



Flush it

The Documentary

A film by WORLDwrite
and Chew on it Productions

Press Release: Immediate***Flush it creates a new stink*****150 years after London's Great Stink, similar grand plans are needed**

This year's anniversary of the 1858 Great Stink when levels of excrement 'backed up' on the tidal Thames forcing even parliament to adjourn up river, may seem a strange event to commemorate. Yet in the West the grand plans that solved the stench mean we no longer worry about death from cholera and water borne disease. Even more significantly the solutions represented big thinking and massive public investment that transformed lives. To mark the anniversary the UK charity WORLDwrite in partnership with Chew on it productions have released their latest documentary *Flush it*, a film which investigates toilet history and proposes similar serious development. This timely film premiered on Sunday 2nd November at the Battle of Ideas Festival at the Royal College of Art to a packed audience.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is also commemorating this anniversary and have pledged £200 million to Africa by 2010 to provide toilets and better sanitation for up to 75 million people, along with a 'what might have been' poster to remind us of the conditions many are forced to tolerate in developing countries today. The poster depicts a grim life of hand washing, bathing and water collecting by a smelly Thames, what might have been, had London not had a huge sanitation overhaul. Yet DFID press officer Amy Wright suggests DFID's plans have little in common with the Victorian's grand schemes and creative vision. Amy Wright explains:

I know this will not be toilets like we have over here. In the past we had pit holes and treadle pumps so it is likely to be something like that. Factors are affordability, ecological issues, how sustainable they are....I'm talking about taking into account water shortages in Africa and that is why our toilets here are not a feasible solution over there.

By contrast, WORLDwrite's new film, *Flush it*, is watery but not wet. The film interweaves concerns about local water shortages, global water scarcity and toilet history with aspirations for grand projects and excellent loos. This compelling documentary promises to put aspirations for Western levels of water provision and sanitation on the map for developing countries. Eritrean refugee Tiba is at the centre of the film. Pontificating from her own bath full of bubbles Tiba considers everything from depleted aquifers to desalination to Ken Livingstone's plea not to flush. Tiba informs us pit latrines stink, while experts help flush the crap and remind us that water can never run out.

Director Ceri Dingle says:

Everyone knows our peers want what we have, yet so many people and outfits stick all sorts of provisos on this obvious fact. Every excuse in the book is used to justify rubbish toilet facilities and small scale schemes which frankly we wouldn't piss in. It's so enlightening to hear from experts who recognise all is possible and tell us water is one thing we really shouldn't have to worry about. This film is befitting of the anniversary of the Great Stink and the Victorians' grand plans. It suggests that more big thinking is needed, not more pit holes and treadle pumps.

Producer Viv Regan adds:

Unlike the major investment by the Victorians, DFIDs pledge is pitiful, worse still are the prescriptions for small scale, low tech facilities for our peers, championed by DFID and its partner NGOs . Their starting point is not just what is affordable but what in their view is desirable for the developing world and that doesn't include the thrones they have in their own bathrooms. They are promoting less as best on the back of mythical water shortages. As Tiba tells us in the film "Ideas are now holding us back and I think the West should wake up." Flush it, clearly raises much needed debate and having experts set us straight on the water scarcity myth and the hydrological cycle, is a real treat.

Flush it is now available on DVD complete with extra filmed material from Twyford's Alsager factory, the Flushed with Pride Exhibition and developments at Thames water. The film and further details are available at: www.worldwrite.org.uk/flushit.

Contact Details

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The genesis of a film made to question low horizons

Demanding the best for everyone is at the heart of WORLDwrite's work and water provision and sanitation requires no less. For many years the charity has questioned Western low horizons, the derisory nature of development prescriptions for our peers in the developing world and the tendency to view everything in terms of 'sustainability.' It is against this backdrop the film *Flush it* evolved.

In 2002 we produced a critical charter *Time to Ditch the Sustainababble* which unpicked the conflation of environmental limits and human needs and noted:

"Most projects promote superficial improvements and primitive technologies like solid fuel stoves, pit latrines and dry sanitation – burning dung, shitting in a pit and then recycling it – in preference to the necessity of forging modern infrastructure plans. It is intriguing that educated Westerners dedicate so much thought to Third World shit and dirt."

Read the full charter here www.worldwrite.org.uk/archive/criticalcharter.html

In 2003 we ran a campaign with hundreds of young volunteers entitled *Raising Horizons to Raise Water* to put the case for modern amenities for the developing world. As well as conferences and workshops, campaigners carried water on their heads across London to demonstrate the unacceptable toil involved in fetching and carrying water for miles each day. We also took part in a head to head environmental debate on water online see www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006DE3C.htm

In 2005 we completed a major film based exchange visit to Ghana. Five films which form the [*Pricking the Missionary Position*](#) series captured numerous instances of disgust at what was on offer from the West, from a derisory rope pump suggested by Water Aid to useless boreholes. Unsurprisingly, aspirations for modern bathrooms, washing machines, piped water in every home and all the mod cons tripped off the lips of anyone and everyone when we asked what they wanted. What is more remarkable is the extent to which our peers obvious wish to live the comfortable life we do in the West is down played, denied or deemed ridiculous. This is often justified in terms of 'cultural difference,' 'environmental impact,' 'not a priority,' 'unaffordable luxury', 'inappropriate' or 'not a need but a want.' All of these disgraceful excuses were evidently in need of a good flushing.

In 2005 volunteers taking part in our film training programme suggested we take on the water worriers and put our peer's aspirations to the fore by simply telling the tale of one of our volunteer's dreams and exploring what that meant, we had a film.

The making of a film about more than loos

Numerous volunteers were involved in the making of *Flush it*, many shooting for the first time as part of WORLDwrite's film training programmes. It is due to their effort and input that this film has finally been made. We had many long days and long weekends shooting for the film, long journeys, next to no cash and no paid shooters. Our star and inspiration for the film, Tiba now has two babies such is the time it takes to make a film with no budget while learning but not earning on the job. The limits of our gear, although it improved over time, were a constant source of exasperation and our novice crews had wind, water, cantankerous flushes and pooh to contend with, a hard task even for experienced crews with high end kit we can only dream of. Politically the shoots proved our early contention that it is perfectly possible to meet our peers' aspirations for great bathrooms and loos.

WORLDwrite and Chew on it productions owe special thanks to the organisations and individuals who helped to facilitate the shoots we undertook. Some of the most revealing shoots are detailed below along with additional footage we were unable to fit in the film.



Flushed with Pride

The Gladstone pottery museum in Staffordshire is home to the *Flushed with Pride* gallery and provided vital background material on the history of the British Loo and sanitation. Burgeoning scatological jokes aside, volunteers shot far more fascinating material here than we were able to use. This extra footage is available on the *Flush it* website and DVD. It was also great to have Curator Angela Lee provide a detailed tour of the

material on display in the *Flushed with Pride* Gallery. The exhibition reveals the problem solving, ingenuity and an outlook which gave rise to the modern amenities we take for granted in the West. For us, it put aspirations for great bathrooms and sanitation in the developing world in perspective. The earliest reference to a wash down water closet is around 1597 and a version of the flushing loo has been around since the 1770's, although as Angela explained, it wasn't Thomas Crapper's invention and crap doesn't come from his name. More than 200 years later a large percentage of populations in much of the developing world are still expected to make do with holes in the ground, hand pumps, rivers and streams. More tragic still are the campaigns which demand little more than the status quo in terms of sanitation and fresh water provision. We couldn't help but notice the similarities between early faeces collection, before the indoor flushing loos won out and the expensive trendy composting contraption volunteers filmed at Blondin allotments. Both involved backward toil, literally shovelling shit.

The museum address is Uttoxeter Road, Longton, Stoke on Trent, ST3 1PQ

For more information on the Gladstone pottery museum visit

www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/museums/gladstone-pottery-museum



Pump it up

The Crossness Pumping station was built by Sir Joseph Bazalgette as part of his great and effective plan to deal with London's sewage problem in the mid 19th Century. We learned much from our shoot at Crossness not least the extent of the Victorian's pride in their achievements. The comparison with today's low horizons and animosity towards large scale projects is salutary. Having author James Heartfield with us to provide commentary helped illuminate the changes in historical context and attitudes. On this shoot Tiba, around whom the film weaves, was clearly due to give birth rather imminently which had the crew slightly alarmed. Timing is clearly vital when key figures are pregnant mums. We resolved to pursue our investigations with her staying safely at home for the remaining shoots.

The pumping station with its magnificent interiors and great engines is now looked after by a dedicated group of volunteers who have been campaigning to raise funds for the station's restoration through their charity the Crossness Engine's trust.

The pumping station is located at The Old Works, Crossness S.T.W. Belvedere Road Abbey Wood, London SE2 9AQ and their website is www.crossness.org.uk



Sanitary ware for all

Our Twyford's factory shoot proved to be an exhilarating experience. Witnessing great numbers of newly crafted loos moving on conveyors over head, spookily humanoid robot sprayers, the kilns and workers smoothing the clay was an unexpected treat. Because we got so much great footage here, far more than we could fit into the film we decided to make some more of it available on the website and on the DVD as extras. Manager Terry Woolliscroft was something of an inspiration too; such was his knowledge of toilet manufacturing history and enthusiasm for the great sanitary leap forward provided by the flushing loo. We instantly became fans. His infectious eagerness made such a refreshing change from the usual cynicism about growth, industrial production and all that it offers. Tiba could be rest assured, that if Terry had his way, everyone would have fabulous loos.

Twyford Bathrooms are based at Lawton Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 2DF, Twyford's website is www.twyfordbathrooms.com.



On the water

Kielder water is the last great man made fresh water reservoir to be created in the UK, it was an obvious must for the film. We stayed in the wooden lodges in Leaplish waterside Park for our shoot in March 08 and thankfully they are pretty flash, warm and well equipped. Park staff were really helpful and provided a boat at a time of year not suitable for cruises.

Our intrepid crew just about coped with keeping the camera on board atop choppy water while something of a boy racer sped us across the lake as though we were a Bond crew.

The reservoir with its 27 mile perimeter, surrounded by spruce is now a huge tourist attraction but this was not the intention when Kielder was constructed. It was planned in the late 1960s to satisfy an expected rise in industrial demand for water. Finally completed in 1981 it took two years to fill with water. The decline of traditional heavy industry, served to undermine the original justification for the reservoir. Today no one complains however as it attracts around quarter of a million visitors a year and ensures North East England always enjoys plentiful water supplies. Kielder is linked to the Derwent Reservoir's distribution system by a pipeline running from below the Kielder dam so the water can be used to supplement levels when the River Derwent is low. Consequently the North East does not suffer the water conservation panics common in the South or the hose pipe bans. We can but hope the irksome pleas to not flush are more likely to be seen as an irrational prejudice in this part of the UK. For more information on Kielder visit www.visitkielder.com

The Great Debate



This inspiring team has long supported WORLDwrite's efforts to put the record straight on global development issues. Based in Newcastle they hold regular debates, talks and conferences and yearly, a joint affair with WORLDwrite. Chair and founding member Dr Caspar Hewett is a water engineer and provided great insights for the film. He accompanied us to Kielder water for the shoot.

We had organised the Kielder shoot for the day after a joint debate in Newcastle where panellists discussed excerpts from WORLDwrite's films *Keeping Africa Small* and *I'm a subsistence farmer get me out of here*. Oxfam's Press Officer was on the panel and in a discussion over Water Aids derisory rope pump for Ghana claimed Ghanaians we had filmed who laughed at Western NGO's demeaning scheme clearly had no idea about poverty! This provided a great spur to complete *Flush it* and get the truth out about aspirations in opposition to such sanctimonious and outrageous Western rubbish. It certainly encouraged us to brave bad weather and head for a cold lake side to shoot something which embodied thinking big in terms of water provision.

For more information on the Great debate visit www.thegreatdebate.org.uk



Fresh water makers

Thames water has had bad press for a few years now, with panics about water wastage, anger over leaking pipes amidst hose pipe bans and increasing water bills. While we did not set out to wave the flag for Thames water it must be said they were not the originators of a miserly approach to fresh water provision and had some fascinating problem solving ideas in the pipeline. They deserve credit for taking on the opposition to building a desalination plant in Newham which could top up supplies for London if reservoir levels became too depleted. An interesting clip we didn't have room in the film for reveals more and is available to watch on the Flush it website.

Thanks are also due to many more individuals and outfits and there are many more stories to tell from making fake pooh with mars bars – filming the actual stuff was not too popular- to the boys trying to filming their own pee whilst peeing, but we hope the above will give you a taste of our filmed investigation and adventure.



Production Information**Synopsis (100 words)**

Watery but never wet, this compelling documentary promises to put aspirations for Western levels of water provision and sanitation on the map for developing countries. The film interweaves concerns about local water shortages, global water scarcity and toilet history with aspirations for grand projects and excellent loos. Eritrean refugee Tiba is at the centre of the film. Pontificating from her own bath full of bubbles Tiba considers everything from depleted aquifers to desalination to Livingstone's plea not to flush. Tiba informs us pit latrines stink, while experts help flush the crap and remind us that water can never run out.

Credits**Contributors (in order of appearance)**

Tsedal Tesfamarian
WORLDwrite volunteer

James Heartfield
Writer and lecturer

Angela Lee
Exhibition Curator,
Gladstone Pottery Museum

Tony Rachwal
Research & Development Director,
Thames Water

James Woudhuysen
Professor of Forecasting & Innovation,
De Montfort University

Robin Oakley
Senior Climate Campaigner,
Greenpeace UK

Dr Caspar Hewett
Water engineer & The Great Debate Chair

Christopher Kilpatrick
Chairman,
Blondin Allotment Association

Terry Woolliscroft
Customer Services Manager,
Twyford Bathrooms

John Bradley
Blondin Allotment Association

Crew

Director
Ceri Dingle

Producer
Viv Regan

Assistant Producers
Victoria Millward
Rhys Moore
Emma Grant

Cameras
Andy Hirst
Ian Foster

Additional Camera & Sound
Collette Powell
Tony Hill
Beatrice Shelley
Nathan Gallardo
Nicky Webster
Jenny Bingham
Luwam Fessahaye
Monika Majaskiene
Millicent Kumeni
Jonathon McEllan
Victoria Millward
Rhys Moore

Research and Development
Zaake De Coninck
Tennyson Togwe
Jonathon McEllan

Editor
Balint Tusor

Effects and Animation
Nick Stone

Post-production Assistants
Saleha Ali
Carol Dodsworth
Aisha Forbes

Web Design & graphics
Kyle Duncan
Niall Crowley
Emma Grant

Original format: DV CAM
Online edit: Avid Express Pro
Digital cut format: Mini DV, DV CAM, DVD PAL (all regions)
Aspect Ratio: 4:3
Flush it: 42 mins 17 secs
Extras
Flushed with pride Exhibition 5 mins 54 secs
Twyford Bathrooms 7 mins 17 secs
Thames Water 5 mins 15 secs
Completion: October 2008

A Film by WORLDwrite & Chew on it productions
Registered Charity Number 1060869

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