



Above Building a community through business: Lulu Sturdy and her thriving vanilla factory. Right Chimpanzees abound in the forests

# The Britons rebuilding Uganda

Uganda has emerged from the shadow of Idi Amin's gruesome rule to be nominated as Lonely Planet's number-one destination for 2012. Encouraged by a benign political climate and economic growth, adventurous Britons are spearheading the country's very African renaissance. Emily Fairweather meets them

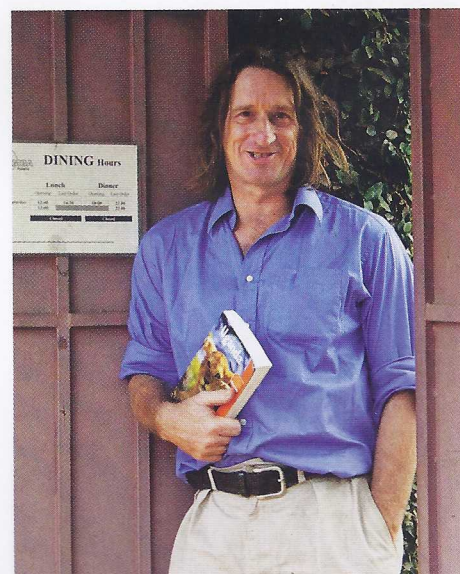
## Andy Roberts, mapmaker and travel-guide writer

Emily Fairweather Photography; Suzi Eszterhas/ardea.com  
 Andy Roberts looks like a cross between Gerard Depardieu and Shaggy from *Scooby Doo*. A Sussex gravedigger and landscape architect, he took off to backpack through Africa 18 years ago. 'I came through some miserable French-speaking countries, then I got off the train at Kampala and I was struck by the freshness of Uganda and its people. They'd had a rough time, there was nothing to buy and you either stayed in the Sheraton or on a classroom floor in the YMCA. Then a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) job came up, developing forest eco-tourism projects.' Today, Andy is co-author of the *Bradt Travel Guide for Uganda* and the creator of beautiful watercolour tourist maps. 'Tourism is expanding so fast here. In the 1990s, the only tourists were backpackers

or parents visiting VSOs like me. Now, tourism is the main source of foreign exchange. The sixth edition of *Bradt* has already sold twice as much as the fifth, and that was double the fourth.'

The downside is Kampala's traffic and power cuts: 'We're prisoners in our own areas. It's so congested that we rarely go out for dinner because it takes too long. We have to choose whether to use battery backup to watch television or have light.'

**'Life is raw and it's tough, but the little you can do goes a long way'**



Power cuts aside, Andy Roberts fell in love with Uganda and its people 18 years ago



From medicine to pantomimes: Dick Stockley brings a very English humour to his work as a doctor and missionary

## Dr Dick Stockley, GP and missionary

Dr Stockley is renowned in Kampala for his blunt bedside manner and he's the most irreverent missionary I've ever met. His parents were horrified when he and his Irish wife, Rosie, left the UK to be young missionaries in Uganda in 1980. Setting up camp with the Karamoja people in north-eastern Uganda, he admits: 'I spent my first three years sitting on the loo.'

He continues: 'Then, Uganda was really poor. Up country, there were no facilities—no electricity, water, roads or petrol. The post offices had no stamps and the banks had no money. We just learnt to eat what the locals ate.' After 12 years, Dick set up a GP surgery in Kampala, which mainly administers to expatriates and NGOs. He has seven golden rules for survival, including using common sense ('Don't get into an unknown taxi when you're drunk at 4am) and not having sex: 'The risk of contracting an STD is 200 times greater here than at a university in the UK.'

Dick wrote and directed the Christmas pantomime, which was performed at the National Theatre in Kampala. 'It's an awfully English thing. We lampoon everyone and it's totally politically incorrect.'

He says he'll retire in five years, when he's 65, to be 'a burden on my children and drool and pretend to be deaf. My life? I've tried to follow the path that God set out before me.'



Lulu Sturdy employs 100 local people in her vanilla business, buying from 1,000 farmers

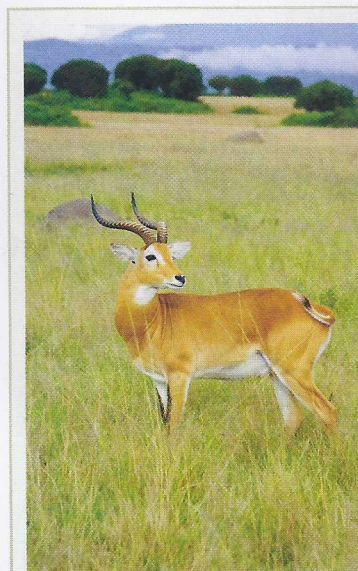
## Lulu Sturdy, vanilla entrepreneur

At Ndali Estate in western Uganda, cousins Lulu Sturdy and Aubrey Price are carrying on their grandfather's dreams. Maj Trevor Price, the British tea pioneer, established the Ndali estate in the 1950s. It was confiscated in the 1970s by Idi Amin, but, in the 1990s, the major's son, Mark, returned to build Ndali Lodge, which Aubrey runs, and Lulu, 43, has set up a Fairtrade vanilla business. Looking around her plant, it's hard to believe that this building wasn't even here two years ago, not to mention the huge vats of vanilla extract and handmade chests housing bundles of liquorice-like pods. They're on their way to Waitrose, Tesco, the River Cottage and Ben and Jerry's.

Lulu left Chipping Norton, where she was designing furniture and proofreading, 13 years ago to run the farm during her uncle

Mark Price's recuperation from illness. Tragically, he died the next day. She stayed and built an extraordinary Bohemian house above the Rukwanzi crater lake; she has a temperamental Land Rover called Be Nicer, several dogs and employs 100 locals, buying green vanilla from more than 1,000 farmers. Her turnover is £500,000.

However, it has been a hard journey. At first, the farm resembled a refugee camp with more than 300 squatter families and no trees. 'You've constantly got the "dark side".' Lulu points out. 'I'm reminded of death every day, but it makes you feel alive and motivates you. Monday, my farm manager, was almost murdered by machete and I've seen friends die unnecessarily through inadequate medication and education. Life is raw and it's tough, but the little you can do goes a long way, so if you have a little bit of money and you put it in the right place, you can see big changes'.



## Ugandan facts and figures

- Uganda is similar in size to the UK
- It was a protectorate of the British Empire from 1900 to 1962
- 15,000 Britons visit Uganda every year
- The population is 32 million, half of which are children under 15, and rising. Life expectancy is only 53
- Idi Amin was expelled more than 30 years ago, and died in Saudi Arabia in 2003. President Museveni, who is known as 'M7', is now in his 26th year of government
- Churchill loved Uganda and called it the 'Pearl of Africa'. In 1908, he said: 'Uganda is a fairytale. You climb up a railway instead of a beanstalk and at the top there is a wonderful new world. The scenery is different, and, most of all, the people are different from anywhere else in Africa'



**Above** Leaders of the Ugandan social scene: Clare and Aubrey Price. **Below** Ndali Lodge, their country-house hotel

## Aubrey Price, lodge host

Aubrey Price—‘more Wooster than Jeeves’, according to *Bradt*, runs Ndali Lodge, the expatriate hub outside Kampala, more as a country house where you’re a treasured guest than a paying hotel. A flamboyant 30-something Yorkshireman dressed in lilac cashmere and constantly on his mobile phone (with *The A-Team* theme as ring-tone), ‘Aubs’ is universally known and loved. His stamina as a *bon viveur* is legendary and is now matched by Clare’s, a corporate lawyer he met at a party ‘at 4am’.

He was 19 when his father flew out to Africa to take ownership of 700 acres of land. ‘Dad settled on tourism as the most likely source of a comfortable income. In 1996, the lodge opened for business. It was an immediate hit.’ The main challenges, Aubrey says, are ‘a sketchy infrastructure and widespread beliefs in the powers of witchdoctors’.



Julia Lloyd with some of the local schoolchildren she is helping through her organisation

## Julia Lloyd, chimp conservationist

Julia Lloyd couldn’t be further from her native Rochester. She now lives on her own land on the edge of the Kibale National Park in western Uganda, close to the community of chimpanzees where she knows each one by name. ‘Chimps are drama queens,’ she says, ‘and much more interesting than gorillas. They’re better than watching *EastEnders*.’

Julia spent the past few years tracking this community for her PhD, assessing the effects of tourism on chimps in their natural habitats, and has completed her fieldwork. Methods included testing the chimps’ urine for signs

of stress and recording their behavioural patterns before and after visits from tourists.

‘I’m much happier without any walls or doors,’ she says, as she shows me around her compound of huts on stilts. ‘You just feel good in the forest—all that wonderful energy. And I can hear chimps every morning.’

‘You just feel good in the forest—all that wonderful energy’

Recently, Julia has been distracted from her studies by a readymade family she’s taken in. ‘I set up an organisation, In The Shadow of Chimpanzees, with friends, focusing on the school on the edge of the Kibale National Park. We’ve sent 10 orphans to senior school.’ Her research office is being set up in her tree house, which tourists will be able to visit before or after chimp tracking.

‘You see many people who are exasperated working in Africa, but I’ve reached a middle ground where I stop expecting 100%. In England, you notice when things go wrong, whereas here you’re grateful when things go right. You have to be your own mechanic, vet and midwife. I’m here for the long-term and I’m very, very lucky: I think this is the most beautiful place in the world. The chimps I study are right there. This isn’t just textbook conservation—I’m living it.’

