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## CHARITY, DECOLONIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE STAREHE BOYS SCHOOL, NAIROBI\*

The Starehe Boys School in Nairobi is one of the undoubted success stories of post-independence Kenya. It was founded in 1959 by Geoffrey Griffin, a disillusioned former British army officer. Appalled by the atrocities committed by both sides during the Mau Mau Emergency (1952–60), Griffin refused to renew his commission and worked instead to care for juveniles caught up in the crisis. Initially with just two tin sheds on a piece of waste ground not far from the slums in the Eastlands district of the city, the school began as a club which took in destitute boys made homeless either through the death of their parents or their forced migration.

Griffin conceived of Starehe as a home and an escape for the boys from their often dreadful circumstances (*starehe* means ‘peace’ or ‘comfort’ in Swahili). With support from a range of financial backers, Griffin’s plans became more ambitious. After independence at the end of 1963, his ‘club’ soon became an officially recognized school and by the early 1970s was achieving some of the best examination results in the country at both primary and secondary level. Today, with the boys easily recognised in their familiar red and blue uniforms, often seen parading in their famous brass band, the school is persistently put forward as a triumphant display of what an independent Kenya can and has achieved. Through its myriad supporters and donors all around the world, the school continues to take in the poor and disadvantaged and provides them with a free education alongside a small (up to 20 per cent of the total school population) — if massively over-subscribed — cohort of fee-paying students.<sup>1</sup>

\* I am extremely grateful for the advice, comments and assistance of the following: David Anderson, Emily Baughan, Dan Branch, Matt Houlbrook, Andrew Jones, John Lonsdale, Tom McCaskie, Anthony Mwangi, Saima Nasar, Paul Ocobock, Kevin O’Sullivan, Benedetta Rossi, Stephen Smith and Heather Widdows

<sup>1</sup> The first and most significant history of the school was written by a former volunteer teacher: Roger Martin, *Anthem of Bugles: The Story of Starehe Boys’ Centre*

This article seeks to explore why the school became the object of the hopes and imaginations of a really quite extraordinary cast of characters. As will be seen, Griffin himself is perhaps the most intriguing individual bound up with Starehe's history. But he was joined at various points by so many who, collectively, demonstrate the competing — though more often complementary — interests that have been invested in the broader project of development in Africa. Griffin's chief administrative support came from Pat Shaw, in his spare time possibly the most brutal police officer in Kenya's recent history. Together, they received at the school hundreds of prominent visitors and admirers over the years, ranging from politicians such as Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki and Mau Mau resistance leader Tom Mboya, Waruhiu Itote ('General China'), film-maker Ken Loach, royalty such as Britain's Princess Anne, King Constantine of Greece and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, international political heavyweights like Indira Ghandi, Senator Robert Kennedy and Desmond Tutu, sports personalities as prominent as Muhammad Ali and Pele, popular entertainers such as Vera Lynn and Cliff Richard, and the British children's television presenter Valerie Singleton, of *Blue Peter*.

For all these individuals, Starehe became a symbol for something much more significant. It stood in for the future of a country, if not a continent. For Griffin it was a means by which he could offer his services to his fellow Kenyans after the Emergency, a means more in keeping with the ill-fated liberal rehabilitative principles that supposedly lay behind the notorious detention camps set up for the Mau Mau. For the moderate nationalists who took control of the country at independence it represented what Kenyatta termed *harambee*, Kenya's own 'self help' process of national development. For others it constituted a traditional form of charitable assistance, while for others still it was an example of development for all of Africa to follow. Only for Ken Loach, the one critic from those listed above, did it represent the inappropriate transfer of the English public school ethos to the

(n. 1 cont.)

and *School* (Nairobi, 1978). Various other publications have appeared, often timed to coincide with important school anniversaries. See, for example, Kennedy O. A. Hongo and J. N. K. Mugambi, *Starehe Boys' Centre, School and Institute: The First Forty Years, 1959–1999* (Nairobi, 2000),

African context. Yet for all the others, it was to serve as a classic instance of what has been somewhat pejoratively labelled a ‘donor darling’, the sheer amount of international funds being the key factor behind its growth and success.

This article takes the admittedly peculiar example of just one school to cast light on wider processes in the history of charity, decolonization and development. Starehe became an instance of what has otherwise been referred to as the ‘projection of personal ideologies onto a space on the map sufficiently little-known as to accommodate fantasies of every type’.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, the school has been able to thrive. It has come to have a special place in Kenyan society, its achievements as a ‘bastion of excellence’ perpetually being reported in the press.<sup>3</sup> Griffin himself was honoured several times by the Kenyan and British governments and frequent official reports have commended the school’s disciplinary, educational and social service record.<sup>4</sup> All this was possible because, unlike other aid initiatives, Starehe has been able to attract the consistent support, over several decades, of international charities, official aid agencies, the UK and other western governments and the Kenyan ruling class. Griffin proved to be an adept master at making all of these potentially conflicting interests and agendas serve the purpose of his beloved school.

Thanks to the opening up of new archives, principally the unofficial British agencies of Oxfam, the Save the Children Fund (hereafter SCF) and Christian Aid, which constituted some of Starehe’s main international donors, it is possible to

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Ellis, *Season of Rains: Africa in the World* (London, 2011), 94.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Starehe’s bastion of excellence’, *Weekly Review*, 13 Oct 1989, 20–1. Further such press cuttings can be found in the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (hereafter KNA), XK/1/12, ‘Starehe’.

<sup>4</sup> Kenyatta awarded Griffin the Moran of the Burning Spear in 1970, Moi the Order of the Golden Heart in 1986 and he was appointed OBE by the British government in 2002: Peter Otiato Ojiambo, *Teaching beyond Teaching: Dr. Geoffrey William Griffin and Starehe Boys Centre and School* (Saarbrücken, 2008); ‘Geoffrey W. Griffin: Obituary’, *Old Cambrian Society*, 2005, at <<http://www.oldcambrians.com/Obituary-Griffin,Geoffrey.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); Peter Ngangi Nguli, ‘Dr Geoffrey Griffin a Man who Had a Heart for Black Children in Need’, *Standard Media*, 21 Aug. 2013, at <[http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000091464/dr-geoffrey-griffin-a-man-who-had-a-heart-for-black-children-in-need?articleID=2000091464&story\\_title=dr-geoffrey-griffin-a-man-who-had-a-heart-for-black-children-in-need&pageNo=2](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000091464/dr-geoffrey-griffin-a-man-who-had-a-heart-for-black-children-in-need?articleID=2000091464&story_title=dr-geoffrey-griffin-a-man-who-had-a-heart-for-black-children-in-need&pageNo=2)> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); ‘Geoffrey Griffin: obituary’, *The Times*, 18 Aug 2005, at <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/obituaries/article2084245.ece>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); *Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies* (Nairobi, 1976), 35.

trace how and why Starehe appealed to so many. Moreover, in situating such sources alongside those produced by the school itself, and with newspapers and official papers available in the UK and Kenya National Archives, it is possible to offer a case study of development that follows a literature on decolonization in approaching the subject from the three-sided perspective of the global context, the national donors of the former colonial powers and the socio-political pressures within the recipient state.<sup>5</sup> The first part of this essay therefore traces the appeal of Starehe to donors in Britain and elsewhere, especially for rapidly expanding charities and NGOs becoming increasingly associated with the global development infrastructure. The second part turns its attention to Kenya itself, drawing out how the appeal of the school to certain political agendas and national priorities complemented the desire of the donor community to provide a model for African development.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the history of humanitarianism. In part this is a reaction to our present-day concerns about the ways in which seemingly straightforward feelings for the welfare of distant others is interconnected with wider political issues about human rights, global governance and international security.<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian histories, covering topics as broad as anti-slavery activism, refugee assistance, disaster relief and longer-term aid interventions, uncover patterns of empathy, solidarity and fellow feeling that run counter to the real and imagined boundaries created by global geopolitical rivalries, either of an imperial or Cold War nature. This case study of Starehe makes a contribution to this literature by connecting it with the three key issues of decolonization, development and charity.

First, as a school set up under a late-colonial regime and which flourished under an independent one, Starehe represents a key example of an institution which eased the processes of decolonization by providing important continuities of

<sup>5</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Postwar World* (Basingstoke, 1988); Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of Colonial Empires* (Oxford, 2008); W. David McIntyre, *British Decolonization, 1946-1997: When, Why and How did the British Empire Fall?* (Basingstoke, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Stefan Ludwig-Hoffman, 'Human Rights and History', *Past and Present*, no. 232 (Aug. 2016).

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personnel, ideas and practices.<sup>7</sup> Expertise residing in institutions did not just disappear. In the realms of social welfare as much as economics, ways of thinking and seeing formed the continuous foundations above which political change took place.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, key dates in the apparent transformation of humanitarianism such as the end of the Second World War, become less important than the permanencies in personnel and practices throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. In countries such as Kenya, individuals navigated their way through the late-colonial state and on into the post-colonial regime. Characters such as Griffin were able to stay because they worked for both national and international agents, thereby ensuring that initiatives such as Starehe appealed both to the new regime and to supporters within the former colonial powers.<sup>9</sup>

Second, these continuities not only mattered for newly empowered Kenyan officials and politicians, but for international agencies keen to utilize the contacts that they had made during imperialism to support further development initiatives. These interpretations of decolonization are easy to reconcile with a literature on development. The late-colonial state engaged in a heightened policy of ‘developmentalism’ that constituted a ‘second colonial occupation’ of centralized planning and technological progress.<sup>10</sup> The expert personnel and the faith in rational planning were shared not only among colonial officials and moderate nationalist planners, but also by

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002); Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, ‘Introduction’, in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds.), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1997); Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, Oh., 2007); William Beinart, Karen Brown and Daniel Gilfoyle, ‘Experts and Expertise in Colonial Africa Reconsidered: Science and the Interpenetration of Knowledge’, *African Affairs*, cviii (2009); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, Ca., 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Burton and Michael Jennings, ‘Introduction: The Emperor’s New Clothes? Continuities in Governance in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial East Africa’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xl (2007); Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, Ct., 1994).

<sup>10</sup> D. A. Low and J. M. Lonsdale, ‘Introduction: Towards the New Order, 1945–63’, in D. A. Low and Alison Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa*, iii (Oxford, 1976); Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925–52* (Oxford, 2000).

the expanding bureaucracy of a global development infrastructure. Technical assistance often relied on the knowledge and actual experience of colonial officials, especially when the final stages of decolonization meant that many — Griffin included — sought alternative sources of employment.<sup>11</sup> 5

The point that the case of Starehe demonstrates, though, is that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also played an important role in the interconnected histories of decolonization and development. Starehe's formative decade — the 1960s — came at the same time as the UN's first development decade 10 when the international aid system was being both reimaged and reinforced. Bodies such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (hereafter FAO) became concerned not only with prestige economic and technical infrastructure projects but also with meeting the needs of the hungriest people. Reaching the 15 poorest meant that the FAO worked in partnership with NGOs on the ground which, in turn, continued to support local welfare and missionary bodies that had operated at the frontline of grassroots social services for many decades previously.<sup>12</sup> Of 20 greatest significance was the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, launched by the FAO in 1960. The Campaign transformed the humanitarian and development sector, enrolling NGOs into the FAO projects and wider machinery while also massively boosting their incomes and forcing a shift 25 in their roles from agencies concerned with immediate relief and suffering into ones focused on long-term development.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London, 2008); Marc Frey and Sönke Kunkel, 'Writing the History of Development: A Review of the Recent Literature', *Contemporary European History*, xx (2011); Frederick Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, viii (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Such continuities call into question the sense of the modern aid and humanitarian sector as a specifically post-1945 development: Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xl (2012); Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011); Johannes Paulmann, 'Conjunctures in the History of International Humanitarian Aid during the Twentieth Century', *Humanity*, iv (2013); Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940–1970* (Basingstoke, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Gattrell, *Free World? The Campaign to save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963* (Cambridge, 2011); Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Times: Oxfam, the First Fifty Years* (Oxford, 1992), 74; Anna Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960–70', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xl (2012).

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Starehe's early history came at a time when western donor agencies were transforming their roles into something more familiar to today's, often big, international NGOs.

Third, the story of Starehe is also one of what charity has achieved in the history of development, especially at a time when new independent governments had scarce resources for social welfare projects. NGOs raced into Africa and elsewhere with little knowledge and very little experience, but they did so backed by increasingly significant funds from a generous public eager to see its money spent on projects that testified to the good effects of their charitable donations. Starehe would prove to be such a grassroots project and one which appealed to the public in Britain and elsewhere. Whether it was in the long-term interests of the Kenyan people was not an issue which yet concerned the expanding NGOs. Enthusiasm trumped expertise in these optimistic early years of what would eventually come to be termed the 'alternative' path to development.<sup>14</sup> It resulted in a scatter-gun approach to small-scale local development projects that both lacked cohesion and facilitated the continuation of colonial institutions and systems of knowledge. Older forms of mission and, as with Griffin, ex-pat civil servants proved particularly adept at securing funds from British charities. As will be seen from a focus on Starehe's two principal early backers, the Save the Children Fund and Oxfam, the turn to development, although well meaning and potentially effective, was also un-coordinated and largely unaccountable. Starehe's story is therefore also one about how aid has worked on the ground, with all the success and failures that this has entailed for NGO involvement in the international aid business.<sup>15</sup>

That Starehe is able to bear the weight of such an analysis, is in large part due to the multifaceted career of Griffin himself. He simultaneously held three positions. In the first place, he was a charitable volunteer. Starehe was always his own private

<sup>14</sup> Michael Edwards and David Hulme (eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World* (London, 1992); Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats? NGOs and Aid* (Oxford, 1998); David Lewis and Tina Wallace (eds.), *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change* (West Hartford, Ct., 2000); Anthony J. Bebbington, Samuel Hickey and Diana C. Mitlin (eds.), *Can NGOs Make a Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives* (London, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge, 2015).



initiative, supported by the unpaid work that he put in as director after he had finished his day job and which continued to his death in 2005. In that sense he was a recipient of aid, though one who was able to exploit the opportunities available such that his biographer referred to him as ‘Kenya’s champion beggar’.<sup>16</sup> 5  
Secondly, though, he was also a career civil servant during decolonization and beyond. He served as Colony Youth Officer in the last years of British rule and was then immediately appointed by Kenyatta to run the new National Youth Service. This gave him superb contacts across several administrations and his work there makes clear just how important youth policy was to both the colonial and post-colonial state. Finally, Griffin worked in an honorary capacity as the administrator for SCF in Kenya, thus connecting him to the world of international development. This ensured that he was always able to make Starehe the chief focus of activity for SCF in Kenya, as well as opening a door to various sources of funding that existed more generally across Europe and North America. As will be seen, the real reasons for Starehe’s success are due to Griffin’s navigation of these three roles — recipient, administrator, donor — which mapped onto the three broader historical processes emphasised below — charity, decolonization, development — and always to the advantage of the institution closest to his heart. But that he was able to do so points to more significant interconnections between colonial and post-colonial states, donor publics and charities, and the wider structures that supported international development practices in the key early years of decolonization. 25

## I

Starehe’s founder was an idiosyncratic, if highly motivated, settler colonial. The son of a police officer, George William Griffin was born in 1933 in Eldoret in the settler community of Kenya’s Highlands. As a boy he attended the main educational establishment for Europeans in Nairobi, the Prince of Wales School, two years ahead of his own age group. There he experienced bullying though he later flourished after he edited the school newsletter and revived the school scout troop, two 35

<sup>16</sup> Yusuf M. King’ala, *The Autobiography of G. W. Griffin, Kenya’s Champion Beggar, as Narrated by Himself to Yusuf M. King’ala* (Nairobi, 2005).

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enthusiasms which would shape the expansion of Starehe. Knowing that his parents would not be able to fund a university education, he dropped out of the sixth form and joined the Survey of Kenya as a junior cadet. When the State of Emergency was declared in 1952 he undertook officer training in the UK and was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Because he was fluent in Swahili, he served as an Intelligence Officer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Kings Africa Rifles.<sup>17</sup>

Griffin's military career was short but it had a profound effect on his outlook. He claimed to have been 'awestruck by the sheer brutality' of both sides during Mau Mau.<sup>18</sup> Although few details of his service career are recorded, from what is known of the role of the settler recruits in the Kenya Regiment it is extremely likely that as an Intelligence Officer assigned to interrogating Mau Mau suspects he would have witnessed — and possibly participated in — some of the appalling abuses of human rights perpetrated by the British army.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, his military service shook him to the extent that he resigned his commission at the first opportunity. And whether through guilt, grievance, empathy or compassion, he clearly left with a genuine desire to provide a different set of opportunities for the next generation of Kenyan youth.

At Starehe Griffin took in often desperately poor boys, many of whom were homeless, orphaned and embarking upon a life of crime. In one early survey of 400 boys admitted to the school, over half had been arrested and referred to Starehe through the juvenile courts.<sup>20</sup> Conditions in the city ensured that Griffin had a steady supply of boys to reform. In 1969 one survey estimated that there were 25,000 boys of primary school age in Nairobi who were not enrolled in school.<sup>21</sup> Griffin and his assistant, Pat Shaw,

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–9; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*; Guy Campbell, *The Charging Buffalo: A History of the Kenya Regiment, 1937–1963* (London, 1986); Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge, 2012); Len Weaver, 'The Kenya Regiment', in Malcolm Page (ed.), *A History of the King's African Rifles and East African Forces* (London, 1998), 239–49.

<sup>18</sup> King'ala, *Autobiography*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London, 2005), 85; Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (2005; London, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> G. W. Griffin, 'The Urban Youth Centre, City of Nairobi: Progress Report, February 1961 – March 1962': Andrew Hake Papers (hereafter Hake Papers), School of Oriental and African Studies, London, PP MS 46/4/84.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self-Help City* (London, 1977), 206–7.

made notes on all the boys' life histories, not least to attract sponsorships and to celebrate individual transformations.<sup>22</sup> 'George', for instance, had been held with boys twice his age in a Mau Mau detention camp. Upon release and return to his district of origin in 1961 he discovered that he was an orphan and so made his own way to Nairobi, before eventually coming across Starehe when he was twelve years old. There he flourished, worked hard for the National Christian Council of Kenya in his vacations, passed his School Certificate in 1968 and had become a full inspector of police by 1972.<sup>23</sup>

Dozens of other such stories can be found in the archives. Boys themselves were encouraged to write of what the school had done for them. Especially in the school publication, *Endeavour*, boys wrote of their great fortune in finding their way from the streets or a cell to Starehe. They told of family tragedies from disease to murder, abuse from strangers, lives of crime and vagrancy, poverty and hunger, arrest and detention and eventual salvation through Starehe.<sup>24</sup> Later on, alumni have provided similar stories. To quote just one example, Raphael Tuju, director and founder of Ace Communications, stated: 'To you Dr Griffin I owe so much. When I was 13 years of age, my life was traumatised in ways I keep finding very difficult to talk about . . . you picked me up . . . instilled confidence and hope in me'.<sup>25</sup> It is no wonder that many have referred to Griffin as a 'father' to whom they 'owe a great debt'.<sup>26</sup> And with such results it is also not surprising that affluent and well-connected parents pressured Griffin to admit their privileged children too (in 1967 Carlo Iagrosso became Starehe's first European pupil<sup>27</sup>) and politicians have acknowledged what Griffin has achieved. At his funeral in 2005, President Mwai Kibaki told the thousands of mourners

<sup>22</sup> Christian Aid Papers (hereafter CA Archive), SOAS Special Collections, CA2/A/10/54, Starehe Boys Centre.

<sup>23</sup> 'Starehe Boys Centre: Dormitory Accommodation Proposal', 1972: Save the Children Fund Archive (hereafter SCF Archive), Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Starehe Boys' Centre, *Endeavour* (1969), 13-22: *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Raphael Tuju, 'From a Son to his Father', in Hongo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys' Centre*, 7-9.

<sup>26</sup> Starehe Boys' Centre, *Endeavour* (1969), 73: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>27</sup> Starehe Boys' Centre, *Endeavour* (1969), 55: *ibid.*

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that Griffin was ‘a true patriot and great friend of Kenya’s youth’.<sup>28</sup>

Behind all these aspects of Starehe’s history are the charitable donations that have sustained its growth. Griffin first approached Shell/BP in Kenya and held a fortuitous meeting with John Francis, its public relations officer. Griffin took Francis around some of the hovels and hideouts where homeless boys could be found in Nairobi, before showing him the rudimentary rehabilitation initiatives that were then in place. Francis was impressed and committed his company to an association with the school that extended beyond the financial: he drew up the school constitution, chaired the Starehe management committee and eased relations with the colonial administration when questions arose about Griffin’s potentially conflicting private and public roles.<sup>29</sup> Shell BP provided the original tin huts for the school, made various capital grants over the years and contributed to running costs by an amount which had increased to £6,000 *per annum* by 1977.<sup>30</sup> Other early local and ex-pat funders included the Sheikh Fazal Noordin Charitable Trust, the Child Welfare Society, the Kenya Welfare Trust, the African Welfare Society, the Roundtable No. 1 and the Welfare Trust of East Africa. In total these organizations and others would donate around £13,000 in the first two years of the school’s existence, enabling up to one hundred boys to become boarders.<sup>31</sup>

However, it was when Griffin turned to the West that really significant donations started to come in, enabling what was still a boys ‘club’ to become a school. First, he turned to the UK and secured £3,000 from the Dulverton Trust. The amount itself was not particularly large, but the personal connection was more important. The Trust’s chair, Lord Dulverton, also sat on the Council of Oxfam, and would take a special interest in that NGO’s Africa Committee, even going so far as to attend its first

<sup>28</sup> Mwai Kibaki, ‘Speech at burial ceremony of Geoffrey Griffin’, at <<http://www.oldcambrians.com/Obituary-Griffin,Geoffrey.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015).

<sup>29</sup> J. G. Francis to James Gichuru, minister for finance, 11 July 1963: KNA, A2G1/7/82.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 151; King’ala, *Autobiography*, 63–5.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 7, 23–5.

Field Directors meeting in Nairobi in 1969.<sup>32</sup> Second, Griffin was aware of his own lack of professional expertise in youth work and education and so embarked on a brief trip to Los Angeles and the US to learn about new methods of handling delinquent youth. There he rejected most new developments in psychology and care work, but not before also visiting the offices of the Ford Foundation. This organization committed itself to match the funding that had already been raised and gave Griffin £12,000 in 1961 which enabled him to build a two-storey teaching block which he named after the Foundation.<sup>33</sup>

In 1962 Griffin took two Starehe boys, George Waiwa and Peter Njenga, to the UK on a Youth-Helps-Youth Campaign. This was ostensibly to raise funds for the youth centre work which Griffin was employed by the colonial government to oversee, and which aimed to cover the whole of Kenya. Instead he used the trip to promote his private venture. The visit was much reported in the press and Griffin was able to exploit his official position to secure a meeting with Queen Elizabeth, the Lord Mayor of London and Cliff Richard (who would reciprocate by visiting the school the following year, performing his songs for the boys in the school hall).<sup>34</sup> More importantly, Griffin's visit consolidated his connections to the headquarters of the SCF, of which the queen was patron. The charity was to become Starehe's most important backer, funding the school from 1964 through to 1996. Rather than financing one-off capital costs, SCF committed to the long term by providing an annual grant of £8,000 to cover running costs such as teachers' salaries. By the 1970s SCF was spending up to £50,000 per year in Kenya, the vast bulk of which found its way to Starehe.<sup>35</sup> It enabled, for instance, Starehe to offer competitive salaries that ensured that the school could recruit eight of the very best primary school teachers, including former headmasters, from across Nairobi in 1964. No mention has been found of what this transfer of skilled labour did for those schools not fortunate enough to obtain the foreign funding needed to retain their best staff.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes of second Africa Field Directors' Conference, Nairobi, 23-24 Jan 1969: Oxfam Archives (hereafter Oxfam MSS), Bodleian Library, Oxford, PRG 2/3/1/1.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 25-6.

<sup>34</sup> 'Schools and Clubs Asked to Adopt Kenyan Child', *Guardian*, 5 Dec. 1962.

<sup>35</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 29, 77.

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SCF had been active in Kenya for some time. Operation Anvil, of April 1954, designed to intern thousands of Mau Mau sympathisers among the Kikuyu, also swept up hundreds of children who were held at Langata detention camp. Many were passed on to missions attached to bodies such as the Church Missionary Society and the Christian Council of Kenya, backed by donors such as Christian Aid and with the support of the British government.<sup>36</sup> But, unable to cope with the numbers, international humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross were called in to deal with the repercussions of the mass repression. Operation Anvil also resulted in an explosion of homeless and delinquent youth in Nairobi, some of whom were dealt with by SCF's Place of Safety in the city. But something more extensive was felt to be required. In late 1954 the SCF general secretary, Brigadier T. W. Boyce, met with the secretary of state for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, and called for an 'Operation Anvil for children'.<sup>37</sup> SCF committed to running a camp at Ujana Park, to be modelled on its Serendah school in Malaya (likewise experiencing an Emergency) and which, like Starehe later, would provide education as well as games and occupational training.<sup>38</sup> For Boyce, who believed that Kikuyu women formed 'a very hard core in the Mau Mau', the camp/school would serve to 'soften them down . . . through the children'.<sup>39</sup> Lack of official funding as the Emergency eased meant that Ujana soon closed down, and the Child Welfare Society absorbed SCF's limited Kenyan activities.<sup>40</sup>

Griffin would inherit some of these initiatives. From 1957 he was employed by the government's Department of Community Development to run Youth Training Centres (referred to as Youth

<sup>36</sup> Janet Lacey, 'Report on visit to Kenya in January 1955 to discuss the possibility of Inter-Church Aid participation in rehabilitation schemes planned by the Christian Council of Kenya', 14 Mar. 1955, and 'Report of a visit to South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Kenya', 24 Apr. 1956: CA Archive, CA/A/4/3.

<sup>37</sup> 'Notes of a meeting held in Secretary of State's rooms', 17 Nov. 1954: The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), CO 859/660.

<sup>38</sup> T. W. Boyce to SCF Council Members, 8 June 1955; Alan Lennox-Boyd to Boyce, 9 June 1955: *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Boyce to Lennox-Boyd, 1 June 1955: *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 58; Brigadier T. W. Boyce, 'Report on proposals from the Government of Kenya for the re-establishment of SCF aid', 16 Aug. 1960: SCF Archive, box 147, file: Kenya 1960; G. W. Griffin, 'The urban youth centre project, city of Nairobi: progress report, July 1959 - February 1961', 9 Feb. 1961: KNA, AB/14/49.

Clubs in Kenya) and Juvenile Reception Centres which assessed children's needs and repatriated them to their home areas if families could be found. In 1960 he was encouraged by his employers to ask NGOs again to take on certain social welfare responsibilities. In the report that he wrote with his friend Roger Owles, they glossed over much of the government's own actions in displacing hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu and instead attributed the rising number of urban homeless youth to 'the incipient breakdown of tribal responsibility caused by the social changes from subsistence to cash economy in the rural area, and the rapid urban development'.<sup>41</sup> Amidst this 'crisis of youth', a common trope of late-imperialist social welfare, they asked SCF to again fund a Place of Safety in the Kariokor district of Nairobi to take in boys found wandering the streets.<sup>42</sup>

SCF duly responded and began also to take an interest in Griffin's private work at nearby Starehe too. Having appointed a new administrator for Kenya in 1961, SCF remained in frequent contact with Griffin.<sup>43</sup> He ensured that SCF maintained its support for the Kariokor Place of Safety while also informing SCF of his more ambitious long-term plans for his other centre which he hoped to 'run more on the lines of a good boarding school' and which he felt was 'much more in keeping with the ideal of SCF'.<sup>44</sup> In 1962 the SCF administrator began to develop plans to establish a network of 'Places of Safety' around the country, working in liaison with the Kenyan government. But at this point Griffin seems to have persuaded SCF along another route, effectively throwing into confusion the boundaries between his own private initiatives, his work as a civil servant and the supposedly independent operations of a British charity. In 1962 he moved the Place of Safety to the same premises as Starehe, creating instead a 'Rescue Centre' at Kariokor which SCF financed. The idea was a 'complementary' system with each of his three institutions forming part of 'an overall pattern'. The Kariokor Rescue Centre, based in one of the

<sup>41</sup> Boyce, 'Report on proposals', 16 Aug 1960, SCF Archive, box 147, file: Kenya 1960.

<sup>42</sup> On the problem of youth generally at this time see Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: Making Manhood, Maturity, and Authority in Kenya, 1898-1978* (Athens, Oh., 2016), ch. 8.

<sup>43</sup> I. G. Brown, 'Report for period 1 October - 14 November 1961': SCF Archive, box 147, file: Kenya 1960.

<sup>44</sup> I. G. Brown, 'Nairobi Place of Safety', 26 Nov. 1961: *ibid.*

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city's poorest slums, took boys in for the night and gave them a meal. If they so requested, they could then be moved on to the Place of Safety where a case-worker would try to get the boy back to his family. At the same time he would attend classes at the co-located Starehe Centre, to which he might ultimately transfer if no other forms of support could be found for him. 5

After consolidating his connections with SCF on his UK tour, Griffin returned to Kenya to also become SCF's local administrator, adding a new international charitable role to stand alongside his local official and voluntary functions.<sup>45</sup> 10 Despite the obvious potential for conflicts of interest, the SCF hierarchy had nothing but praise for his achievements at this time, further believing that his own personal administrative qualities trumped any difficulties arising from the blurring of his different positions.<sup>46</sup> As such, what Griffin had managed to put in place by 15 1963 was a system of social welfare that not only blurred the boundary between the official and unofficial spheres, but collapsed the distinction between short-term humanitarian relief and long-term development. Griffin's institutions cared 20 for the children from initial 'rescue', to immediate 'safety', to long term 'comfort'. This was significant since NGOs in Britain had to navigate the intricacies and whims of charity legislation and public opinion, both of which could be uncomfortable with aid rather than relief.<sup>47</sup> In addition, many staff within these 25 organizations were likewise uneasy about taking on longer term projects that did not appear to deal with immediate suffering and which seemed to take their organization beyond its original charitable statutes.<sup>48</sup> Just about every charity underwent 30 internal disputes as to their appropriate levels of commitment

<sup>45</sup> I. G. Brown, 'Suggestions for extension of work in the field', 2 Apr. 1962, and 'Memorandum on the Kariokor Rescue Centre', 31 Oct 1962; J. V. Hawkins, 'Place of Safety - Nairobi/Kenya', Nov. 1962: *ibid.*; G. W. Griffin, 'Kenya: Report', 1963, and W. E. Evans, 'Impressions of the Kariokor Rescue Centre', Feb. 1963: *ibid.*, Kenya 1963.

<sup>46</sup> [?] Dearden, [?] Harper and [?] Miller, 'Joint Report on the Visit to Kenya and Uganda', 1969: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>47</sup> James McKay, 'Voluntary Politics: The Sector's Political Function from Beveridge to Deakin', in Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin (eds.), *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in Britain and the Wider British World* (Manchester, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson and Jean-François Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 113-14.



to the competing demands of short-term relief and long term-development. Whether intentionally or not, Griffin's three institutions skirted round these thorny issues, enabling charities to tell different stories to different audiences about the precise goals and nature of their work amidst the Eastlands slums. 5

The networks born of imperialism that SCF facilitated also linked up to its other, more internationalist connections. SCF made itself the gateway to a whole world of funding that Griffin could never have imagined. It put Griffin in contact with its global counterpart, the International Union of Child Welfare, the secretary-general of which, Dr Mulock Houwer, visited in 1964. He referred to Starehe as the 'flower in the mud' that constituted 'a model project for Africa' and, most importantly, he took the decision to support Starehe alone rather than the Kenya National Council of Social Service, the then government-supported body which dealt with the voluntary sector as a whole throughout the country.<sup>49</sup> Houwer assisted Griffin by publicizing the total costs of £31,000 that would be needed to build a secondary school.<sup>50</sup> Other organizations responded to the call. A Nuffield Foundation contribution of £18,650 was followed by two grants of £10,000 and £17,000 from the Danish government to build laboratories and staff apartments (plus further substantial support from the Danish scouts), £15,000 for a boarding house from the Bernard van Leer Foundation based in The Hague and £35,000 from the Dutch Government to build an Assembly Hall and workshops. In 1967 the IUCW itself responded with a £65,000 donation to build a new three-storey primary school, and it facilitated contacts between Starehe and SCF sister organizations around the world. Pat Shaw particularly fostered these connections. He would go on to visit Denmark every summer, publicizing the work of the school and encouraging people to sponsor children's school fees through a scheme co-ordinated by the Danish Save the Children, *Red Barnet*.<sup>51</sup> 10 15 20 25 30

<sup>49</sup> Colin Thornley, 'IUCW Joint Action in Kenya', 13 Sept. 1967: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Af Caspar Strand, *Red Barnets historie – En fortælling om 60 års udvikling og arbejde* (Copenhagen, 2005); G. W. Griffin, 'Kenya: Assisting Deprived, Vagrant, Orphaned and otherwise Needy Boys In Kenya', Feb. 1967: SCF Archive, box 147, file: Kenya 1967; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 61–3.

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Fundamental to the early success of Starehe were Britain's other leading humanitarian charities. Following a request filtered through the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, Christian Aid administered a sponsorship scheme for the boys, raising funds from individual supporters and groups such as the Boys Brigade.<sup>52</sup> Once the connection was established, Griffin wrote frequently of his duties to meet the needs of his 'dependent' boys and haggled continuously for further funds, be it to support additional teachers or to fund capital projects.<sup>53</sup> Outstripping these donations, however, were those from Oxfam. SCF first approached Oxfam in 1963 to see if the latter would assist its work at the school. Oxfam was impressed and duly gave £11,000 to build and equip a classroom. This was followed by a further substantial grant of £15,300 to construct a two-storey workshop block and dormitory in 1965, the latter named after H. Leslie Kirkley, the then director of Oxfam. In total, Oxfam gave the school around £43,000 over a decade.<sup>54</sup> Its assistance was crucial to enabling Starehe to be granted a registration certificate, thereby making it possible for boys to sit the national preliminary examinations. The charity was in no doubt that it was money well spent. As its Overseas Aid Director put it in 1968, 'Something of a miracle has been worked in the lives of many of the children'.<sup>55</sup>

Within just a few years from its establishment, Starehe had captured the imagination of many around the world and a steady stream of visitors had passed through its doors. While visits by royalty and politicians such as Senator Robert Kennedy and Indira Gandhi were crucial to Griffin's philanthropic ambitions, highlights for the boys were more likely to have been Mohammad Ali's visit, plus an impromptu football training match that Pat Shaw arranged with Pele at the

<sup>52</sup> FFHC Requests to Board Meeting, 10 Mar. 1966; Griffin to Gerald Walker, secretary of London District Boys' Brigade, 19 Nov. 1966: CA Archive, CA2/A/10/4.

<sup>53</sup> B. J. Dudbridge, Memo, 21 Feb. 1966; 'Kenya: Starehe Boys' Home', 1967; Barber, Bellhouse, Mwangi & Co., 'Starehe Boys Centre: Auditors' Report', 29 Mar. 1967; Griffin to [?] Lacey, 17 July 1967; Pat Shaw to Heather Webster, 28 Feb 1968: CA Archive, CA2/A/10/4.

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of Africa Committee, 1 Sept. 1966: Oxfam MSS, PRG/1/3/1; Grants lists, 1962-89: COM/1/1/3/1; Information Dept Country Files: Kenya (1), 1965-90: COM/2/9/9.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard Llewellyn, 'Visit to Kenya and Tanzania, Nov. - Dec. 1968', 3 Jan 1969: *ibid.*, PRG/1/3/2.

Uhuru stadium.<sup>56</sup> The fascination with the school has extended to academics and educationalists, idealistic volunteers from across Europe and teachers on exchanges from English public schools. A particularly productive connection was made with Christ's Hospital in Britain, a school similarly run on public school lines but with an intake of children based on a range of — arguably dubious — charitable criteria. Volunteers such as Peter Attenborough introduced many of Christ's customs while others such as Roger Martin developed long-lasting connections which would see him publish Starehe's first history, *Anthem of Bugles*, in 1978. 5 10

The only apparent blip in this constant stream of praise came in 1969. To mark its fiftieth anniversary, SCF commissioned the left-wing British social realist film-maker Ken Loach to make a film of its work. He travelled to Kenya and focused on Starehe, arguing against the transfer of English public school customs to the local African context as well as engaging in a broad-ranging critique of neo-colonialism in which he implicated 'sticking plaster' charities such as SCF. As a piece of propaganda, the film was an unmitigated 'disaster', and SCF aggressively pursued Loach to ensure an extensive cover-up that resulted in the film being effectively banned (it was not aired in public until 2011).<sup>57</sup> 15 20

But Loach's film provoked SCF into acknowledging that it had an image problem. SCF recognised that it had fallen behind the trends in humanitarianism and development that in the 1960s saw an increasing turn to radicalism and political advocacy by bodies such as Christian Aid and Oxfam, particularly after the Haslemere Declaration of 1968 which called upon the government to increase its aid budget.<sup>58</sup> The 1960s brought a new generation of committed internationalists to the aid sector who highlighted the benefits of grassroots, local initiatives. To the British public, Starehe was able to present itself as embodying such a new spirit, while also remaining firmly part of the 25 30

<sup>56</sup> 'Griffin, 'Visit to Kenya by Senator Kennedy', 6 June 1966: KNA, NYS/1/327; Starehe Boys' Centre, *Endeavour* (1969), 70–1: SCF Archive, 60; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 169.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Hilton, 'Ken Loach and the Save the Children Film: Humanitarianism, Imperialism and the Changing Role of Charity in postwar Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, lxxxvii (2015).

<sup>58</sup> Haslemere Committee, *The Haslemere Declaration* (London, 1968).

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'establishment'. In particular, Griffin's work in promoting his school in Britain led to the creation in 1970 of the UK Starehe Association, which would be chaired by Paul Whitehouse, a senior career police officer who had served, in a voluntary capacity, as Starehe's assistant bursar from 1963 to 1964.<sup>59</sup> 5

More significant still was the interest expressed in Starehe by Princess Anne, who became president of SCF in 1970 while still only 19 years of age. Her advisors were keen to make a documentary to promote her charitable work, while both Griffin and the SCF were keen to make another film about Starehe rather different in tone from that of Loach's.<sup>60</sup> Anne's interest increased SCF's resolve to make the school the focus of much of its activity in Africa and it renewed its efforts to convince other donors of the Starehe cause.<sup>61</sup> The British High Commission in Kenya worked closely with Kenyatta, SCF and Griffin to ensure that the royal visitor's trip to Starehe (as well as the Rescue Centre and Place of Safety) went as smoothly as possible.<sup>62</sup> She visited in February 1971, accompanied by the popular TV presenter Valerie Singleton, and the resulting film was released as a *Blue Peter* special at peak viewing time on Easter Sunday.<sup>63</sup> It proved to be a huge success for both Starehe and the SCF.<sup>64</sup> It was followed by a special *Blue Peter* publication and a Christmas Appeal later in the year, as well as a follow-up film in 1972 and a presentation on Starehe by Kenyatta when Queen Elizabeth visited the same year.<sup>65</sup> 25  
Princess Anne has continued to support the school up to the

<sup>59</sup> The charity is now known as Starehe Future: <<http://www.oldcambrians.com/Obituary-Griffin,Geoffrey.html>>.

<sup>60</sup> Griffin, "'Boys of Starehe' film", 30 Sept. 1970: KNA, NYS/1/327.

<sup>61</sup> W. N. Hibbert, 'Report on visit to Kenya', Jan 1971; 'List of trusts and trustees to be approached for Starehe', 13 Jan 1971: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Director of fundraising, 'Memo', 13 Jan 1971; Director of fundraising to Mary Dawnay, 19 Feb. 1971: SCF Archive, 48, file: 'The President Film: The Princess and the Children'.

<sup>63</sup> BBC Press Release, 7 Apr. 197: *ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> Brian Holden to Shaw, 29 Apr. 1971; Shaw to Holden, 4 May 1971: SCF Archive, 883.

<sup>65</sup> Biddy Baxter and Edward Barnes, *Blue Peter Royal Safari with H.R.H. Princess Anne and Valerie Singleton* (London, 1971), 8. One ironic consequence of the visit is that SCF's work became so well known in East Africa that when the austerity three-day week was introduced in Britain in 1973, Uganda's President, Idi Amin, cheekily announced the creation of a Save Britain Fund to assist his former colonial masters in their hour of need: Dominic Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974* (London, 2011), 593.

present day, visiting on several occasions and securing yet more philanthropic connections and donations.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, other aid agencies jumped onto what was becoming something of a philanthropic bandwagon. In Britain, Oxfam propaganda in the press took advantage of its existing Starehe links, while Childcare International and the leftist War on Want joined Christian Aid in running sponsorship schemes for Starehe pupils and CAFOD provided the materials to run an accredited City and Guilds vocational course.<sup>67</sup> Save the Children organizations elsewhere, especially in Canada, Denmark and Sweden, contributed heavily to sponsorships and other forms of help, as did bodies such as the Christian Children's Fund of America, NOVIB in the Netherlands, *Kindernothilfe* and *Brot für die Welt* in Germany, the Musgrave Charitable Trust in Ireland, the Ford Foundation and the Moore Foundation in the US and *Rettet das Kind* in Austria.<sup>68</sup> These private funds were substantially improved by other larger grants from the governments of Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, as well as the European Economic Community.

By the 1980s the Starehe fund-raising machinery resembled that of many of the leading private schools from around the world. A successful Aim High Appeal in 1996, for instance, raised £1million for an endowment permanently to support 100 pupils every year.<sup>69</sup> Charities have consequently doubted whether the school was the most appropriate beneficiary of so much private philanthropy. The Danish scouts' funding of a swimming pool does appear a peculiar interpretation of development 'needs', though the symbolism of the provision of such a luxury otherwise denied to non-white Kenyans was significant. NGOs have worried that funding might be better directed towards more pressing concerns and they have been

<sup>66</sup> Starehe Management Council minutes, 1982: KNA, XK/1/12; 'Princess Anne praises Starehe', *Kenya Standard*, 1 Oct. 1998: SCF Archive, 857.

<sup>67</sup> John Davies, 'I am Oxfam', *Guardian*, 12 May 1971; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 75, 154.

<sup>68</sup> Griffin to P. J. Gachathi, Ministry of Education, 27 July 1971; Griffin to Gachathi, 29 Dec. 1972; Griffin, 'Starehe: Planning for the Future: A Report to the Ministry of Education', Feb. 1978: KNA, XJ/27/85; Ojiambo, 'Educating modern Kenyans', 147-8. *Rettet das Kind* is not affiliated to the international Save the Children federation.

<sup>69</sup> Various extensive papers related to the Aim High Appeal: SCF Archive, 859; Honjo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys' Centre*, 75-88; King'ala, *Autobiography*, 70.

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uncomfortable with the fact that the ongoing nature of charitable donations goes against the spirit of the self-sustaining development project which many initially believed Starehe to be. Oxfam ceased to support Starehe by the late 1970s precisely because of these concerns. Likewise, *Red Barnet* eventually wound down its sponsorship programme in 2001 and even the British SCF began to pull back on its operations in the late 1990s after Aim High had succeeded. 5

But the overall support for the school from the West has been really quite staggering. While each individual grant may well have been given as a specific and isolated form of assistance to a grassroots, self-help and local development initiative, collectively the amounts raised take on the scale of an official development project, albeit targeted at just one school. Starehe provided the opportunity for charities and their supporters to be seen to be doing something, and doing something quickly and effectively. It provided both immediate humanitarian relief and long-term development assistance which enabled two tropes of humanitarian propaganda — the hungry child and the smiling black face — to be presented at one and the same time. And it operated through a mechanism — the traditional English public school system — that was, to many donors, both personally familiar and pedagogically sound. Moreover, donations could be made by charities in the knowledge that the school was also supported by the newly independent Kenyan state. It is here, in Starehe and Griffin's relationship to both late-colonial and independent government, that we can begin to trace a more complex story of development from a very different angle. 10 15 20 25

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To understand the support for Starehe within Kenya, it is illuminating to reflect on the alternative career of Griffin's chief administrator at the school. Patrick David Shaw was one of Kenya's most infamous police officers, having joined the Police Reserve in 1959. From the 1960s until his death in 1988 he patrolled the streets of Nairobi ferociously dealing with the city's most violent gangs. His biographer estimates that possibly hundreds died as a result of his eagerness to use his .38 special to execute justice on the spot. Weighing in at well over 300 pounds 35

he was a formidable spectacle and he and his specially reinforced Volvo became a legendary presence within the capital. His operations were hardly under cover and even his codename, 'ROMEO 9' was widely known. He famously killed Kenya's most wanted criminal Wakinyonga in 1978 and was widely believed to have been involved in the assassination of the opposition political leader J. M. Kariuki three years earlier. Shaw was not some wayward cop, a white throwback to a colonial regime when Special Branch had acquired a brutal reputation interrogating Mau Mau suspects. His work was supported by the highest authorities and his additional work at Starehe was well known. He rose to the rank of senior superintendent and was awarded the Silver Star by President Daniel arap Moi just before his death in 1988. Moi's words at Shaw's funeral described him as 'constant, selfless, sacrificial'.<sup>70</sup>

Shaw's position at Starehe helps us to understand the importance of the school within Kenyan society and politics. Shaw first met Griffin on the latter's fundraising trip to the UK in 1962 when Shaw himself was on leave from his then job with the Agricultural Department. He returned to become a volunteer at Starehe, and soon afterwards his salary was being directly funded by SCF. Indeed, it was this daytime employment which enabled Shaw to work for the Kenyan police as a volunteer. Like Griffin, Shaw served more than one master, though it was Starehe that commanded his ultimate loyalty (he forfeited part of his salary as a donation to the school). But it is the respect and support that both men courted and captured from Kenya's elites that explains another side to Starehe's success.

While the school's financial stability relied on the philanthropic networks available through its colonial connections, its political legitimacy came through its close relationship to official

<sup>70</sup> Scan: *Starehe Comment and News*, Feb 1988, 1, 4-5; 'Patrick Shaw obituary', *Weekly Review*, 19 Feb. 1988, 19; KNA, XK/1/12; David Zucchino, 'A Kenyan Lawman: Large in Life, Now Larger in Legend', *Kenya Inquirer*, 13 Mar 1988, at <[http://articles.philly.com/1988-03-13/news/26277319\\_1\\_nairobi-police-radio-kenya-police](http://articles.philly.com/1988-03-13/news/26277319_1_nairobi-police-radio-kenya-police)> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016); David Smith, 'Investigating Patrick Shaw, Kenya's most dreaded cop', *Kenya Daily Nation*, 25 Mar. 2013, at <<http://www.nation.co.ke/Features/DN2/Patrick-Shaw/-/957860/1728956/-/uvolk3/-/index.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); David Smith, 'Kenya: Kablam! The only language Patrick Shaw spoke', *African Culture Direct*, 26 Mar. 2013, at <<http://africulturedirect.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/kablam-only-language-patrick-shaw-spoke.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015).

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post-colonial power, particularly via Griffin and Shaw. Starehe clearly appealed to the new rulers of Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta conferred the motto, *Natulenge Juu!* ('Let Us Aim High'), and was a frequent early visitor, as was J. M. Kariuki (before his fall from political favour and subsequent demise) and also Tom Mboya, the trade unionist and nationalist leader who served as minister for economic planning and development in Kenyatta's government. After Mboya's assassination in 1969, he was replaced as patron of the school by Minister of Finance Mwai Kibaki, a fortuitous appointment given that he in turn would become vice-president in 1978 and president in 2002. Between Presidents Kenyatta and Kibaki, however, was Daniel arap Moi, also a frequent visitor to the school, leading the services at the founders' day in 1969 and being the guest of honour at various celebratory events through to the fortieth anniversary of the school in 1999. Their patronage was followed by additional support, not least through the payment of many teachers' salaries and the various land grants (totalling forty-eight acres) that have been made to support its physical expansion.<sup>71</sup>

But it is the particular ethos of the school that warrants further explanation. That Shaw's brutal exploits with the night-time criminals of Nairobi could become well known, not only to Starehe's financial backers and the Kenyan public but also the school's pupils, is significant. Shaw exercised a firm hand over the capital's discordant elements that fitted in with an 'ideology of order' that has been argued to have been the chief characteristic of post-independence Kenyan politics and which has overshadowed other political liberties and civil rights.<sup>72</sup> This in turn coalesced with the particular focus on discipline that Griffin exercised within the school and which he learned from his experiences in dealing with Mau Mau. Griffin participated in new methods of

<sup>71</sup> Griffin, 'Address by the Founder on the Occasion of the Centre's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary', 24 July 1999, in Hongo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys' Centre*, 118; Griffin, 'Starehe: Planning for the Future', 14 Feb. 1978; Griffin to Gachathi, Ministry of Education, 6 Nov 1970; A. K. Kiri, Nairobi provincial education officer, to Gachathi, 19 Sept. 1974: KNA, XJ/27/85.

<sup>72</sup> E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Democracy and the Ideology of Order in Kenya', in Michael G. Schatzburg (ed.), *The Political Economy of Kenya* (New York, 1987). The concept has been most usefully deployed by the historians Daniel Branch and Nic Cheeseman in their 'Introduction: Our Turn to Eat', in Daniel Branch, Nic Cheeseman and Leigh Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat: Politics in Kenya since 1950* (Berlin, 2010).



institutional rehabilitation which he subsequently adapted to fit in with both the English public school tradition and Kenyatta's catch-all notion of *harambee*.

Griffin's disillusionment with the British armed forces' tactics of interrogation and detention of the Kikuyu actually coincided with a more liberal imperialist promotion of rehabilitation. Early on in the Emergency, Tom Askwith, the colonial government community development officer, promoted the idea developed by a number of ethno-psychologists such as Louis Leakey and J. C. Carothers that Mau Mau rebels could be 'cured' through re-education and rehabilitation. This provided a rationale for the British government's development of detention centres as these were to be the sites for an intensive hearts and minds operation.<sup>73</sup> As Caroline Elkins has put it, this was a 'curious moment for liberal reform' though one which would come to be almost wholly overshadowed by the forms of torture and brutality that became the norm of the camps, particularly as practised by Special Branch (the police unit that Shaw himself joined).<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Askwith maintained his position despite the overwhelming defiance of his principles at the Mau Mau detention camps and was able to carve a tiny niche for his slightly more enlightened approach.<sup>75</sup>

Shortly after leaving the army Griffin and his friend Roger Owles took up posts in 1955 as community development officers in Askwith's new ministry. They were employed at Manyani Detention Camp to identify underage boys who were being held inappropriately, with adults and more seasoned Mau Mau rebels.<sup>76</sup> Viewed with suspicion by both the inmates and Special Branch, Griffin nevertheless identified around 1,000 children of sixteen years or less. On these he was then able to practise a more liberal form of rehabilitation at Wamumu Approved School and Youth Camp in 1955. Unlike all other forms of detention and supposed 'rehabilitation' during the Emergency, Wamumu has been described as 'a paradise for

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 281-4

<sup>74</sup> Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 110

<sup>75</sup> A. R. Baggallay, 'Myths of Mau Mau Expanded: Rehabilitation in Kenya's Detention Camps, 1954-60', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, v (2011).

<sup>76</sup> Kinga'ala, *Autobiography*, 45-7

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young Mau Mau suspects' that stood out for its entirely exceptional approach.<sup>77</sup>

Along with Owles and his superior officer, Captain George Gardener, Griffin embarked on a hearts and minds operation that drew extensively from his limited experience, made up as it was of his own schooling and officer training. He reduced the armed personnel at the camp from 200 to 40, obtained a blanket pardon for the boys from the attorney-general and set to work to win their trust, turning them away from the ideology of Mau Mau and towards becoming useful colonial citizens. In practice this meant strong discipline but also the creation of educational classes, skills training, physical exercise and competitive sports. The boys built their own classrooms, recreational grounds and a church. Following Gardener's lead, Griffin introduced rudimentary khaki uniforms, Reveille, flag parades on Empire Day, a house system (four out of five of which were named after colonial Kenyan 'pioneers': Boyes, Delamere, Grogan and Lugard), prefects (adapted to the local context in that the role was only available to the circumcised, which had the effect of clearly demarcating an internal hierarchy) and a Boy Scouts troop (Griffin himself had been Kenya's first ever King's Scout and would become, along with Shaw, a member of the Kenya Scout Council).<sup>78</sup> Almost all of this prefigured many of his initiatives at Starehe. He even introduced a motto, 'Truth and Loyalty', that might well have been used for his later school. And the famous Starehe school council, *baraza*, was borrowed directly from Wamumu where it was used as an informal public meeting where boys could relate their past experiences to the group and 'cleanse' themselves of Mau Mau.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 289; Ojiambo, 'Educating Modern Kenyans', 196–209.

<sup>78</sup> Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, ch. 7; Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens, Oh., 2004), 172–3; G. K. Gathu, Kenya Boys Scouts Association, to Griffin, 1 July 1966: KNA, NYS/1/234.

<sup>79</sup> Ojiambo, 'Educating Modern Kenyans', 219–28; Smith Hempstone, 'Wamumu: The Old School Tie', *Institute of Current World Affairs: Letters by Former Fellows*, 29 June 1957, at <<http://www.icwa.org/txtArticles/SH-27.htm>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016); Hongo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys' Centre*, 27–8; Kinga'ala, *Autobiography*, 49–56; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 49–56; Paul Ocobock, 'Generation Mau Mau: Constructing Rites of Passage in Late Colonial Kenya', unpublished paper, at <[http://www.academia.edu/4865235/Generation\\_Mau\\_Mau\\_Constructing\\_Rites\\_of\\_Passage\\_in\\_Late\\_Colonial\\_Kenya](http://www.academia.edu/4865235/Generation_Mau_Mau_Constructing_Rites_of_Passage_in_Late_Colonial_Kenya)> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016).

As John Lonsdale has argued, for certain individuals such as Griffin, Mau Mau recreated ‘the cross-racial loyalties of the frontier and paradoxically, turn[ed] some whites into Kenyans with no other home’.<sup>80</sup> After Wamumu, Griffin’s work as Colony Youth Organizer led to the creation of two self-help clubs and schools throughout Kenya, though it was at Starehe — which he set up in his spare time — that he was able to implement fully what he had learned at the camp. Most significantly, he sought out two former Wamumu inmates to assist him at Starehe and to confer a legitimacy upon his enterprise among the local community. Geoffrey Geturo Gatama, a former clerk caught up in the indiscriminate sweep of Operation Anvil, became a leader of the other boys in the camp and an assistant to Owles and Griffin.<sup>81</sup> From a much poorer background, Joseph Kamiru Gikubu had been a fully signed up Mau Mau sympathiser and oath administrator. Slightly older, he likewise became a ‘school captain’ and would later follow Owles to work at an approved school in Othaya.<sup>82</sup> In 1959 Griffin persuaded both former detainees to join him at Starehe. Gikubu was placed in charge of the Kariokor Rescue Centre and Geturo became principal of the school itself. Owles himself later joined Griffin as an officer in the National Youth Service and regularly volunteered to help with the school band.<sup>83</sup>

Together they implemented a regime that drew directly from their experience of Wamumu. Not only was the institutional language of ‘Places of Safety’, ‘reception centres’ and ‘youth clubs’ (for many years Starehe retained its nomenclature as a club rather than a school) directly taken from the rehabilitative

<sup>80</sup> John Lonsdale, ‘Kenya: Home County and African Frontier’, in Robert Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), 108–9.

<sup>81</sup> Hongo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys’ Centre*, 44–6; Kinga’ala, *Autobiography*, 65.

<sup>82</sup> Kwamchetsi Mokokha, ‘Life Lessons on Sincerity from Starehe Co-Founder Joseph Gikubu’, *Daily Nation*, 9 May 2014, at <<http://mobile.nation.co.ke/blogs/-/1949942/2309168/-/format/xhtml/-/vnu545/-/index.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016); John Njiru, ‘Starehe Boys Co-Founder Joseph Gikubu Passes On’, *Daily Nation*, 8 May 2014, at <<http://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/Starehe-Boys-cofounder-Joseph-Gikubu-passes-on/-/1950946/2307808/-/format/xhtml/-/jg7746z/-/index.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); ‘Past Directors: Joseph Kamiru Gikubu’, Starehe Future, at <[http://www.starehe.org/schools/past\\_directors.html](http://www.starehe.org/schools/past_directors.html)> (accessed 19 Jan. 2015); Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 40–1; Hongo and Mugambi, *Starehe Boys’ Centre*, 40–3; Peter Ojiambo, ‘Gift of Education: Joseph Kamiru Gikubu and the Development of Kenyan Youth Education from 1957 to the present’, *Africa Review*, vii (2015).

<sup>83</sup> Shaw to Roger Owles, 5 June 1969: KNA, NYS/1/259.

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principles of Askwith's model of community development and colonial youth policy more generally, but the actual practical methods implemented at Wamumu found their way into the school.<sup>84</sup> Starehe became a curious mixture of rehabilitation camp and English public school, though Griffin believed the two to be entirely compatible. School houses, scout troops, opportunities for social service and the famous marching band have been pillars of the school's ethos from the very beginning. The central emphasis of all of Griffin's rhetoric about his educational philosophy has been the trust that he has claimed to have placed in the boys. But such trust, he clearly believed, could only survive within a highly ordered environment. Discipline was therefore crucial to how the school functioned.

This is not to go so far as to argue that discipline overshadowed trust in the same manner as discipline and brutality overshadowed rehabilitation in the Mau Mau camps. But it is to argue that the Emergency provided a stimulus to discipline that Griffin's experience in the army reinforced. In the late-colonial and early post-colonial periods, Griffin clearly believed that tough discipline was a necessary backbone to everything else that went on at the school. He took personal responsibility for all disciplinary matters, possibly as a deliberate counterpoint to the perceived arbitrariness of white colonial justice. Teachers were not permitted to execute their own punishments and all offending boys were instead referred to him. In the early days of the school, he clearly believed in the importance of being 'tough' with boys who had been brought up on the streets. He was not against prefects 'knocking [a boy] cold' before presenting him for further, more structured punishment. One of the most contrived was a system known as 'D' which he took directly from Wamumu.<sup>85</sup> Here, the offender would be kept separate from the other boys, interviewed daily by Geturo or Gikubo and set to manual work.<sup>86</sup> Even his extraordinarily sympathetic biographer tells remarkable stories of how quick Griffin was to

<sup>84</sup> Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, ch. 8, and "'Joy Rides for Juveniles': Vagrant Youth and Colonial Control in Nairobi, Kenya, 1901-52', *Social History*, xxxi (2006), 39-59; Ellen Boucher, 'The Emotional Requirements of Postcolonial Citizenship: Outward Bound and Survival Training in Nigeria and Kenya, 1951-1963', paper presented to North American Conference on British Studies, Nov. 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, ch. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 33.

use corporal punishment: ‘He could cane a whole class of 35 boys and have the strength to shout, “Next!” after caning the 35<sup>th</sup>’.<sup>87</sup>

Discipline was not simply about punishment. It also meant the rigorous structuring of all the boys’ time. But particularly in the 1960s the line between discipline and punishment was narrowly drawn. The boys used to refer to Griffin as *Gatemi*, a Kikuyu diminution of the word ‘cut’, which denoted his supposed effectiveness with the cane.<sup>88</sup> Certainly this gave rise to rumours about his background. The boys gossiped that he had been a ruthless hunter of Kikuyu during Mau Mau when he had supposedly similarly been nicknamed ‘the knife’.<sup>89</sup> Ken Loach picked up on the boys’ stories when making the SCF film and repeated the rumour that the school was run by a headmaster who had ‘shot more people in the Mau Mau uprising than anyone else’.<sup>90</sup> Beyond the more fanciful stories, though, there were certainly concerns about the regulations, order and military discipline imposed at the school. That relatively few Old Starehians from the early 1960s attend alumni events might well be due to their less appreciated experiences of the school. Certainly, there were criticisms at the time of ‘Griffin’s magic mix of uniform, rules and cane’ which created what amounted to a ‘military establishment’ and visiting NGO staff could be taken aback at the militarism of the school and Griffin’s own khaki attire.<sup>91</sup>

In later years Griffin became more comfortable about sparing the rod. He maintained, however, that corporal punishment was absolutely crucial to order more generally. When unrest broke out across Kenya’s schools in 2001, he regretted the banning of caning in schools which he felt

<sup>87</sup> Kingala, *Autobiography*, 112.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>89</sup> Dida Jallow-Kalake, ‘A Childhood Memoir’, *Freedom Newspaper Online*, 12 Mar. 2010, at <<http://www.freedomnewspaper.com/Homepage/tabid/36/newsid367/5021/mid/367/London-Letter-Ngugi-Wa-Thiongos-Dreams-in-a-Time-of-War/Default.aspx>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016). It is also possible that the term referred back to his use of circumcision as a tool of rehabilitation at Wamumu.

<sup>90</sup> Ken Loach in Anthony Hayward, *Which Side Are You On? Ken Loach and His Films* (London, 2004), 120.

<sup>91</sup> Starehe Boys’ Centre, *Endeavour* (1969), 56; SCF Archive, 60; Joseph Odindo, ‘Griffin’s Magic Mix of Uniform, Rules and Cane’, *Daily Nation*, 30 June 2005, 1–4; Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 194; ‘Educating Modern Kenyans’, 371; Philip Jackson and Gordon McLeod, ‘Report of visit to East Africa’, 26 Sept. 1967: Oxfam MSS, PRG/1/3/2.

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underlay the disturbances.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, his approach echoed the ‘festishization of order’ and stability articulated by Kenya’s political leaders and which was used to discredit the opponents of the state’s development policies and ‘to violate its citizens’ human rights’.<sup>93</sup> This explains why Griffin and Starehe have been presented as models of good educational practice in Kenya and why Shaw’s dual role at the school and with the police was seen as complementary. The Ministry of Education has been a persistent admirer of Starehe’s disciplinary techniques and record and it frequently asked Griffin to reflect on his experiences to fellow headmasters and educationalists.<sup>94</sup> When, in 1982, civil disturbances erupted throughout the capital, Starehe was admired for its ability to prevent the protests spilling onto its campus, an achievement many other schools could not claim.<sup>95</sup> Following the notorious rape of seventy-one schoolgirls by their fellow boarders at St Kizito’s school in 1991, as well as other outbreaks of general indiscipline, Griffin was asked to submit a full report to a specially commissioned presidential committee on student unrest.<sup>96</sup> So well received were his recommendations that Griffin went on to revise them into a general set of guidelines on good practice that were published in 1994 as *School Mastery*.<sup>97</sup>

But if Griffin’s approach to education was aligned with the requirements of the new post-colonial state, then so too did his work at Starehe fit with the specifically Kenyan approach to nation-building advocated by the moderate nationalists who supported Kenyatta after 1963. ‘Harambee’, literally ‘all pull together’ in Swahili, became the official motto of Kenya. It was a phrase ideally suited to the new leaders of Kenya who eschewed the more redistributive elements of socialism as advocated in

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Harding, ‘Kenyan School Spare the Rod’, *BBC Online*, 21 Aug. 2001, at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/Ojiamboi/world/africa/1502376.stm>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016).

<sup>93</sup> Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011* (New Haven, Ct., 2011), 18.

<sup>94</sup> Griffin to Dr Towset, minister for education, 4 Nov 1978; Daniel Mbiti, Ministry of Education, to Griffin, 25 Jan 1980: KNA, XJ/27/85; Griffin to National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies, 11 May 1976: KNA, NYS/1/286.

<sup>95</sup> Starehe Management Council minutes, 1982, 11: KNA, XK/1/12.

<sup>96</sup> G. W. Griffin, ‘Submission to the Presidential Commission on Student Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenyan Secondary Schools’, 18 Aug 1991: SCF Archive, 857.

<sup>97</sup> Geoffrey Griffin, *School Mastery: Straight Talk About Boarding School Management in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1994).

other parts of Africa and who looked instead to self-supporting institutions that did not upset an otherwise pro-capitalist and pro-western agenda. Starehe fitted well within this conceptual framework, suggesting both a tradition of self-help that had marked the independent school movement in Kenya and a means of securing western funds for social welfare programmes that the new regime could ill afford. In effect Harambee eased the transition from colonialism to independence and enabled institutions and individuals such as Starehe and Griffin to offer almost seamless continuities between the two.

This was a marriage of school and nationalist politics that had to be navigated carefully. Griffin undoubtedly came under some pressure after 1963 from those more radical voices that pushed for the 'Africanization' of key positions in the new independent state. Griffin ran into trouble with Dick Oloo, the MP who also served as the director of the National Council of Social Service and who was well aware of the many worthy welfare services that would welcome the injection of foreign capital that Griffin was able to obtain for Starehe.<sup>98</sup> But Griffin had the backing of Kenyatta who immediately made him the director of the National Youth Scheme (hereafter NYS) in April 1964. The NYS was created as an 'army without guns', a mechanism to channel Mau Mau aggression to more productive purposes and to instil discipline and order into all of the nation's youth for civilian purposes, as well as providing a release valve for any pent-up feelings of dissatisfaction among former Mau Mau fighters.<sup>99</sup> For Griffin, it gave him regular access to Kenyatta, a crucial opportunity for face-to-face interaction given the way in which the president conducted politics and which resulted in the reward of an extra one month's leave per year from his official post to allow Griffin to focus on Starehe.<sup>100</sup> Most important of all, Kenyatta appointed Waruhiu Itote, better known as the famous Mau Mau forest fighter, General China, to the NYS: he eventually became Griffin's deputy in 1970. China had been incarcerated with Kenyatta, and the two had become close comrades, with the future

<sup>98</sup> Pierre Zumbach to Colin Thornley, Sept. 1970: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>99</sup> See various press cutting in KNA, NYS, for example: P. G. Okoth, 'Experiment which Grew into Major National Force', *The Standard*, 17 Aug. 1974, 4; Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age*, ch. 9.

<sup>100</sup> 'President proud of work done by NYS', *Daily Nation*, 4 Nov. 1970: KNA, NYS/1/251; Griffin, 'Starehe: Planning for the Future': KNA, XJ./27/85

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president teaching China to improve his English and his political understanding. Initially uneasy alongside one another, Griffin and China became great colleagues. China facilitated Griffin's direct access to the president on several occasions, as well as serving on the school management committee and providing a genuine national hero to visit the boys at Starehe frequently over the next three decades.<sup>101</sup> Once enemies in combat, by 1974 China could speak of the 'most steady, intelligent and wise leadership' of Griffin at the NYS.<sup>102</sup>

Starehe fitted well with the type of nation-building that Kenyatta advocated. As historians of modern Kenya have argued, the real winners of Mau Mau were not the rebels but the loyalists during the Emergency. They continued to staff the institutions of state and Kenyatta's dislike of radicalism meant that he was unwilling to embark on a massive process of educational reform that would have threatened the status of independent schools. For all its 'rhetoric of non-alignment and African socialism, Kenyatta's government was generally pro-West and pro-capitalism.'<sup>103</sup> As Daniel Branch has argued, Kenyatta's politics came to be based on identity and 'recognition' (that is, of the rights of ethnic groups) rather than on the 'redistribution' that many of his more radical political opponents pursued. They, unlike him, preferred policies of greater state intervention and even the removal of white settlers from their lands. Charity and private initiative — the factors behind Starehe's growth — fitted seamlessly within the broader political context of Kenyatta's moderate nationalism and ethos of stability and control.<sup>104</sup>

Griffin made the appropriate noises about 'harambee' and African socialism. Starehe, he claimed, was based upon brotherhood and freedom, principles which did not, as his critics contended, make Etonians out of the destitute, but

<sup>101</sup> King'ala, *Autobiography*, 78–9; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 230–88; Griffin, 'Starehe: Planning for the Future': KNA, XJ./27/85. On Itiote's relationship with Kenyatta and his role at the NYS see his autobiography, *Mau Mau General*, reprinted in Myles Osborne (ed.), *The Life and Times of General China: Mau Mau and the End of Empire in Kenya* (Princeton, NJ, 2015), 32, 120, 128–9,

<sup>102</sup> Minutes of NYS staff meeting, 16 Aug. 1974, N.59/74: General China: KNA, ARK/2/32.

<sup>103</sup> Branch, *Kenya*, 38.

<sup>104</sup> Burton and Jennings, 'Introduction', 10–12; M. Tamarkin, 'The Roots of Political Stability in Kenya', *African Affairs*, lxxvii (1978).



which aligned the school with his 'faith in the meritocratic doctrine of African socialism'.<sup>105</sup> As the new state struggled to find the funds to support an educational infrastructure, locally supported and community-funded harambee schools sprang up around the country to cater for the many children unable to find places in government schools.<sup>106</sup> Even by 1985, of the approximately 2,000 secondary schools in the country, around one-third were government maintained, one-third were harambee and another third were originally harambee but received (like Starehe) government assistance for teacher salaries.<sup>107</sup> Gaps existed within social welfare and Griffin made sure that he filled them in a manner compatible with the governing principles of the day.

Likewise, he carefully navigated the institutions of both the late-colonial and early post-colonial regimes. Although he was principally devoted to his school, he never took a salary for his work as director and, in fact, even appears to have invested some of his own inheritance. His working day was focused in the mornings on his job as Colony Youth Organizer and then National Youth Leader. He returned in the afternoons, still in uniform, to the school, to focus on Starehe affairs, always staying long enough to participate in the lowering of the flag ceremony at the end of each day. Between all of this he worked in an honorary capacity as the Kenya administrator for SCF, with Shaw flexibly serving as his administrative assistant in all three roles. Undoubtedly, this involved a considerable strain upon his time, but it also meant that Starehe's interests would be foremost when he dealt with the potentially competing demands of government and western charity. Moreover, his entire private life was given over to the school, raising questions about his non-existent domestic life and even his sexuality (perhaps a little too defensively his biographer devoted several pages to affirming his heterosexuality, but no real evidence exists beyond a potential Freudian slip when Griffin referred to Shaw as 'Patrick

<sup>105</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 206.

<sup>106</sup> L. A. Kivuva, 'Secondary Education Reform in Kenya: The Quest for Quality, Relevance and Equity', *Comparative Education Review*, xlviii (2004); E. J. Keller, *Education, Manpower and Development: The Impact of Educational Policy in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1980).

<sup>107</sup> Ojiambo, 'Educating modern Kenyans', 257.

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Griffin<sup>108</sup>). But the key point is that at all times and in all his roles he was attuned to different political and institutional agendas and was able to ensure that Starehe took full advantage of them.

The actual benefits that Starehe could derive from the blurring of Griffin's private and public functions within Kenya might be trivial in any one instance. Cumulatively, however, they could be much more substantial. As with his role in the colonial government, he could steer dignitaries along a course that would be sure to pass Starehe.<sup>109</sup> He carefully selected government officials to serve on his management committee.<sup>110</sup> He might obtain, through Shaw, additional assistance from the police in training the school band.<sup>111</sup> Or he might use his connections with other government departments to secure better school trips for his boys.<sup>112</sup> The United Nations Day Parade in 1966, which Griffin organised, offered a visual image of the fuzziness that he deliberately fostered. The Starehe boys marched alongside the scouts and the NYS conscripts, while the school band played with the police.<sup>113</sup> Inevitably, the dual roles that he adopted began to attract their critics. Along with pressures for Africanization from MPs such as Oprong Oduya, questions arose in parliament about whether Griffin was supporting his school through the admission of children of the rich and powerful.<sup>114</sup> Always a lurking suspicion among the school's critics and those given to jealousy following their own failure to secure places for their sons, there has never been enough evidence to make such accusations stick, not least because of Griffin's genuine commitment to helping the disadvantaged.<sup>115</sup> But he

<sup>108</sup> Joyce Nyairo, 'The Half-Truths Biographers Tell', *Daily Nation*, 27 June 2014, at <<http://mobile.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/The-half-truths-biographers-tell-STAREH-E-BOYS-GEOFFREY-GRIFFIN/-/1950774/2363804/-/format/xhtml/-/11wxcw1/-/index.html>> (accessed 19 Jan. 2016); King'ala, *Autobiography*, 83, 142-5; Griffin, 'Urban Youth Centre': Hake Papers, PP MS 46/4/84.

<sup>109</sup> Griffin to Ministry of Education, 27 Feb. 1969, 19 Nov. 1970: KNA, XJ/27/85.

<sup>110</sup> Griffin to J. W. Nguru, provincial higher education officer, 9 Apr. 1983: KNA, XK/1/12.

<sup>111</sup> Griffin to B. N. Hinga, commissioner of police, 12 May 1976: KNA, NYS/1/330.

<sup>112</sup> Griffin to V. A. Hall, commander, Kenya Navy, 3 Dec 1969: KNA, NYS/1/329.

<sup>113</sup> 'United Nations Day Parade', 7 Oct 1966: KNA, NYS/1/271.

<sup>114</sup> Griffin to Ministry of Co-operation and Social Services, 28 June 1969; W. F. N. Kiari to Griffin, 1 Aug. 1972: KNA, XJ/27/85.

<sup>115</sup> Kiari to Gituro, 26 Sept. 1970; Kiari to Griffin, 4 June 1970; Kiari to Griffin, 27 Oct 1970: KNA, XJ/27/85.

was politically savvy enough to know just when it was important to please his masters. Two alumni from the early decades particularly stand out: Michael and Andrew Kenyatta, respectively the grandson and nephew of the president.<sup>116</sup>

The school clearly meant different things to different people, though for all its boys stood in for the future of Kenya as a whole. As much as Starehe became the beacon of hope for so many western aid agencies, it also became a symbol of a model for the development espoused by Kenyatta and his allies. Moboya, Kibaki, Moi and Itote would be joined as visitors to the school by a whole host of prominent government officials. For instance, Mbiyu Koinange, Kenyatta's brother-in-law, minister of state and son of the prominent Kikuyu chief, Koinange Wa Mbiyu, even presented the boys with a live bull as a Christmas present following his visit.<sup>117</sup> Starehe took in boys from other African countries in an attempt to present the school as a symbol of progress not just for a nation but for an entire continent.<sup>118</sup> The people that the school did not attract were those associated with the opposition leader Oginga Odinga, a former minister in Kenyatta's government who quit in 1966 to form the Kenya People's Union. Odinga himself would be interviewed in Loach's SCF film about Starehe, along with younger radicals such as the writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and the academic historian, Ben Kantai. Odinga told Loach that Kenyatta's government had maintained 'the status quo' of the colonial regime and had merely enriched itself to take the place of the old settler elite.<sup>119</sup> Later, in a voice-over by either Thiong'o or Kantai to a scene of the Starehe boys marching in their band, the viewer is informed that 'the Starehe system, the elimination of Swahili on campus, the prohibition of African dress on campus, the rigidness of uniform, . . . does do a disservice to the African students, . . . it does tend to rip and disembowel Africanism from them'.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> 'Starehe Boys Centre: Dormitory Accommodation Proposal', 1972: SCF Archive, 60.

<sup>117</sup> Martin, *Anthem of Bugles*, 66.

<sup>118</sup> Griffin to Ministry of Education, 31 Mar. 1977; N. Nganga to Gachathi, 22 Apr. 1977: KNA, XJ/27/85.

<sup>119</sup> Executive Committee Minutes 276<sup>th</sup> meeting, E.4326: SCF Archive, 421; 'Transcript of Save the Children Fund Film', 9, 14, and Kenneth Brown Baker Baker to Irving Teitelbaum, 28 Oct. 1969: *ibid.* 43, file: Kestrel Films, 1969-70.

<sup>120</sup> 'Transcript of Save the Children Fund Film', 6: SCF Archive, 43, file: Kestrel Films, 1969-70.

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What is remarkable, though, are the relatively few criticisms that have been made of the school. To be sure, as Kenyatta clamped down on opposition voices, Griffin faced less opposition, at least in public. But Griffin's adept navigation through various competing interests and agendas also enabled him to bring people round to his cause. Here he could be almost duplicitous. Belying his close connections to the Kenyatta elite, he presented himself to SCF, for instance, as a victim of the regime. He insisted that he wished to leave his role as National Youth Leader to devote more time to SCF, but that Kenyatta, followed by Moi, would not allow him to do so.<sup>121</sup> This may have been a dream for Griffin, but he was nevertheless being disingenuous since he knew too well of the damage to his salary and other entitlements as a civil servant that would be lost were he to switch employment to a foreign agent.<sup>122</sup> 'Obliged' to carry on in only an honorary capacity, assisted by his able deputy, Pat Shaw, Griffin then worked to oppose other schemes that might deflect funding from Starehe. He blocked funding for a Home for Destitute Girls in the Pumwami district of Nairobi that a SCF Council member visited and wished to support, and he persistently reined in SCF's activities even when headquarters made it clear that it wished to expand its work in the country.<sup>123</sup> Instead, he managed to place ever more of his Starehe staff on the SCF payroll, making it liable for certain employer responsibilities.<sup>124</sup>

One area where he did face sustained criticism was in regard to gender. He argued, and he dug his heels in, over the development of a Starehe for girls in the 1970s, despite female education becoming recognised at this time as a vital tool for development and notwithstanding repeated prompting from visiting NGO staff and figures as prominent as Moi.<sup>125</sup> Griffin did his duty and participated in the wide-ranging interministerial committee to look into a Starehe Girls' Centre that the president instigated in

<sup>121</sup> J. A. Cumber, 'SCF Kenya', 17 Nov. 1973: SCF Archive, 147.

<sup>122</sup> J. S. Gichuru to J. G. Francis, 11 July 1963: KNA, A2G1/7/82.

<sup>123</sup> Annexure 'A' to ORW Agenda, Mar. 1971: SCF Archive, 147.

<sup>124</sup> J. P. Fonseca to Griffin, 13 June 1977: *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Griffin to Fonseca, 15 May 1976: *ibid.*; address by Daniel arap Moi on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Starehe Boys Centre and School, 5 Oct 1979: KNA, XJ/27/85; 'Girls Starehe', *Weekly Review*, 12 Oct. 1979, 13: KNA, XK/1/12.

1980.<sup>126</sup> But he will have been privately relieved when the proposals became overshadowed and then forgotten by the president amidst the unsettling of the regime in the run up to the attempted *coup d'état* in 1982. Griffin's excuse was always that he simply did not have enough time and that the promotion of girls' education lay properly with women's welfare organizations.<sup>127</sup> In this regard it is telling that the Starehe Girls School did not open its doors until as late as 2005, the year of Griffin's death.<sup>128</sup> But for others too, Griffin's single-minded focus on his boys was a problem. By the later 1970s, senior staff at SCF were becoming frustrated with Griffin's Starehe-centric approach to development yet he continued successfully to divert their attempts to give him a salary, an initiative which might reasonably have led to more being expected of him as their administrator.<sup>129</sup> SCF also began to express 'disquiet' over 'Mr Shaw's place in certain types of police operation' but even then Griffin deflected their concerns and instead persuaded SCF to increase Shaw's salary.<sup>130</sup> Griffin has been described as a genius by many, but perhaps his ultimate achievement was his ability to avoid sustained criticisms of any kind.

The final demonstration of this interplay between charity, decolonization and development came in the support of the Kenyan state for Griffin's fund-raising schemes. Starehe held the key to a world of international funding which the very highest officials of the Kenyan government were keen to access. Kenyatta may have sniffed at 'those professional friends of the African' but he was not averse to accepting their money.<sup>131</sup> Whenever he and Moi spoke at Starehe events, they were always sure to acknowledge the financial support received from the various agencies.<sup>132</sup> This was part of a more general policy on

<sup>126</sup> *Report of the Interministerial Committee Appointed to Consider the Establishment of Starehe Girls' Centre*, 1981: KNA, XK/1/12.

<sup>127</sup> Griffin to Fonseca, 15 May 1976: SCF Archive, 147.

<sup>128</sup> Even here, Griffin's dubious diplomacy is apparent. In contrast to the evidence presented here, the school's website states that 'The dream of starting Starehe Girls' Centre was nursed for many years by the late Mr. Geoffrey Griffin, the founder of Starehe Boys' Centre, without success', at <<http://starehegirlscentre.co.ke/>>.

<sup>129</sup> Griffin to Fonseca, 17 June 1977: SCF Archive, 147.

<sup>130</sup> N. P. Jackson, 'Visit to SCF (Kenya)', 19-23 May 1978; Hugh Mackay to Griffin, 24 Aug. 1978; Griffin to Mackay, 9 Dec 1978: SCF Archive, 147.

<sup>131</sup> Jomo Kenyatta, cited in Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 131.

<sup>132</sup> Kenyatta, 'Starehe Founders' Day speech', 30 May 1969; address by Daniel arap Moi, 14 Nov. 1969; address by Daniel arap Moi, 1979: KNA, XJ/27/85.

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the part of the moderate nationalists to court the West. Mboya and Kariuki were both well known friends of the US and both used their visits to that country to attract donations to Starehe. Kariuki returned from one such trip as early as 1965 bearing a personal cheque for £50 that he had obtained from Louis Stumberg, the Texan frozen foods entrepreneur.<sup>133</sup>

Griffin knew full well the implications of these donations. As he expressed it to the Ministry of Education, 'it may be felt that, in view of the country's developing state and budgetary problems, we should not lightly cast aside the present very substantial income from private sources (much of which results in useful foreign exchange)'.<sup>134</sup> Yet what is even more remarkable is that the state did not passively accept such props to its own limited welfare policies. It also actively approached the international aid community on behalf of Starehe. The Ministry of Education wrote directly to agencies such as NOVIB and *Brot für die Welt* to support Griffin's requests for assistance, explaining how important Starehe was to its nation-state building.<sup>135</sup> When the potential for charitable assistance took on greater proportions, the state could mobilize its personnel in a manner similar to how it might approach the official institutions of global government. In 1972 Vice-President Mwai Kibaki, then also the minister for finance and the patron of Starehe, addressed the IUCW directly to support a substantial donation. As he explained, because of the 'pressing problems on almost every front' that Kenya as a nation was facing, 'we must look for beneficiaries outside Kenya to assist with capital works'.<sup>136</sup>

For all of these reasons — financial, political, pedagogical, personal, philosophical — the seemingly peculiar circumstances of Shaw's appointment begin to make more sense. Griffin could present a focus on discipline, order and service that seemed to place in microcosm the political principles of the government and in a manner which could be sold to the West. It also meant that Shaw did not have to hide his activities with Special Branch from the school. What he achieved on the streets of Nairobi with youths

<sup>133</sup> 'American Gift for Boys Centre', *East African Standard*, 6 Aug. 1965: KNA, NYS/1/327.

<sup>134</sup> Griffin, 'Starehe: Planning for the Future': KNA, XJ/27/85.

<sup>135</sup> Gachathi to NOVIB, 4 Aug 1971; Griffin to Gachathi, 29 Dec. 1972; Gachathi to Bread for the World, 15 July 1971: *ibid*.

<sup>136</sup> Mwai Kibaki to Pierre Zumbak, 1 Mar. 1972: SCF Archive, 60.

lost to the criminal world actually complemented the work of the school with those boys young enough to have been saved from such a career. Indeed, Shaw is said to have taken some of the boys out with him on reconnaissance trips, utilizing the skills that Griffin had instilled in them through the scout troop. Even after Shaw had been rumoured — along with China — to have been involved in Kariuki's assassination, he was still revered by the boys.<sup>137</sup> In an interview conducted with him in the school magazine, *Scan*, he recounted his work as a police reservist when he first arrived in Kenya. The boys, for their part, joked that they entered his office 'gingerly', grateful that they were able to 'escape' to publish their interview.<sup>138</sup> The boys obviously knew and possibly even approved of his activities, and he was supported in them by not only Griffin and — indirectly — the SCF, but also by the Kenyan government. Amidst the confusing years of decolonization and independence, when all sorts of agencies and institutions were jockeying for roles and authority, charity also intervened to set down its own marker in a more general, if locally complex, mixed economy of welfare and development.

### III

It is important to draw out that which is particular to Starehe and that which has more general applicability. Certainly, the specificities of Starehe are many and the whole philosophy of the school appears as something of an anachronism. Griffin's rhetoric located the school within Kenyatta's notion of harambee and even of African socialism more generally. Yet it borrowed almost all of its traditions from what he considered to be the hallmarks of the English public school to the extent that it largely copied Harrow's 'School Song'. Griffin repeatedly told of his disgust at the atrocities committed during Mau Mau yet it was the liberal imperial rehabilitative ethos implemented at Wamumu that provided the immediate precursor to Starehe's creation. He played a delicate balancing act so that the school could appeal alike to royalty such as Princess Anne and heroic freedom-fighters such as General China. He maintained a forceful emphasis on

<sup>137</sup> Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History since Independence* (London, 2012), 282; Koigi Wa Wamwere, *I Refuse to Die: My Journey for Freedom* (New York, 2002), 182; Branch, *Kenya*, 116.

<sup>138</sup> 'Interview with Mr. Shaw', *SCAN*, 54, 1979, 16–17; SCF Archive, 147.

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discipline to the extent that he meted out punishments himself with a military efficiency. So familiar was the importance of order and discipline to both elite, public school-educated backers in Britain and a first generation of nation-builders in Kenya, that it no longer appears quite so remarkable that his deputy was a sadistic voluntary police reservist who frequently operated outside the law. That Shaw's salary continued to be paid by SCF was, perhaps, a little more surprising, but merely attests to the compromises made and the blind eyes that had to be turned when charities involved themselves in specific acts of assistance.

But it is in the support that the school received that something of a more general nature emerges. Griffin clearly took advantage of his position as an official of a western charity, a civil servant in a colonial and then post-colonial government and as a volunteer director of a school. He occupied a space in social welfare created by the interlinked processes of decolonization, development and the expansion of philanthropy across Africa. From there, he was able to ensure that his school received a steady supply of donations at the expense of other initiatives in Kenya. He was able to present Starehe as fitting the needs of Kenya's new rulers, assisted through the regular visits that he arranged for the likes of China, Mboya, Kenyatta, Moi and Kibaki. The school might well have been the product of a British regime, but it thrived once the bureaucracy of the imperial state had withdrawn and it proved itself an attractive source of western funds to a nationalist government too unwilling or too unable to devote such resources to education or homeless youth itself.

This should not detract from the wider context within which Starehe thrived. Charitable interventions enabled non-state actors to become key agents in developing social welfare models for African post-colonial development. The question comes down to whether the success of the school equates with the success of development more generally. There is no denying that Griffin was successful on his own terms, and it is obvious too that the various aid agencies and governments also regarded Starehe as a success, not least because they continued to fund and support it over several decades. But from a development perspective, success is ultimately measured according to different criteria. Starehe was initially championed as an instance of several NGOs' pursuit of grassroots initiatives which, by the 1970s, would be celebrated more widely as the



‘alternative’ path to development. This was to be focused on small-scale local initiatives which aimed to have as their principal beneficiaries the most needy in society, such as the boys taken in at Starehe. And, ultimately, success for these projects would come when they became either self-sustaining or were replicated elsewhere with similar results. 5

Yet Starehe’s success in this regard has been dependent upon its continued charitable status. Those who have given to the school have had to keep on giving. Here Starehe becomes emblematic of some of the more general problems associated with charitable interventions in development, especially at this moment of decolonization. The alternative approach of the NGOs was never systematically planned or coherently thought out. A story of success has been presented here, but it could so easily have been one of failure, as in the case of Oxfam and Christian Aid’s adventures with *ujamaa* in Tanzania, one of the few examples of the history of charity and development that has been comprehensively covered.<sup>139</sup> All these experiments in alternative development initiatives involved complications, contradictions and complexities that have proved the chief stumbling blocks whenever an NGO has sought to scale up the benefits of a Starehe or any other scheme to a more general level. And particularly in the 1960s, when methods of project evaluation were, at best, rudimentary or else, more commonly, non-existent, so many charities entered late-colonial and post-colonial Africa with limited experience and little knowledge of where and what they were doing. Always attuned to what could be sold to their publics at home, NGOs frequently fell under the spell of a social entrepreneur such as Griffin or other well-connected persons who offered an opportunity to do good in a fast and efficient manner. In doing so, they rushed headlong into a gap in the provision of social and economic welfare that so many individuals and institutions had an interest in them filling. 20

The fact that police officers, royalty, sports stars, celebrities and politicians could all come together to support an initiative shows that they were all involved in a wider game of development about which the rules and the expected outcomes were only vaguely understood. That this all happened in the period from the late 25

<sup>139</sup> Michael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujamaa in Tanzania* (Bloomfield, Ct., 2008). 35

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1950s to the early 1970s, before the NGO approach to development really took off as a global phenomenon, points to the essentially messy and uncoordinated nature of decolonization and development. Yet it set in motion many of the dynamics between the donating public, the sponsoring agency, the local beneficiary and the fledgling state that would come to be solidified in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, what it did was to carve out a role for charitable agencies in the developing world that is now no longer questioned, no matter how diverse and effective such interventions have proved to be. The end result of the NGO intervention in the fledgling Starehe enterprise in 1959, as with so many other development schemes, was that charity would come to be a persistent presence over the next half century and more.

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