and care for students in ways which honour God and follow Christian patterns of learning and living – with the prayer that each of them

will enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

A continuous upgrading has made significant changes with the addition of newer buildings as well as major repairs to the older buildings. Over the years, Brass Tacks has been involved with various projects including construction and tiling of the dining hall. This year we were asked for assistance and I joined a team from Canada (Tim McDougall and Andrew Williamson) as well as contractors from the capital city, Lusaka. With the 100-year celebrations imminent and visitors planning to attend from various parts of the globe, the plan was to tile the dorms and some of the classrooms.

Over 1,000 square metres of tiles were laid in two weeks by the visiting contractors giving the classrooms, library,



Sakeji school has changed over the years





All hands on deck to do the grouting

and dormitories a more modern look, as well as improving the light reflection and brightening up the interiors. This has also made these areas easier to clean.

After the tiling was complete, there were many beds which needed repairs with sprung joints and missing slats. All the wood is locally sourced hardwood which behaves quite differently to the construction timber in UK. However, the benefit is that the hardwood is resistant to termite attack.

In recent years, the construction of a large fully equipped workshop has greatly facilitated making and repairing the

furniture, and almost anything else for that matter. Much of the steel structural part was sourced by Andrew Williamson who also has been instrumental in buying specialised equipment to make a workshop which any school or college would be proud of.

While the tiling was in progress, the children were enjoying their Easter break, but the staff were busy working to feed the troops as well as being very hands-on with the grouting, painting, and reorganising the bedrooms and classrooms in preparation for the start of next term.

After the tiles were laid, there was a lot of effort by various members of staff to make the dormitories and classrooms clean and ready for the arrival of the new term. Dorms were painted, library reorganised, and all the other areas spruced up. Do pray with us that the centenary will be a time of great blessing, and perhaps reflection, as former students and staff return for a visit. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

See [https:// www.sakeji.com](https://www.sakeji.com)



Dormitory for girls all ready



Staff ready for new term

# Dipalata Mission Clinic

Alan Park



The new clinic with insulated roof

Having completed the tiling project at Sakeji school ahead of schedule, the two Canadians and I booked a flight to Dipalata in the Zambezi district. Mark and Jenelle Heikoop (USA) have a ministry there which includes the clinic work and buildings and maintenance needs as well as home schooling their four daughters. Jeff Speichinger is the father to Jenelle, and he is well cared for by the family since the recent passing of his wife June in December last year. The assembly is small, but they gave us a warm welcome and we were able to share in the conference messages at Easter.

The small hospital was recently built by builders from N. Ireland and is well designed and constructed. Insulated roof panels make a huge difference to the temperature inside the wards. Janelle has a PA system which has yet to be installed but which will be used to share the gospel to the patients and visitors.

The Lord does work in strange ways because neither Mark nor I had any inkling that we would be able to help with the construction of extra staff accommodation so soon after his initial phone call. It was an immense joy to be part of the Heikoop family with their four daughters for 2 weeks, filling in as substitute uncles and (hopefully) bringing a new batch of stories and jokes.

On Sundays we travelled around a couple of assemblies to give help with the ministry. I think they were encouraged by the change of faces and hopefully also by our time around the Word of God.



Start of the foundations for the new building



Mark filling the foundations





Tim McDougall and Alan being entertained

The construction work required was greatly speeded up with the use of two tractors, one with a broken gearbox selector mechanism which had to be repaired before work started. Fortunately, the gravel pits were not too far away so we had plenty of sand, but stones were more challenging. Some local lads were

employed to break up rocks for use with the concrete floor slab.

On the morning when I was preparing to leave, we were busy pouring the first part of the slab. I was sorry to leave but Phil Kennedy and Paul Dodds fly out mid-June to continue this project.



Block laying



Pouring the first part of the slab



# BACK TO THE FUTURE

Paul Dodds



Paul discussing the building programme

Hebron School in Ootacamund Tamil Nadu, South India was founded in 1899 to serve the Christian worker community of India and South-East Asia. Over one hundred and twenty-five years later, it is still going strong with around 320 students from over 20 nationalities and is a co-educational residential school using the IGCSE/A level teaching system. It is a special place for my family, as Angie and I worked there for several years and our three children completed all their education at Hebron; in addition, our youngest daughter Katie and her husband along with two children are currently both teaching and dorm parenting there. We have lots of memories and still many friends in the school and local town. It always feels like coming home when we visit.

Having experience of building and developing the school with its infrastructure in the past, I was asked if I could help with future development plans, specifically with five buildings each being dormitories of 20 students and dorm parents. One dorm is to be demolished, and a new



Hostel at Kollegal

building erected in its place whilst others are to be modified and extended. We also looked at their water supply which is from springs and wells, and storage and general management of this vital supply during the changing seasons. We attended many meetings and plans were made.

‘We’ were a group of four. For Angie the main reason for her visit was to help with our new grandson Zac who was born just three days before we arrived at Hebron. Jayne, a lady from our church had previously worked at Kollegal Girls Home and was paying a much longed-for visit, so we left her there after a brief lunch stop. The plan was to collect her three weeks later the way home. It was also nice for us to be there, albeit briefly, as Kollegal was a place we had spent much time in our Hebron school holidays, and Paul was on the board for many years and in fact Brass tacks did a great job one year in renovating the main bungalow and helping with one of the dorms.

## God is still very much supreme in Hebron

Lawrence was the fourth member of the group; as an architect and Brass Tacks board member, he travelled onto Hebron with us and was a great help in the planning process of the school. Lawrence had not been to India before, and after being held up en-route by a wild elephant on the road, amongst other new experiences, I believe it was a good time for him too.



Things have changed in Ooty in 125 years. However, in all the changes some things are the same, lessons and music for example. We attended an amazing production of ‘Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat’ worthy of any West End production. Joseph was ably played by a 17-year-old Korean lad. But the one thing that does remain the same is the refrain in the school song, ‘Deo Supremo.’ There is no doubt in our experience of this trip and others since leaving, that God is still very much supreme in Hebron. The buildings may be somewhat in need of updating but we thank God that He is the same yesterday, today and for the future and beyond.

There are many opportunities at to serve at Hebron, their short-term international guest programme to help as a volunteer and all the current needs and information can be found on their web site <https://www.hebronooty.org>

# Highlights from 13 years with Brass Tacks

Alan Park



A support chair made from paper mache

When Sheila and I took on the responsibility for CEO and Administration with Brass Tacks in 2012, we were stepping into some very large shoes. Colin Breeze had been the face of Brass Tacks both at home and abroad and had engaged in projects in many parts of the globe. We had much to learn!

These projects I have selected because of their unique challenges for the team - and also for the enduring impact of the assistance given in enabling local Christians to pursue their God-given vision for mission.



The first two classrooms

## Wukwashi Wa Nzambi, Kitwe, Zambia (Autumn 2014)

Wukwashi is a centre for children with disabilities which supports families and trains volunteers. This was one of the most difficult projects on many fronts: transport, accommodation, finance. The task was to build a simple structure for a school. With the limited funds available we completed two classrooms and then had to stop work. A subsequent radio broadcast by the Mutembo's was sufficient to stir up interest from a person of influence in the electricity board who then got his team to come and complete the project. The plaque at the entrance records that the school was even opened in 2018 by the then First Lady Mrs Lungu. Joyce and Henry Mutembo are still in charge and are providing a unique facility both in training parents as well as educating the children. <https://sharedhope.org.uk/2021/03/05/wukwashi-wa-nzambi-project-kitwe>





View from the campsite at Salt

**Manara ministries serves to bring the Good News of Jesus to young people from surrounding countries**

### **Manara Ministries camp centre – Jordan (2017, Issue 63)**

This was my first venture into the middle east. The camp centre operated by Manara ministries serves to bring the Good News of Jesus to young people from surrounding countries as well as Jordan itself. Being built at the edge of a precipice and with the full flood of rains coming down mount Gilead meant that the ground was being eroded, and the few buildings were having their foundations undermined. We built a trench across the full width of the plot and diverted water to the ground nearby. This saved the campsite and allowed them to further develop the plot.



Digging the drainage trench



All these windows in two weeks!

### **The windows project, Douai, France (2018, Issue 64)**

Sam and Mary Bouix were working with a church who had purchased a large property over three stories. The windows had heavy duty steel frames because the old ones had been blown out in the war. The plan was to remove these 68 windows by cutting them out of the wall and replacing them with more modern ones. The work was dirty, noisy and potentially dangerous. All the windows were completed within the two-week timeframe. We worked with the French believers who were great support, and we enjoyed our meals together. On the last night I was sufficiently bold to make pepper sauce for the bar-b-que. They even seemed to enjoy it! These are just a few of the many projects we have worked on and during that time we have been blessed as we sought to lighten the burden of our brothers and sisters who share the Good News of Jesus Christ. We have been hosted by some amazing people who have been very generous with their lovely meals and



Flo and the team enjoying a break

sharing their homes with the associated inconvenience of workers' clothes and tools.

It has been a privilege to be part of the Brass Tacks story, and we are confident that as the work adapts to cope with changing times, that there are great opportunities ahead to 'serve those who serve.'



# Reflections

Sheila Park

Almost thirteen years of life; four continents > eighteen countries > 120 projects. What do I take from that? From the perspective of the administrator, the one who does the “boring” jobs – writing letters, keeping track of funds, organising flights....

Yes, sometimes it can seem mundane, routine, even frustrating. But also, an adventure in faith, trusting God to provide resources, and for help in bringing together a jigsaw which can seem impossible, to ensure that necessary personnel arrive on location with all the requirements to do the task.

**I have often been reminded that our creator God is sovereign in the tiny details**

I have often been reminded that our creator God is sovereign in the tiny details, be it in creation design, or those “God appointments” when people and circumstances come together in the most amazing ways.

One of those which stands out for me is during Covid, when we just started to come out of hibernation. Building projects were permitted, within certain restrictions. In the most remarkable chain of circumstances, we became involved in the work at Currie Christian Community,

near Edinburgh, building a retreat for mission partners from South America who serve in Asia. Over two years, that building took shape and is now in constant use, providing a much-needed space for many who are on the front-line of mission in dangerous and taxing locations (see [www.brass-tacks.org.uk](http://www.brass-tacks.org.uk), magazine Spring 2021, Autumn 2021 & Spring 2022). God indeed is in the detail.

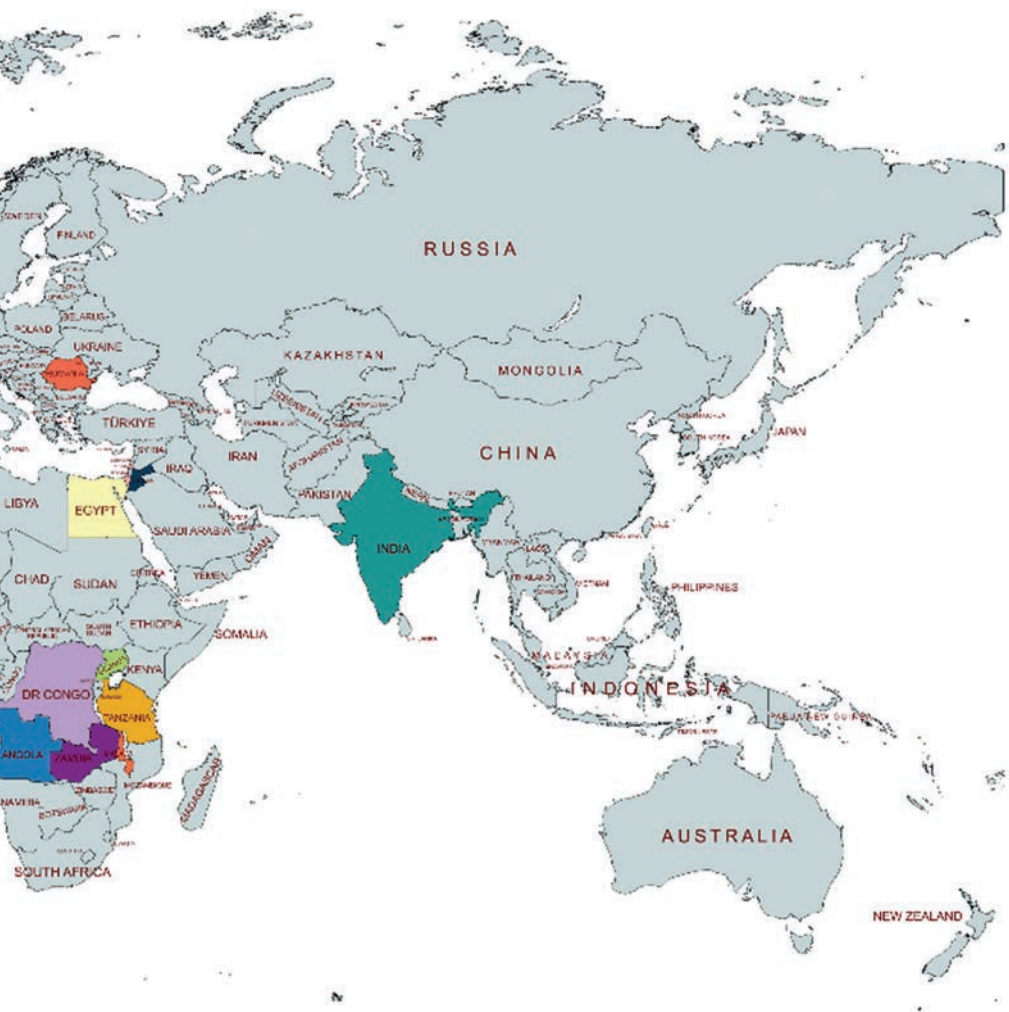


Currie Community church

One of the great blessings which I see each week is the interaction with people who write in regularly, many with a small gift, who remind us that they pray for Brass Tacks and appreciate the ministry which is done. Each of these individuals or church representatives, is known to God and their offering is precious to Him, as is the offering of each one involved in Brass Tacks, whether mission partner, volunteer, or trustee. “If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever,” (1 Peter 4:10).







# LLANISHEN – Cardiff. A church with vision.

Clive Morgan & Nathan Surrell

## Vision For Next 10 Years

At Llanishen Evangelical Church ([www.LLEC.org.uk](http://www.LLEC.org.uk)) we were planning a major refit to our 1950s building.

The elders wanted a facility which we could use for food ministry, a place to belong, a place just to meet in small groups and discuss the Christian faith. We wanted an updated AV system to engage via video and powerpoint, an office for our paid elder. Graciously, the Lord has provided wonderfully on each prayer request; we feel overwhelmed with provision from so many sources. I write this letter today, the day of our first community event in the new church; we welcomed 70 people from the community for an Easter Fun Day.

## New Kitchen

Our kitchen was a strange diagonal shape and was too cramped to provide extensive food ministry which the Lord put on our hearts. A very narrow part of the kitchen was often unusable. A radical

solution was needed. So, drawings were made to make the kitchen twice the area and make it into a simple rectangular shape; three distinct areas of cooking, preparation and cleaning were designed.

This is where the help of Brass Tacks was invaluable. They gave us brilliant advice, provided skilled manpower to install a Howdens' kitchen, and gave another witness to the other trades on site of Christians working together for the gospel. David Woods and Paul Dodds brought good humour, wonderful teamwork and high-quality skills to our project.

## 12 Doors

We also wanted to give our project a 'whole rebuild feel'. We sourced 12 new doors and Nathan Surrell and Paul Trotman worked tirelessly to fit all these.

Thank you, Brass Tacks,  
Kind regards,  
**Clive Morgan**



The old kitchen needed re-design and enlarging



New kitchen





Llanishen Community Church

**Nathan Surrell, one of our young volunteers who is a self-employed carpenter writes of his satisfaction in completing his part of the project – a real witness to the joy of using God-given skills for His glory.**

The task of moving the doors from where we were cutting them to size and where they were hung usually had to be done several times for each door. This was due to the age-old problem of hanging new doors into old openings which have moved and settled over time. It is a very satisfying job however as when the doors are swung and handles and locks fitted it really makes the project look finished. My favourite part of the job was getting to modify the old entrance doors, fitted I

believe by one of the founders of the church, into fire escape doors. It's nice in an age of throw away materialism to repair and conserve historical and often very well-made parts of buildings.



Paul Dodds and David Wood

# CpC Vârfurile - 10,000 Screws not 10,000 Miles

David Wood

In 2024 we received an enquiry from a Christian group operating in Romania – Copii pentru Cristos, which was then unknown to Brass Tacks. The charity was set up by a Scottish couple, Wilma and Harry Somerville, and a Romanian national, Vio Jorza, in 1991, with the aim of taking the gospel to children in Romania following the fall of Communism.



When CpC first began, a site in the beautiful village of Vârfurile in the Carpathian foothills was purchased; the camp was sited in a small portable building sent out from Scotland and re-erected onsite, the first small camps began in summer of 1993.



God has richly blessed, and since then, a new building was constructed for multi-purpose use. Harry was called to be with the Lord in 2013, and Wilma continued to live at the camp all year round but has now returned to Scotland for family reasons.

Each summer, from June to September 500 children come to camp in Vârfurile in groups of 54 plus leaders. The leaders are trained during winter months, in programmes run by CpC; these young leaders teach children from the Bible each week in homes in and around the town of Arad.

It was our privilege to send a team out – with some trepidation to an unknown destination – but as always with trust in our sovereign God.

## David Wood writes:

In March Phil, Paul and I set out on a trip to Romania. Phil and I flew from Edinburgh via Amsterdam while Paul flew from Bristol direct to Budapest. We all met up ready for the 6-hour road trip to Vârfurile via Arad.

Phil was using a new piece of technology he had acquired to track his baggage – only to find when we arrived in Budapest one of his bags was still sitting in Amsterdam! The next excitement was the driver who was supposed to take us to Arad left without us; but after a few phone calls between Scotland, Hungary and Romania we eventually got confirmation that another driver would come and take us to Arad. We finally



arrived there about 10pm and after a feed of pizza with the Popovici family we set off for Camp Vârfurile.

Over the next 10 days we lifted carpet tiles and old laminated floor coverings in the girls' dorms. All the floorboards then had to be triple screwed on each joist before laying a 5mm flooring underlay on top of which the new 15mm OSB boards were laid and screwed. The carpet tiles were finally re-laid in the correct pattern with all new skirtings fitted by Alain Popovici, an expert carpenter.

The damaged chipboard floor in one of the boys' dorms was also completely removed and replaced with 22mm OSB sheets.

Also on the site at Vârfurile is a small orphanage – a dream of Wilma and Harry's which was realised after Harry's passing; currently five children who have been abandoned by their families are cared for in "Casa Harry". We enjoyed spending time with the young folks at mealtimes and joined them for a singsong one evening and a games night as well as a walk up the nearby hill.

As you may imagine, a facility such as this sees a lot of hard use and requires constant maintenance. The small local team welcomes help from the UK, both in terms of volunteer work parties, and helpers during camp time.

See Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ChildrenforChristUK>

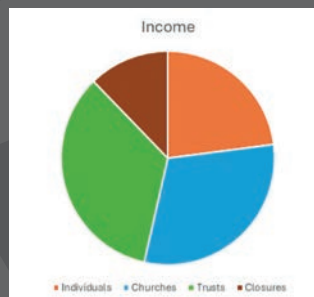
## Finance Update October 2024 to March 2025

Individuals	£13,123
Churches	£17,507
Trusts	£19,550
Church closures	£7000

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Paul and Angie visit friends



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[brastacksuk@gmail.com](mailto:brastacksuk@gmail.com) 0141 237 4131

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Unit 11B, Roddinglaw Business Park, Edinburgh, EH12 9DB

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