

December 2007

Newsletter

Return to Nekemte

This October I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to return again to Nekemte. As this was my second visit, I already had some contacts there, but it was wonderful to be recognised and greeted enthusiastically – even in the street – by people I had met last year. Nekemte has changed considerably during the year. It is an ever growing and expanding town, extensive building everywhere, a greater volume of traffic and now there are significant numbers of taxis, both cars and minibuses, everywhere.

One of my main purposes during my visit this year was to try to set up some school links between schools in Devon and schools in Nekemte and surrounding area. Broadclyst Community Primary School had already sent an introductory letter with photographs to Bekumsa Biya Elementary School, Leghare, and on this visit two teachers from Broadclyst, Tonia Dudley and Chloe Farrant, had accompanied me to Ethiopia, to consolidate this link (ed. see following article.). A 'link team' of three teachers was selected from Bekumsa Biya and the two teams discussed the two-way partnership and communication. Both sides were very positive that this link will move forward. We were very privileged to be taken to some of the homes of the schoolchildren. We were all deeply affected by the extreme poverty level and very basic survival conditions in which some of the families have to live.



Enabling communities
to help themselves

I had also taken with me introductory letters and photographs from three other schools to begin the process of a school link. I was absolutely delighted with the response from the Ethiopian schools. Children from Tedburn St. Mary Primary School, Year 5, had written letters to accompany photos of their school. Sorga Leilisa Elementary School responded with letters from their students to accompany beautiful drawings.



A Grade One class at Sorga School

The Headteacher of Blackawton Primary School, Dave Strudwick, had sent a personal letter with photographs of his school. The Director of Birka Bekumsa Elementary School replied with a positive letter to accompany a folder with photographs and drawings of Birka Bekumsa School. Exeter Cathedral School, Pre-Prep Department had designed a beautiful card – children's self portraits surrounding a school photo. The Bethel Kindergarten responded with a similar card with several portraits and class

photos. I feel very encouraged that these links will develop and be sustained. In addition to the school links, another communication link was added between the Woodcraft Folk of Exeter and the GIDAN Youth Group, a local Christian Youth group.

Whilst in Nekemte I was fortunate to meet up with others who are contributing educational support in no small measure. Andrew Craig worked for the whole month of October at New Generation University developing a graded spoken English programme recorded on CDs – a very well structured programme through three levels. Three new VSO workers had arrived in Nekemte on the same day as me, to join Jane King who has been working there since February. Jane is based at the Teacher Training College working on the 'cluster schools' project. Mark Smith is working with the ELIC programme, and Emma Sarton is based at the new Wollega University, a tutor on the Higher Diploma. We 'farangis' spent several pleasant evenings together discussing educational issues and exchanging views. Jane, Mark and Emma accompanied us on several school visits and I was pleased to have helped promote a working relationship between them and Qes Alemu. I also met up with Jenny Merritt at the EECMY School for the Deaf, and Richard Livermore of 'Open Ears Worldwide' who, with his team, was testing and fitting aids and instructing staff in the process.

I would like to reiterate how fortunate and privileged I feel to have had this second opportunity to become a little more involved with the people of Nekemte – a people who are always so welcoming and friendly, who are working so hard to make life better for themselves and still manage to remain optimistic. I hope that in a very small way we are helping to make a difference.

I must add a huge thank you to Qes Alemu Nega, to whom I owe so much, for without him none of the experiences of which I have written would have been possible.

Penny Pullen

Broadclyst School Visit

We arrived in Addis Ababa on Saturday 14th October and travelled 250km to Nekemte. Here we visited Bekumsa Biya Primary School where we were met by the Director Tasfa Tafari. We were greeted by the students and welcomed into their classrooms. The school was in a rural area, 12km out of the nearest town. It had no electricity and no water, although a well had been provided by the Exeter-Ethiopia Link. The buildings were made out of mud, straw and wooden stakes. The classrooms were obviously very dark, with little natural light. We noticed how many children were taught in each class and in some cases class numbers had reached over 100. The children were working without desks and were sat hunched over benches.



The Broadclyst, Bekumsa Biya staff 'link team' who are working to maintain successful contact between the two rural primary schools.

In this country each child has a right to education. In Ethiopia, it is a struggle to balance education and the demands placed on children to work in the home and on the land. We saw first hand how much value children put on their education in order to have the freedom of choice as they grow up. The exercise books used were supplied by the children themselves and the community raised funds to extend the school and continues to maintain it.



A class at Bekumsa Biya School

We brought back a video diary and lots of photographs to show to the children in our school. Our experiences will enrich our children's understanding of global issues and increase their awareness of the wider world and different cultures.

Chloe Farrant and Tonia Dudley

Opening of the Nekemte Eye Clinic 6th October 2007

The Clinic was dressed with banners, and balloons. Before 220 invited guests a ribbon was cut and a plaque unveiled to celebrate the opening of the Clinic. Alex Taylor represented the major donor - Four Acre Trust, and the Link. She was accompanied by Andrew Craig, and Frances Chanter and Carly Bantham from Exmoor Rotary Club.

In her address she expressed thanks to the many people in India, Germany, UK and Africa who have shared their expertise in order to commence eye care in the region. Most particularly she described the tireless work of the Project Manager, Qes Alemu Nega. The clinic building is very impressive. It offers a bright spacious waiting room; dispensary; two wards; several consulting rooms and surgical areas.

However, the doctor and two nurses are offering diagnosis; minor treatments; medications and prescriptions for glasses. They are supported by a receptionist; cashier; 2 cleaners and 2 guards. About 50 patients come each day and 750 people have been seen since the beginning of August.



The next phase of the project will be the introduction of cataract surgery. The doctor and nurses have received additional training in India. During her visit Alex Taylor contributed to the training of 70 social workers who will be promoting eye health and case finding in the community. The UK Project Management Team of Peter Grainger, Mark Howells, Richard King, and Jill Grainger will continue to guide the project, manage the donation from Four Acre, and the Link fundraising programme for the next 2 years.

Alex Taylor

Thanks in Brief

Thanks to:

- Barbara Warren retired optometrist, who kindly donated much useful equipment to the Eye Clinic.
- various donors for about £800 received in recent months.
- the sponsors of seven young women students at the New Generation University in Nekemte.
- to Rachael Jamieson for hosting an enjoyable coffee morning on 24th November which raised £182.
- to Prontaprint, Sidwell Street for their donation of copying and printing services valued at £250 during 2007.
- to Concept First for hosting our website and to Tom Grainger for managing it for the Link.

Newsboard

- Lizzie Cook is training to be a doctor at the Peninsula Medical School and traveled to Nekemte this summer. An article by her will appear in the next edition of the newsletter.
- The Link now has a copy of the DVD 'Black Gold' which is all about ethical questions concerning the Ethiopian coffee trade. It can be borrowed for a week from Ella Huffman. Contact her at ellahuffman@lycos.com or on her mobile 07825-215013.
- The Link is organizing a one day get-together at the St. Sidwell's Centre on Saturday 8th March 2008 from 10am to 4pm. It will cover a review of our projects and include reports from recent visits. Also, perhaps, a series of parallel workshops on different themes (health, education, women, water etc). Please put the date in your diary. Further details will be included in the next edition of the newsletter.

Plant Sale in June 2008 !!

Bruce & Charmain Hebbard will be holding another plant sale next year.

If you have any herbaceous perennials or small shrubs from your garden that you can pot up now then we'll be happy to take them from you next June. You may even be able to cajole your friends to start gathering together some plants for us!

*Any copy for future newsletters can be sent to the editor, Bruce Hebbard, at Cedar House, Pincus Road, Exeter EX2 9EN
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***Exeter-Ethiopia Link
Registered Charity No 1000293***

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 the town of Nekemte.

The Link supports: Health, Water, Women's and Educational projects in Hareto and Nekemte and links between schools in Exeter and the communities in Ethiopia.

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