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# EVE BRANSON FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE HIGH ATLAS MOUNTAINS

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GIRLS LEARNING TO MAKE THEIR OWN CLOTHES



MY FINISHED COAT!



WHAT BETTER THAN A 'FOREST GARDEN' WITH POMEGRANATES, PEACHES AND FIGS, TO PROVIDE WORK FOR THE LOCAL BOYS?



THE POTTERY WE VISITED

## A SUNNY MOROCCAN WELCOME

Our flight left London at 4am on a cold December winter's morning, however the gloom was soon forgotten as when we arrived at Marrakech airport we were met with a temperature of 25 degrees, a clear blue sky and the ever-welcoming sunshine.

I was looking forward to five days' work ahead, checking the activities of the Eve Branson Foundation in three villages: Asni, Tansghart (the village opposite Kasbah Tamadot) and our new craft house in Imsker, high in the mountains.

This time, with the help of my new Eve Branson Foundation assistant, Danielle Ford, we hope to advance the work and teaching in each village. We first visited the red-baked clay village of Tansghart. What a joy for me to find 30 odd girls hard at work, some on machines, some embroidering, whilst others were being taught by a highly-qualified tailor to make their own clothes.

With language difficult I got my translator Zoubair to thank so many girls for turning up on a Saturday. Owing to their enthusiasm, we would be choosing some girls to bring their handmade crafts to display at a polo match event taking place in Marrakech from the 18th-20th April. Moving down the hill from the craft house is the empty Cashmere goat shed. The goats needed a colder climate so we have moved them higher into the Atlas Mountains. As we were leaving Tansghart and the happy girls hard at work, outside the craft house, to my amazement, were 20 or 30 mothers, grannies and grandchildren! This was somewhat overwhelming as there were kisses all round and they conveyed their appreciation for what we are doing for their children. Seldom do you get thanked, let alone expect it, so you can imagine my gratitude.

### A VISIT TO THE COAST

I'd always thought making pottery would be beneficial for the boys in the region around Kasbah Tamadot, but do not know a lot about it. There was nothing planned for Sunday,

so how about a visit to Safi, the famous pottery town on the Atlantic coast? Hence, Danielle, Zoubair and I drove for three hours, passing eucalyptus trees and the odd donkey on the sides of the road as well as a plantation of Argan trees, stopping only at Chemaia, a colourful town displaying a plentiful array of the local produce.

Back on a flat eucalyptus-lined desert road, we arrived at Safi, where the Ksar El Bhar (castle of the sea) stands supreme at the entrance with the blue tranquil sea lying beyond and every corner pavement a colourful display of the local pottery.

Time to venture further up a steep slope which by luck led us to the heart of the pottery factory: kilns, bricks and half-baked mud. Being a Sunday there were few workers, until a tall, well-dressed man approached us explaining the proceedings required to make but one pot! Finally he offered to show us the best fish restaurant on the front. How we enjoyed the sardines! So fresh you could imagine they'd obligingly jumped out of the sea and onto the barbecue, whilst beyond the gulls were eager for any scraps from the fishermen – quite a panoramic view as you sip wine and of course sample the sardines.

Before saying goodbye to our new-found pottery friend we tentatively asked him if he'd come to Asni one day to help us create a pottery factory and he agreed! Thanks to a generous



HAPPY GOATS



SARDINE TASTING

donation of £10,000 from a sponsor we shouldn't need too much more to achieve this. A good day's work accomplished; now tired and ready for a whisky.

### A RETURN TO IMSKER

The following day we visited Imsker, a village high in the mountains which until just recently didn't have enough money to dig a well. Luckily a kind donor, Mr Patrick Hull, has obliged and we're starting to dig – thank you Mr Hull! So there should be great activity in Imsker for our next visit – not only would you be offered refreshments but a bicycle to explore the mountains beyond.

I then had to visit the new home for my goats. Alas after the initial group we now only have nine. The vet had said it was too hot for them in Asni so they are now 2,500 metres higher beyond the village of Imlil amongst the snow-capped mountains.

After a winding drive, passing clumps of wooden boxes at the roadside filled with apples, peaches, cherries and figs (this surely is God's own country!), you have views down to the dried up river bed. The people here are all praying for snow as the water shortage is becoming somewhat acute. Higher and higher we climbed until finally we found a few odd outbuildings. We were led to a doorway and on entering, our hands washed in rose petal water, up a long flight of steep steps, we passed an alley where the remaining goats were munching hay. They had been herded together to show me, although I could tell they were anxious to be let out onto the wild hills to graze on the grass. Meanwhile, we went up to the building's flat roof where the herdsman had kindly laid us a sumptuous meal of his locally-grown produce.

When you visit Kasbah Tamadot I hope you too will brave the bends on the approach road to this village. I can assure you once you've arrived, it's well worthwhile.



MAKING BREAD THE TRADITIONAL WAY



POTTERY IDEAS!

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

When I was a child, my father gave me a Post Office book with pocket money of 6 pence – 2p for me, 2p for the poor and 2p had to go into my savings book. I decided my girls in the Atlas Mountains were starting to earn enough, so I went into the local bank in Asni. To date I've managed to persuade three girls to have a savings book. Will all the other girls be brave enough to realise that money will be theirs for ever!

So that made me feel very satisfied having left 80 girls fulfilling their dreams both financially and constructively. After all, our motto is: 'The Academy for Craft and Creativity'.

EVE BRANSON