

December 2006 Newsletter



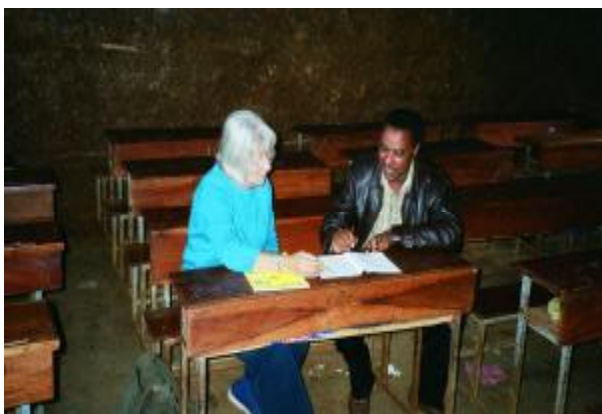
Enabling communities
to help themselves

Recent trip to Ethiopia

Four members of the Link - Peter Grainger, Penny Pullen, Vern Lester and Jeff Sleeman - are just back from a visit to Ethiopia.

On arrival in Addis Ababa, books, a typewriter, £5000 in travellers cheques and a few spectacles for the eye project were carried through customs without any problem. We were met by Qes Alemu (from our partner organization - the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus) and we spent time with several English and Ethiopian friends. After 24 hours we were off.

During the week in Nekemte, members of the group visited five state schools.



Sixty new desks were provided for Burka Bekumsa school. This is Penny Pullen sitting in one with the Director of the school, Shimelis Mitixw.

We also visited the New Generation University College (NGUC), the Teacher Training College, the Nursing College, the EECMY deaf school and a kindergarten. We delivered books and funds for libraries and classrooms and deposited a further £1,000 in the bank for future school support.



On health we visited Nekemte Hospital, the Eye Clinic building site (see above, as the foundations are being put in) and Bekumsa Biya Clinic. Some unseasonal heavy rain stopped our visits to rural areas to see spring protection work.

The Eye Care Project is progressing well. We met Dr Mohammed and Nurse Hirut who have now been working for three months in a temporary room used for consultations in the hospital. So far they have been mostly engaged in vision testing and minor eye surgery.

At the Eye Clinic site the water supply is in place and we saw that the excavations are well advanced, stone is being prepared for the foundations and the concrete structure, trees are being felled and cement had been ordered. Up to 20 labourers (male and female) were on site and the contractor has signed up to an ambitious 3-month contract to complete the building. It is clear that the work has been trimmed to meet the budget and that additional funds will be needed to get the clinic operational (electricity connection, plumbing, floor tiles, telephone connection, external paving and fencing). To help with this 9,000 birr (£600) was deposited in the Eye Project account from the money taken, to pay for the electrical connection.

Following a tour of the hospital it was agreed to support the purchase of small items of equipment in the X-ray facility with a grant of 5,000 birr (£325). We met three American staff working in the hospital (two for one year) and saw the arrival of two whole containers of equipment from the Clinton Foundation. Parts of the hospital remain overcrowded and poorly resourced. Peter spent time in the EECMY office obtaining up-to-date accounts on all the projects. Vern was able to provide some dentistry for children at the deaf school and assess the needs for future provision of a dental clinic in Nekemte (there is no provision at all at present).

The purchase of donkeys to relieve the burden for some women who carry wood to market is continuing. However we discussed the difficulty of monitoring the distribution of funds and in

particular following up the large number of recipient families. We agreed that in future the project should be extended to the provision to women of female sheep and goats for breeding, where this is more appropriate than donkeys. It continues the intention of improving the economic situation for rural women.

We also visited the weather station in Nekemte, to follow up interest from Met Office staff in Exeter to carry out a project on making weather data useful to developing countries. Discussions at NGUC established interest there in hosting the project.

On 13 November we left Nekemte and travelled to Hareto for the day where we visited the clinic and both schools, before proceeding to Ambo. At Hareto clinic we met Junior Nurse, Ketema Amente, who has been in charge for 8 months. His budget for equipment and bills (not drugs and staff) is only 10,000 birr (£650) per year. Our proposed funding of the electricity connection at the clinic was not needed (already done, enabling 24 hour use in emergencies), and changed on request to a microscope and reagents for diagnoses. A 700,000 birr health centre is under construction next to the clinic which will have 18 staff, but the clinic will still remain in operation after this opens.

From Ambo we spent a day sightseeing at nearby Mount Wenchi before proceeding to Addis Ababa for the last two nights. In Addis we visited the British Council for an update on schools projects, and the German Embassy to meet to discuss the ongoing water project they are sponsoring.

The overall impression gained is that some large steps are taking place with economic development, both private and government financed. Some people are undoubtedly better off. There are also many more people about, and the health and education systems are still stretched to the limit. There is still much we can do to support their development.

Peter Grainger

.... the other three members of the group were all going to Nekemte for the first time and here are some of their reflections on their experience ...

My first impression of Nekemte was the respectful friendliness of the people. (Penny)

I was pleasantly surprised by.... the relative normality of life in the cities and our ability to walk the streets in safety. (Jeff)

The facilities for dentistry were non existent, there not being apparently any dental surgery in the whole of Nekemte (population the same as Exeter's). Any treatment required had to be undertaken in Addis Ababa (200 miles away) or just ignored. (Vern)

Touring the local schools was a touching, enjoyable and sometimes uncomfortable experience.... unease at the magnitude of the gap between resources of African and British schools. (Jeff)

Yet, in every school we were greeted with a very warm welcome by staff and surrounded by excited children. I shall always remember the looks of delight on the faces of the teachers as they

received a few books or a volleyball that we brought - things that we take for granted. (Penny)



However, for real emotional overload it would be hard to beat a visit to Nekemte hospital where the overcrowding, dilapidated buildings, minimal resources and filthy conditions contribute to one of the most distressing sights I have ever seen. (Jeff)

Perhaps the most striking revelation for me was simply the ability of ordinary people to carry on with their lives, making the best they can for themselves and their families in conditions of deprivation and hardship. (Jeff)

And finally, SOCKS NEEDED !!

A plea from Penny to help sufferers of elephantiasis after they have had treatment. The socks can be new or used but they must be large and in good condition.

**Send to or Contact:
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Please support these Xmas events which are donating their collections to the Exeter-Ethiopia Link...

- Ø Exeter Philharmonic Choir who are promoting 2 carol concerts on 13th/14th December in the Cathedral. Tickets from the Box Office in the High Street or www.exephil.org.uk
- Ø Exeter Songlines who are performing Xmas world music in the bar at the Phoenix Arts Centre at 7pm on 14th December with mulled wine and mince pies.
- Ø Exeter Chamber Choir who are performing in a Carol Service at 7.30pm at Buckfast Abbey on the same evening.

.... and our thanks also go to....

- Ø Lloyds Pharmacy, for donating an automatic Blood pressure monitor for the Eye Clinic.
- Ø Mrs Brock, Ms Halse and Miss Cowan for donations.
- Ø The Community of the Presentation Trust, Canterbury for £1,000 for the Eye Project.
- Ø Peter & Cathy Kiddle for raising £53 at the Totnes Global Childrens day.
- Ø £30 raised by Exeter Forum after a talk by Peter Grainger.
- Ø Amy Wilson who raised £95 from photograph sales.
- Ø Our August coffee morning at St. Stephen's, Exeter organized by Chris Burns which raised £427 (many thanks to Chris and to all who helped with this).
- Ø Jill Grainger's recent coffee morning which raised £138.
- Ø A big thank you for all who took part in the sponsored walk in September which raised £1,277.

Exeter-Ethiopia Link

The Exeter-Ethiopia Link was set up in 1987 to promote a Community Link between Exeter in Devon, England and Hareto in Wollega, Ethiopia. In 1994 the Link included Nekemte, the principal town in Wollega.

The Link supports: Health, Agricultural and Educational projects in Hareto and Nekemte and encourages links between schools in Exeter and the communities in Ethiopia.

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or view our website:
www.exeterethiopia.org

20th Anniversary of the Link

2007 will be our 20th Anniversary Year
Can you help us celebrate by increasing our membership and income in order to continue our work in Nekemte and, in particular, with the Eye Project?

*Any copy for future newsletters can be sent to the editor, Bruce Hebbard, at Cedar House, Pines Road, Exeter EX2 9EN
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Exeter-Ethiopia Link
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