

Water change for Ugandans' lives

Women living in the Ugandan village of Kigumba no longer face having to trek 10 miles every day just to collect water.

A new well dug in the village has transformed their lives, thanks to the help of £10,000 raised by members of a Salvation Army Church in Sale, near Manchester.

The church treasurer, David Gauntlet, is a computer systems analyst at the Manchester site and he flew out to Kigumba for the well's official opening.

"It was wonderful to see the difference that it's made," said David. "It is almost always the women of the village who collect the water and they have been spending hours every day walking there and back with their children. Now they just have to go a few hundred yards.

"The well water is also very clean, while the water they were collecting came from a supply dam which was used by people for bathing and doing their washing – and by dogs and wild animals. It wasn't fit for human consumption."

The challenge to churches to raise money for Africa was launched at the Salvation Army conference in May last year and taken up with a pledge by the Sale congregation.

David added: "We are now helping towards creating a new farm at Kigumba, which is going to need £60,000, and we are hoping to bring in other sponsors through the Salvation Army to get it going."

David grew up in Zimbabwe, in the days when it was Southern Rhodesia, where his parents were Salvation Army missionaries. He moved to England when he was 16 but has returned to Africa regularly ever since, whether to go on safari, visit old friends, or even once climb Mount Kilimanjaro.



David (back right) with Major Cliff Allchin and the villagers of Kigumba at the newly-opened well

Ice and easy does it

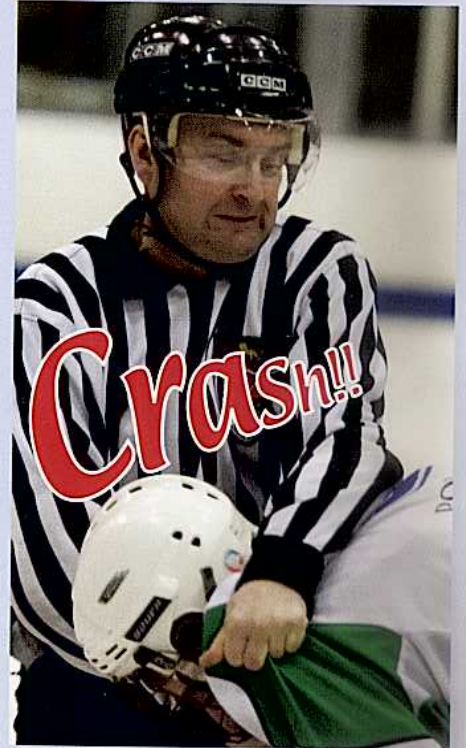
Bracknell human resources manager David Meekison swaps the weekday tranquility of the office for the wild excitement of the ice at the weekends as a professional ice hockey referee.

A former player, David is one of the top officials in the English Premier and English National leagues and travels all over the UK to referee games.

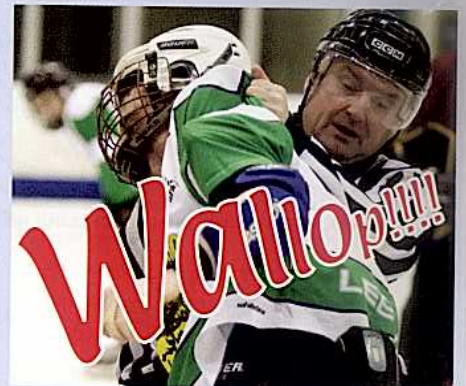
At a recent match – between Lee Valley and Oxford – things got a little tense on the ice and David quickly stepped in to separate the players and bring the game back under control.

He said: "It's great to still be involved in the sport and my experience as a player – I was known as a no-nonsense defenceman – helps me deal with situations like these."

At the end of last season, he was chosen to officiate at the English National Hockey League Championship final that saw two famous old names from the world of British ice hockey go head to head. Said David: "It was a real honour to referee the game between Invicta Dynamos and the Billingham Bears, and I really loved the night."



David gets a grip of a player!



Animal attraction



Bracknell senior pensions administrator Jose Varga came to the rescue when two pigeons got trapped in 3M Centre.

The pigeons are believed to have entered the building via the roof, and spent several days without food and water, staying out of reach. One eventually flew into the Pensions department and hopped along the windowsill to the surprise of 3Mers working in the area.

Seeing that some colleagues were less than comfortable with the uninvited guest, Jose calmly cornered the bird and picked it up. She then took it downstairs in the lift and released it outside the building.

She says: "My late father kept pigeons and we also had chickens at home when I was growing up,

so I wasn't afraid to approach the bird."

The following day, the second pigeon ventured into the Pensions department and Jose had to repeat her rescue mission.

Meanwhile the US typically went one better! There, it was a deer that caused a stir at a 3M research laboratory in St Paul, Minnesota.

The deer smashed through a window, got into the lab and 'was really breaking stuff up' according to appropriately named St Paul police lieutenant Kevin Rabbett.

Officers managed to steer the deer into a hallway, then blocked other passages and got the animal to go through an exit door. No employees were in the lab at the time and no one was hurt in the incident. Pigeons 0 Deer 1.