

Week 2



Monday 2nd and Tuesday 3rd February

I joined the crew constructing the Festival Republic school in Pakklong. It went well, not language-wise as I still have a few (thousand) words to get through before I can join in the constant chit chat that goes on all the time, but building-wise it went well. To work in the middle of a jungle in burning heat is different. I used to work in a store house, a freezer, with temperatures as low as -25°C in Sweden a few years ago. The only way to keep warm was to work like mad. In the jungle it's completely different. You have to work slower and make sure you don't exhaust yourself, take regular short breaks and drink water constantly. If you don't, I think you'd faint after a while. I really tried to have the same speed as the rest of the guys from the start but no, I was still told off after only five minutes, "SLOWLY OLA, SLOWLY".

Once at the same tempo as everyone else it went ok, we got most of the roof up which is great as it means we are now protected from the sun and can work in shade for most of the time. It sure does seem like I joined the team at the right time ☺.

Almost all my work mates wear flip flops and no, it's not flip flops with steel caps, good grip or any other magic functions that would be useful on a building site. Nope, it's just ordinary flip flops made from rubber, safe as a roulette system. Safety, or the lack of it, does not seem to be as a big worry as it is back home and that seems to be the case on every building site here in Thailand. So what about me? Well, I have shoes with steel caps, proper insurance and I'm not leaving the ground for work on any level above ground. It feels better that way.



Wednesday 4th February

The first class at Ban Bangmuang school was today. I was scheduled to teach guitar and as I'm not a guitarist or a guitar teacher I had to practice guitar all morning, spent a few hours online looking for ideas on guitar teaching, found some exercises and then I headed off to the school. I had around ten children in my class, some brought their own guitars while other were guitar-less, AKA beginners, thanks for that! I brought a couple of extra guitars and a tuner and after an hour of tuning, chord practice and some basic scales they all played 'She'll be coming around the mountain' in good ol' style and with me doing my best on violin. Not bad.

Don't think it will get us a record deal but maybe a few festival gigs soon.....



Thursday 5th and Friday 6th February

These two days get their own place in Thai history as the days we introduced the Irish Flutes and Tin Whistles in five different classes here. 13 flutes not played correctly but simultaneously and out of sync for almost an hour is sort of slightly noisy and a good way to stay awake if you are tired. Don't try these kind of flute sessions at home if you want to keep your flat and partner. These metal tubes can definitely test your patience.

The good news is that some students seem to get the idea very quickly and within an hour could play a single octave scale plus 'Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star' without a problem. Others had some difficulty getting the flutes to sound as they wanted but I'm sure it will get better next time. It takes time to get it right but once you get the basics covered it's fairly easy and I'm sure most of these kids here could join any Irish sessions very soon and even if the playing does not match the most advanced Irish players I'm sure their love for music does.

On Friday I also had my first class with the three/four year olds at Pakklong school. Apparently they have been asking their teacher since last Friday if I could have music classes with them and who can say no to such a group of enthusiastic characters? Not me! These kids are 200% happiness and loads of joy. We did a bunch of rhythmic exercises, I clapped a rhythmic pattern first and they tried to copy what I clap. It sounds easy but isn't always. They did well but got red hands, still no one complained, in fact no one complains here. Then with big eyes and a lot of interest I introduced them to the half famous instruments Jaws Harp and Kazoo. Some of them had a little go at these instruments. Then as a great finale I gave them one percussion instrument each and we tried to bang one beat loud when standing up and then play the same beat but quiet when we all crawled around the class room on our knees.



Friday Night – School Karaoke Party

I was invited to join the teachers at Pakklong School to a big outdoor party on Friday night. This was a party for the schools and the teachers in the area. There were 300 tables with food and drinks for 2000 people on a football pitch and they had a big stage with a karaoke setup. Wow!! During the night we heard many speeches, saw some amazing Thai dancing, heard some less amazing karaoke versions of songs I haven't heard before and tried some great Thai food. I was asked by my co-workers if I wanted to sing, but karaoke with a Thai script is pretty tricky! However, I finally managed to make it onto the stage and gave some plastic flowers to a few of the many performers. These flowers were sold next to the stage and were apparently part of a fundraising system. The karaoke singers were all head teachers from the different schools and by buying flowers for the singers you automatically donated the amount to the school.

During each performance loads of people walked up on the stage and gave flowers. What a great idea!

To be continued, Ola