

**MISSION:** Holiday in African seaside country opened Brummie's eyes to desperate poverty

# After £13m, Bob still has the drive to keep helping



## THE ROUTE

■ **BOB** and his team will be driving about 4,000 miles in ten days from Birmingham city centre to Banjul, in The Gambia. Their route will take them from Birmingham to Portsmouth, where they will catch a ferry to France before heading on through Spain, Gibraltar, Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal. The party leaves Birmingham on Wednesday, October 31.

## FACTFILE

### Tiny nation once under British rule

- The Gambia is officially the Republic of The Gambia, in western Africa.
- It is the smallest country on the African mainland and covers just 10,380 sq km (4,007 sq ml).
- It is bordered to the north, east, and south by Senegal.
- The Gambia river flows through the centre of the country and empties into the Atlantic Ocean.
- It became independent from the British Commonwealth on February 18, 1965.
- It has a population of 1,500,000 people.
- More than 60 per cent of Gambians live in rural villages, although more and more young people come to the capital in search of work and education.
- The currency is the dalasi.



Photos: No.: EL260907BOB-3



■ **GEARING UP...** Bob Powell prepares for the marathon journey overland to The Gambia.

Picture: Emma Lee

**Asad.** Doctor forced to flee Afghanistan  
**Matt.** Gave him the confidence to start again

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A TimeBank initiative

**BIG-hearted Bob Powell is off to The Gambia to continue his charity work. We are urging readers to help him raise £5,000 to set up educational scholarships. PATRICE JOHN reports.**

**TWELVE years ago Bob Powell boarded a plane to the African country of The Gambia for what he thought would be a relaxing time in the tropics.**

But a wander away from the luxurious surroundings of his hotel and the tourist hotspots shocked him so deeply that he knew he had to do something.

Horrified by the levels of poverty he encountered, Bob donated £100 towards the building of a much-needed water hole.

Little did he know, this one gesture would spiral into more than a decade of charitable work which to date has seen him help raise and donate almost £13 million in equipment, goods and medical supplies to the country.

Now he hopes to complete a ten-day, 4,000-mile drive from Birmingham to The Gambia to present medical supplies and two

vehicles to the Gambian people. He said: "When I first started giving I knew the basic things that any person needed were access to healthcare and access to education.

"People need the basics to get on in life and that's what I've been doing in the Gambia.

"Most people in the UK have access to the opportunities they need and the basic things of life. It's not like that in the Gambia and if we can give people the opportunity to access a real education and real healthcare, we might be surprised by what happens."

Over the years Bob, aged 60, from Weoley Castle, has paid for a British Red Cross ambulance.

He set up the Bob Powell Gambia Schools and Health Project to distribute the donations in the country and was named a *Birmingham Mail* and Pallasades Local Hero in 2005.

Since then he has donated computers, smoke alarms, gas detectors, bedding, blankets and medical supplies.

He now hopes to raise £5,000 to set up an educational scholarship for children.

Bob works closely with the Jammeh Foundation in The Gambia and the vice-president's son, Suleyman Bunjie.

He will be accompanied by friends John Taylor, Gerard Cream and Gary Payne in a Nissan Quest and Cherokee Jeep.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

■ **WHEN Bob's party arrives in The Gambia at the end of their gruelling drive, the *Birmingham Mail* team will be there to meet him.**

We will be following the work of his charity the Bob Powell Gambia Schools and Health Project and reporting on how your money is making a difference.

Send your donations to Gambia Project, *Birmingham Mail* Charity Trust c/o Birmingham Foundation, Suite 2A, St George's Court, 1 Albion Street, Birmingham, B1 3AH.

Registered charity number 218484.

