

# S·V·P News 5

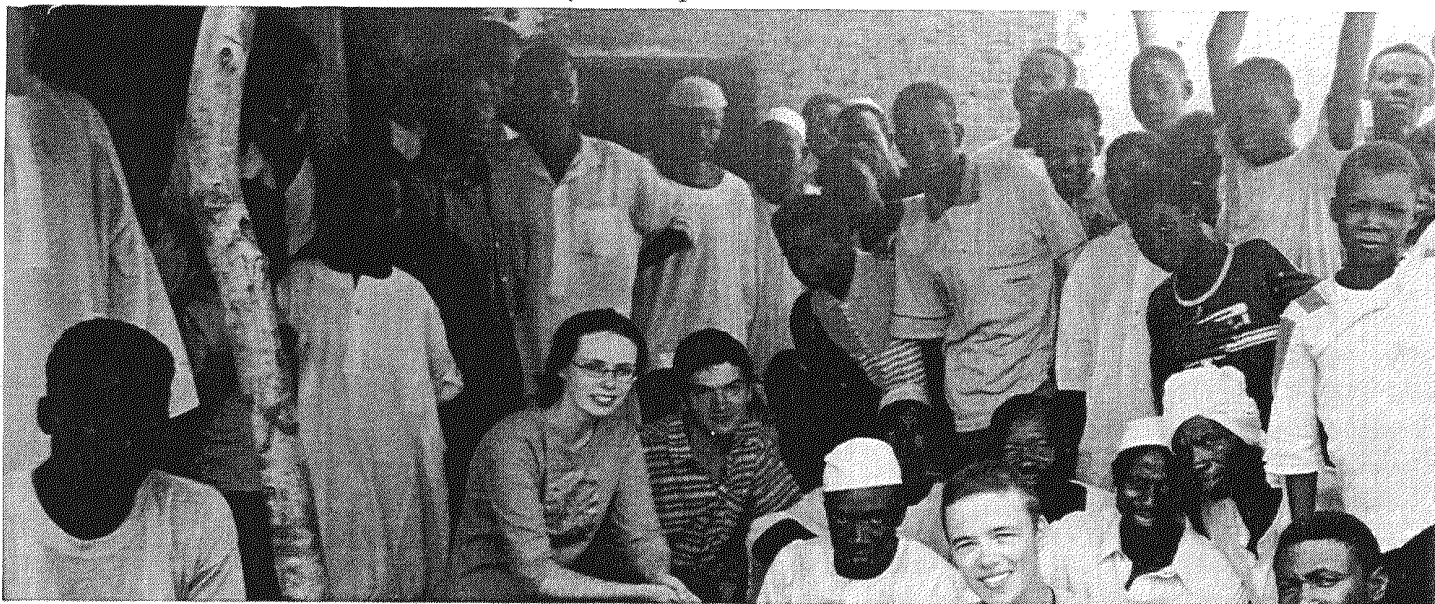
Sudan Volunteer Programme

Registered Charity No 1062155

December 2001

Sudan Volunteer Programme started 2001 with a group leaving London in early January continuing our policy of sending more volunteers with longer term commitments. Re-organisation of university terms in Sudan has also made this year's Summer Programme a much smaller.

As in former years SVP has continued to learn from its experience in many ways which will be relevant to future plans. We rely on the great demand and welcome for our volunteers at all levels of education, and our many friends in Sudan eager to help our expansion and improvement in service and expertise. With the the university year now organised in two semesters we are looking for volunteers for programmes of three or more months with starts in January and September.



*Maria Byars, Ben Cook & Dominic O'Neill with friends at Rumitab, near Khartoum*

## A note from the chairman of Sudan Volunteer Programme

*This is the fifth issue of SVP News. It contains some stories received from our volunteers in this year's programmes. We hope that these will encourage others to join us in our really urgently needed work of teaching English. SVP now has volunteers working throughout the Sudan academic year.*

*SVP thanks all the volunteers of the 2000-2001 season: Ken Darmanin, Emily Chamblin, Michael Metcalf, Eleanor Weaver, Oje Ighoroje, Rebecca Edmunds, Brian Jervis, Richard Lee, Lyndon Ocansey, Laura Donkin, Kirsten West, Scott Burns, Amy Dean, Nadine Powell, Fatimah Ya-Fanah Kelleher, John McAfee, Lee Howard, Simon Carroll, Sue Haigh, Adam Forbes, Sara Almer, Aynah Merchant, Nabila Hameed, David Tighe, Luke Anderson, Lal Howell, Sarah Gough, Amanda Bass, Rowena Sinker, Dominic O'Neill, Nikolai Hutchinson, Ben Cook, Catherine Mahony, Robert Fuller, Robert Hunter, Barnaby Young, Mehrnoosh Aref-Adib, Catherine Bell, Maria Byars, Patricia Kenworthy, Denise Tandy, Dylanne Skillin, Charlie Platts, Julian Steer, Ian Macaulay, Jai Hart, Matt Sanders, Mark Penn, Michael Bartlett, Des Vine, Kirsty Rowan, Imogen Martineau, Till Brückner, Tom Kelly, Alun Macdonald, Simone Crocker, Gareth Carter*

*SVP could not exist without members and supporters. Please continue your help and keep in touch: if not one already - please become a member.*

*Ahmed Bedri*

*Amy Dean writes:* I am an SVP volunteer who arrived in Sudan in January this year. I was first placed in Shendi, then in Khartoum, and then I found my way, rather by accident, to Karima and Merowe in the north. Before arriving I thought that I wanted to be in Khartoum, as Esther's briefing notes made it sound very enticing. Within a week I realised that I couldn't be happy there. Some people fit right in, but others, particularly those who don't live in cities back home, find it rather stressful. Many volunteers never discover how completely different the experience of living elsewhere can be.

My experience in Merowe has been absolutely amazing. I think what I value the most, is that it is like living in one big family; the faculty is so isolated we all have to live around each other all of the time. In the village too, everybody got to know me, and look out for me. In my first few days there, I went to get cold drinks from one particular café, when I didn't return for another day or two the owner came all the way to the faculty (a couple of miles) to ask if I was O.K.!

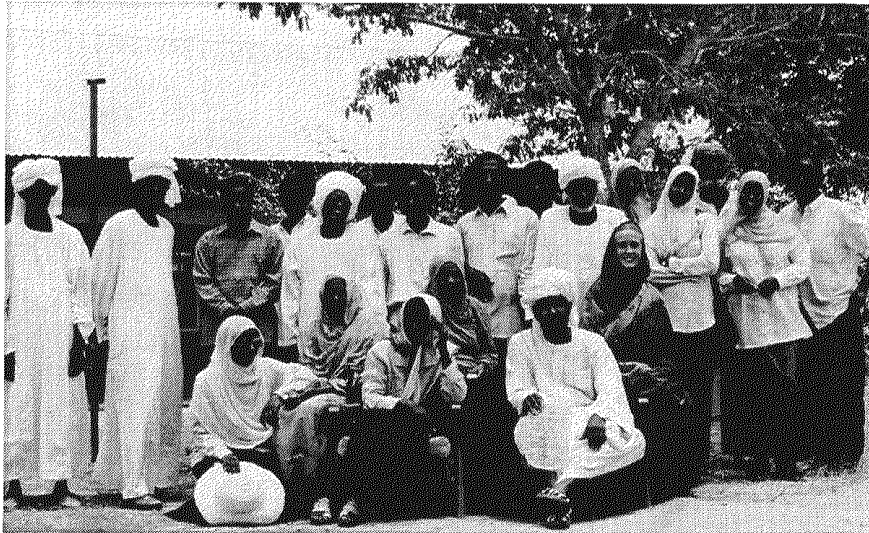
Most visitors to Sudan comment on how friendly and generous the Sudanese are. You will experience this in Khartoum, it is but a watered-down version of what you get in the north! I ended up in

several huge arguments with my friends because they would never let me pay for anything or do anything for myself! Even complete strangers would buy my food and drink in cafes! In one month in Merowe, I only cooked ONE meal myself!

The Faculty of Arts at Karima across the Nile, nearby to Merowe, is the only other faculty of the University of Dongola. Many of our teachers live there. Karima with its surrounding villages is one of most beautiful places in the world. The banks of the Nile are unspoilt, and the villages are scattered amongst the date palms which flank the river. This strip of greenery is narrow; beyond it the desert begins immediately. At the start of the desert, a peculiarly shaped Jebel (smallish mountain) juts out, with a cliff face over-looking the Nile. Jebel ElBarkal dominates the sky-line, and it is easy to see why this was chosen as the first capital of the ancient Kushite kingdom. Surrounding the Jebel are pyramids, tombs, and the ruins of an ancient temple. These can be seen from both faculties, and I never fail to be astounded that I can look out of my lecture-room window and see pyramids, the Nile, and (if I'm lucky), camels. For those who love camels as

much as I do, this is one of the best areas to see them, as they are everywhere, and there's a huge camel market in a neighbouring village. The students are not the standard of those in Khartoum, but they are very enthusiastic, and friendly, and they really value the chance to learn from a native English speaker. The classes are very small (between 8 and 15), which makes life a lot easier. All of the English teachers in Merowe and Karima are fantastic people too; really friendly and mostly quite young.

As there is little to do in the evenings, staff and students congregate in the faculty and just sit around chatting. This may sound boring, and indeed sometimes it is, but they always want to include you, and teach you Arabic, and to learn English. Most of my conversations in Merowe contain is much less serious. I can safely say I've



Amy with friends at the Faculty of Education, Merowe

never laughed so much in any one month than during my time there! They are obsessed with jokes and gossip, and playing tricks, and making fun of me.

If you're keen on learning Arabic, then you are much better off going outside of Khartoum, because you are forced to learn, as so few apart from some of the teachers, speak

English. There are many, many more good things about life in Merowe and Karima, but it's nice to find some of these out yourself. Not all is good about life up in the north, and I feel I should warn anyone who's keen to work there. The main difficulty I had to overcome was the living conditions. It is really not for the faint-hearted! I'm used to roughing it wherever I travel, but the accommodation here is VERY basic. I share a two-roomed building with 5 other women. We sleep in the yard outside because it is too hot, and only in the evenings do we have running water and electricity (no fans)..

This is one of the hottest regions of Sudan, and when I first arrived it was 50 degrees with no running water for 3 days! The good news is that outside of the summer months, it is very cool - getting decidedly cold at night. I would say that from late September until March, it is often cool during the day, and you will need a sleeping bag at night.

Other more minor problems are really psychological. It is sometimes frustrating being the only English person

