

KTA Get Together 2015 Round Up Ampt Hill, Bedfordshire

This year's Get Together marked the 36th Kiribati Independence Celebration and also 21 years of KTA. It was a fantastic event hosted by Helen White and Viliami Ma'asi, who secured a wonderful venue for us at The Ampt Hill & District Community Rugby Club.

Camping took place on the sports field and a marquee was set up on the field for the weekend celebrations. The marquee was used for the sports day and dance practices on the Friday and the main event on Saturday.

Campers started arriving from Thursday lunchtime, it was a beautiful day and a great opportunity for everyone to catch up and look forward to the weekend celebrations. That evening the Kiribati women got together to sing Kiribati songs around a camp fire giving all those camping a preview of what was to come!

Though it rained on the Friday, this did not stop the weekend celebrations. Dance Co-ordinator, Toka Finikaso organised a dance practice and a sports day was put on by Suva Ma'asi and Adelaide White in the marquee during the day. In the evening Victoria Burns and Krista Dixon organised a Pacific Island film night in the Rugby Club showing Lilo & Stitch for the children followed by documentaries from Jeremy Cooper and Victoria Burns for the adults in the evening. The film night was to raise funds for the Vanuatu Cyclone Pam Appeal and the Kiribati Rescue Island Project. The event raised £110 so thank you to everyone that was able to make it.

The main celebration was held on the Saturday and we were fortunate enough to have beautiful weather all day. Over 200 guests attended the celebrations. The doors were opened from 10am for people to browse the stalls which included the KTA Shop, t-shirts designed by Sophia Walsh from Five Boys Clothing in aid of the Vanuatu Cyclone Appeal and the Kiribati Rescue Project, beautiful Pacific Island inspired paintings from Gibson Ben and Kiribati artefacts. This was followed by the AGM, which started at 11am.

AGM news: Dance Co-ordinator Toka Finikaso stepped down from her post as dance coordinator. We welcomed new Committee Members Krista Dixon, Publicity Officer and Rosina Richards, Secretary.

The posts are now as follows:

Chairman: Mrs. Terema Skrzypek

Secretary: Miss. Rosina Richards

Treasurer: Mrs. Philomena Lawrence

Trustee: Mr. Paul Hartness

Publicity Officer: Miss. Krista Dixon

Dance Organiser: Veronica Karea (temporarily filled by Nancy Day in Veronica's absence)

Web Master: Miss. Victoria Burns

The position of Dance Co-ordinator is yet to be filled. If anybody would like to be the new dance coordinator, this post will be elected by the dance group at the next dance practise. Please notify the dance Organiser, Veronica Karea, if you would like to be invited to the next practise.

We are also delighted to announce that the KTA are donating £1,000 to the Kiribati Rescue Island Project. We hope that this contribution will help provide clean water to the people of Kiribati.

After the meeting, the Consulate of Kiribati, Michael Walsh, made a toast and speech updating the attendees of the current situation out in Kiribati. He also noted that he was proud of the new generation contributing to the running of the KTA committee. This speech was followed by Peggy Turpin cutting the annual KTA cake. We were also delighted to have the Mayor Sue Hinkin and the Deputy Mayor Margaret Wilson attend the event. We all had a tremendous feast, which was kindly prepared by Helen White, her family and young KTA members.

The dancing was a real treat again this year. The Dance Group have been practicing very hard leading up to the weekend which was clear to see. At the end of the day, everyone came together in the field in the gorgeous weather to dance, catch up on the day's events and let their hair down. This was then followed by a hay party in the marquee which carried on into the early hours.

Though the rain returned on the Sunday as everybody made preparations to go home, we were all still smiling, helping to clean up and reflecting on an amazing weekend. Chairman, Mrs Terema Skrzypek said "We are so lucky to be a part of such a community spirited culture and the weekend wouldn't have been the same without everybody pitching in to do their bit. Thank you to everybody who came. We are always so grateful for everyone's support and look forward to seeing you all again in Great Dunmow next year (if not before)."

Host Helen White said "I facilitated the event. But there's no way it would have been such a success without everyone who helped! I did not, could not, have done it on my own. I am blessed to have been witness to the coming together of so many people, with so much love for each other. I am blessed to have been witness to old friendships rekindled. I am blessed to have had the ultimate support from all my family and dear dear friends. This was a wonderful weekend. Thank you all for being there."

The event was featured in the local newspaper, Bedford Today (<http://www.bedfordtoday.co.uk/news/in-pictures-taste-of-south-pacific-comes-to-bedfordshire-1-6872999>) and photos were taken during the Saturday celebrations, these can be viewed on the KTA website and on the KTA Facebook Group.

A big thank you to Helen White and Viliami Ma'asi for being fantastic hosts and to everyone that helped put on a spectacular weekend!