

## Mission Paraguay 2014

Writing in 1911, pioneer missionary Wilfred Barbrooke Grubb described in detail the life of the indigenous Indian people living in the Chaco region of Central and North West Paraguay. In 1889 he had been sent by the South American Missionary Society (SAMS) to work amongst the primitive tribes whose semi-nomadic hunter/gatherer way of life had changed little over many centuries. The shaman (witchdoctor) held great influence over people who lived in a vast region of swamp and impenetrable jungle, comprising huge thorn bushes and unusual tree species holding a wonderful diversity of birds and animals with an unimaginable array of biting insects. To the early pioneers the Chaco was known as the Green Hell. Grubb and other SAMS missionaries established a number of mission stations notably at Makxawáya where the present large church was built in 1906. Working with missionary Chris Hawksbee in 2012 Raymond Campbell and Dale Compton from Annaghmore carried out extensive repairs at the church. As well as spreading the gospel, early missionaries built schools and provided training in basic skills such as carpentry. While for many of the Indian people the traditional way of life remained unchanged, following the Chaco war between Paraguay and its northern neighbour Bolivia in the 1930's, the region became more accessible resulting in the clearing of large areas of natural vegetation to create huge cattle ranches. The Indians were forced to abandon their traditional lifestyle and with no land of their own communities became fragmented. In the early 1980's the Anglican Church of Paraguay, with assistance from grants from abroad, purchased large tracts of land in three separate areas of the Chaco to which the Indian communities now hold title.

During recent years many members of churches in Ireland have been in teams of Mission Paraguay volunteers who work to assist the ministry of the Anglican Church in these areas of the Chaco. This summer Raymond will be returning to the Chaco to brave the 'mozzies' together with William Montgomery, Andrew Allen and Philip Boyd. They will visit a number of isolated Indian villages to build new homes and provide toilets for Indian families living



under makeshift shelters of palm logs and polythene sheets. It is also planned to build brick walls to replace palm logs at another church and construct walls at a school consisting of only a metal roof. In May over 300mm of rain fell in just over 24 hours in parts of the Chaco resulting in serious flooding. Despite heavy rain during springtime, for much of the year there is severe drought in this region which has no piped water supply. Once again this year Mission Paraguay plans to fund the building of another large underground rain-water storage tank.

A second Mission Paraguay group will be based in Asunción, the capital and also visit Concepción. They will be working in a number of different communities to support the mission of the local church particularly amongst children and young people; leading sewing workshops to encourage self-sufficiency; distributing second hand spectacles sent from the UK and undertaking some basic home improvement work.



This work is only possible through the generous donations from individuals and churches across Ireland and England.

Thank you to everyone for your prayerful support each year. It is greatly valued.



For further details of the work of Mission Paraguay please see the mission board in church and the SAMS UK and Ireland website:

[www.samsukireland.com/projects/mission-paraguay](http://www.samsukireland.com/projects/mission-paraguay)

*David Orritt*