**Stratford Sub Castle Guild – The Halo Trust**

Andrew Moore, Director of Private Fundraising and Communications at the Halo Trust, gave a fascinating and moving presentation on 13th November in the Reading Room. Andrew started with Halo helping to clear landmines in Mozambique more than 14 years ago and subsequently worked in other remote, dangerous places which included Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Georgia for 12 years before taking on his current role.

Halo’s mission is to protect lives and restore the livelihoods of those affected by conflict. It was formed in Kabul in 1988 and has since been saving lives and helping war-torn communities recover by making their land safe. When conflict ends, areas are all too often littered with landmines and other dangerous explosives, ammunition and munitions. Families can’t plant crops or graze cattle and day-to-day activities such as going to school or fetching water are fraught with risk. Halo recruits and trains local men and women to clear landmines in their own communities who are then able to rebuild their lives with their earnings. Of the total workforce of nearly 9,000, Halo’s international staff number less than 170. The Trust is proud that **98% its employees come from the communities it serves and that many women have been empowered by joining their local workforce. It is currently operating in 26 countries with a global headquarters in Scotland and two small satellite offices in Stratford Sub Castle (Deans Farm) and Washington DC. It’s turnover in 2018 was £61 million with over 90% of its funding provided by national governments, primarily the USA and UK, but also including a number of European countries and Japan.**

Andrew mentioned a few very impressive outputs delivered by the Trust, which include clearing 1.6 million landmines and 12 million unexploded items of ordnance plus securing vast numbers of bullets and guns. Most importantly, its activities have directly benefitted 1.5 million people. One example is Mozambique, which was declared free of mines in 2015 after a total of 213,000 mines were cleared over 22 years (80% by Halo). He also recounted a poignant story about schoolchildren in Zimbabwe walking to and from school through a minefield along a marked path. The Headmaster had earlier lost a leg by stepping on a mine a few years earlier. Regrettably, since the comparatively more recent profusion of home-made Improvised Explosive Devices, especially in the Middle East, mine clearance is facing new challenges.

A photograph in 1997 of Princess Diana walking through a cleared track in a minefield in Huambo, central Angola, highlighted the landmine dangers to the World. Since then, 157 countries have banned landmines and the International Community has set a target to clear all mines by 2025, with the exception of Korea and Syria. Prince Harry, following in his mother’s footsteps during his recent visit to Angola, was pictured walking exactly the same track. It is now part of a street of a thriving small town that has developed after the mines were cleared. The transformation has been so successful that many of the local inhabitants of this town are unaware that it is sited on a previous minefield.

More information about Halo can be found on <https://www.halotrust.org>. The gift bowl donations raised £160 during the evening. With the Government’s UK Aid Match scheme adding the same amount, the total sum raised for the Halo Trust from the event amounts to £320. The Guild ‘s Christmas Social Evening is on 11th December and the next talk on 8th January 2020 will be given by Micky Foster about ‘Wives of Wilton House’.

Ian McGill