

# November 2011 Newsletter



Enabling communities  
to help themselves

## Exeter Celebrates Ethiopian New Year

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September many people came together to celebrate Ethiopia moving into 2004! The New Year Event, known as Enkutatash in Amharic, was held at Poltimore House to share the cultural activities celebrated in Ethiopia. It also marked Exeter's link with Ethiopia, following a visit from 12 Ethiopians in May, through a British Council funded project 'Locally Engaged, Globally Connected'. Donations from the evening went to the East African Food Crisis.



*Malualem explaining the Coffee Ceremony being performed by Faley and Eskendrawit.*

The evening involved a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony held outside by a wood fire, a cultural bring and share dinner, a talk on the Ethiopian calendar and clock and a documentary showing the Awra Amba community with a Skype Q&A with the documentary producer. The documentary covered footage of a community set up by Ato Zumra, who founded Awra Amba in

response to his wish to live in a place where men and women are equal. [www.awraamba.com](http://www.awraamba.com). It was a lovely relaxed evening, with a mixture of food which included several Ethiopian dishes.



*Guests, Jasmine and Tara learning the drums.*

The event was a joint effort by Exeter-Ethiopia Link, Exeter Active Citizens and Ethiopian students from the University and raised £80 for the Food Crisis.

Thanks go to everyone who came and helped with the evening and for Poltimore House for hosting us. *Ella Huffman*

**Ethiopian Fairtrade coffee**  
Roast and ground from the Co-op  
*Mild-Medium strength, not cheap but very nice!*

**Also, Sainsbury's Ethiopian Sidamo  
Fairtrade coffee**  
&  
**Aldi's Lekemti (Nekemte) coffee**  
*Not Fairtrade but helps the local economy*

## Carbon Offset Fund

We know from experience that Community Links like EEL don't prosper and grow without the regular visits between partners which cheap air travel has made possible. Some members already take account of their carbon production by paying for carbon offsets through the many commercial and quasi-environmental organisations which have been set up. A brief tour of the websites of some of these organisations shows that the primary ways of doing this are through tree planting and investment in devices such as fuel-efficient stoves made of concrete shown below.



The Link has decided to set up its own 'Carbon Offset earmarked fund' and has already provided £600 for its first project which is to provide fuel-efficient cooking stoves to 20 households in 2 villages near Nekemte. We aim to follow this up with similar projects and funding for tree planting, so we are inviting all members who wish to offset their own carbon footprint to do so through Exeter-Ethiopia Link rather than paying out money to other organisations, and paying for their admin and overheads.

You can calculate your own contribution using the calculator on the JP Morgan 'Climate Care' website at [www.jpmorganclimatecare.com](http://www.jpmorganclimatecare.com) without donating money through them. (As donations to EEL we could also obtain tax refunds on your donations enhancing their value by 25%.) Just follow the instructions on the website as far as the payment stage where you will find a total cost, send a cheque for that sum to the EEL Treasurer stating 'for Carbon offsetting', and close the website.

I have calculated my own donation for 2010 as follows:

Flights	1.08t carbon		£8.16
Car	6000miles@51mpg	1.70t	£12.75
Electricity	2000kwh	1.23t	£9.26
Heating Oil	1000 litres	3.01t	£22.59
<b>TOTAL COST</b>			<b>£52.76</b>

*Richard King*

### 'Politics and People in Ethiopia'

7-9pm on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Exeter Global Centre, Berkeley House, Dix's Field, EX1 1PZ

**Professor John Markakis of the University of Crete, author of 'Ethiopia; The last Two Frontiers' will talk about the recent history and current politics of Ethiopia.**

For those who missed John Markakis's talk to the EEL Meeting in March this is another opportunity to hear him outline his assessment of the current situation which some Ethiopians find contentious.

For further information on his recent book see: [www.boydellandbrewer.com/store](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/store) and insert 'Ethiopia the last two frontiers' in the search box.

## November visit and funded projects

A visit to Nekemte will take place at the end of November by Mark Howells and Mark Hodgson to evaluate current project and assess the viability of new ones. During the visit the Marks will be visiting schools to exchange pupils work from linked schools and check that funding previously sent has been spent and outcomes achieved. So far this year over £9,000 has been provided by the link for schools for books and equipment, improvements to libraries, desks for classrooms, and improvements to water supplies, toilets and sanitation, and a further £3,000 will be taken on the visit for schools. Whilst there the two Marks will be meeting up with Mark Smith another member who is also visiting Nekemte to work on projects (that makes three Marks!) in connection with a Learning disability centre, special educational needs and the public library for which the link has provided £1,400.

Aspects of the visit will include:

- Visiting some of our linked schools to exchange work done by pupils. Will also be checking that funds previously sent have been acted on, e.g. improvements to libraries, purchase of desks, toilets and water supplies, as well as providing funds for similar items/projects.
- Evaluating an environmental and income-generating pilot project to train people to build fuel efficient stoves which is now complete and assessing the viability of extending this further (this links to the photo on page 2).
- Contact with a local university with respect to providing further business start-up courses for women and discussing the scholarships provided by our members.

- Visiting the eye clinic that we built and checking on a laundry room we provided funding for.
- Meeting up with an 'elders' group to whom we have recently provided funding for an income-generating pilot project to produce bricks for local construction.
- Assessing the viability of photovoltaics and micro hydro/solar-powered water pumps for schools and villages.
- Assessing locations for tree planting to link in with the carbon-offset scheme we are developing (again, this links to the article on page 2).

So ... a busy two weeks. *Mark Howells*

## Update on the Eye Project

I visited Nekemte in November 2010, accompanied by a local Rotary member. Rotary agreed to fund the equipment and bedding for two 10 bed wards.

It was very gratifying to see the progress that had been achieved in 2010. For example in October 2010 the ophthalmologist, Dr Fakadu, did 92 surgeries, and the nurses 65.

<i>The service figures for the year 2010 were:</i>	
<i>Outpatient assessments at the clinic</i>	<i>11,871</i>
<i>Outpatients seen at satellite stations</i>	<i>3,888</i>
<i>Cataract and other major surgery</i>	<i>1,495</i>
<i>Minor surgery</i>	<i>903</i>
<i>Spectacles supplied</i>	<i>2,158</i>

There are covered waiting areas and a tea shop provided by a lady who had previously been destitute.

The spectacle workshop is extremely profitable. The technician Adaneck Tasisa and her assistant supplied 350 glasses during the first two weeks of November and 2,000 to 3,000 are prescribed annually. Adaneck is profoundly deaf. With the exception of readymade readers Adaneck, cuts and fits prescription lenses into purchased or donated frames.

A regular programme of eye camps is underway. They assess many thousands of people and where possible treat disease or supply spectacles. Those needing surgery are booked in and the parishes offer some funding to enable them to go to Nekemte.



*Diagnostic work with a woman patient.*

For example the team has been to a sugar factory at Fincha 270kms away, and to Nekemte prison. Staff stay under canvas for a week and see around 4000 people. The most recent camp was at Ambo where 288 operations were performed and nearly 4000 people examined. As well as clinical services they provide health promotion, and spring capping. A bus is to be converted into a mobile clinic to enhance the outreach service, and enable cataract implants to be done in the villages. The statistics for 2011 will reflect the significant growth in clinical output that has occurred this year. Demand is high.

Recently I was notified of a funding shortfall of £12,000. The Link agreed to donate £1,000 for the purchase of cataract lenses in August. *Alex Taylor*

## **Scholarships for Women**

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the continent according to the Human Development Index with which the United Nations measures standards of living. In Ethiopian society there is a wide divide between rich and poor. The country has suffered the cost of war, drought, famine and these social, environmental and political issues have made it harder to develop educational opportunities for all. The majority of the population live in rural areas, dependant on agriculture for the families' survival, many living at a very basic subsistence level.

There is access to education in elementary school at village level, but parents are often reluctant to send their children to school. The children are needed at home to help the family income. School drop-outs occur frequently due to distance and poverty. However, there is a growing realization that education is the gateway to a better quality of life.

For ten years New Generation University College has considered the interests of hundreds of the disadvantaged from the poorer parts of society. The vision of NGUC is 'the aim for excellence and the building of a new generation through education'. They have instituted a scholarship scheme whereby young people from the poorer parts of society have access to learning - to achieve a qualification which may lead to a recognized job and an income and a vastly improved quality of life - not only for them, but for their extended family.

Exeter Ethiopia Link is very aware of the position of women in Ethiopian society. In the family structure, if there is an opportunity, it is given to the men. The women have to resort to the most menial of jobs to support the family. Also, owing to accidents and disease, and the prevalence of HIV/Aids, there are many woman or child headed families and orphans. The young girls find themselves in a destitute position, and have to resort to firewood carrying and selling on the street, working as maids, and even, and not uncommonly, prostitution.

In 2005/06 Exeter Ethiopia Link took the decision to sponsor six young women students so that they may follow a course at New Generation University College. The students were selected by Rev. Alemu Nega, who looks deeply into the circumstances of each of the young women. The venture was a success. Owing to the generosity of individual sponsors Exeter Ethiopia Link has been able to increase the number of sponsored students each year, and this year, 2011/12 sixteen young women are following courses at New Generation University College. Many thanks are due to the kindness of the individual sponsors who are giving these young women a wonderful opportunity, to give them back confidence and self respect and to completely turn their lives around.

*Penny Pullen*

### **Rahel's story**

Extreme poverty and semi orphaned, to survive Rahel used to resell charcoal and firewood in the open market. Sometimes she could do hair dressing in the village or assist in weaving to earn enough to survive. Rahel was born in a local village called Feyinerra. Her mother died when she was very young, and her father worked on a

farm earning less than a birr a day with four other children and a second wife. It is normal that when the first wife dies the father has to marry again due to farming demand and family upkeep. Rahel was fully engaged in generating income for the family besides doing her secondary level education under the strict control, pressure and unhappy face from her step mother, who constantly complained about her learning and always told her to move out from house and find a man to live with. Rachel was very unhappy. Eventually Rahel moved out with the help of her ninety year old grandfather, who decided to look after her if she could produce income for her living. He provided shelter and minimal clothing. Rahel finally succeeded in completing her tenth grade education. However, although she was academically competent, Rahel could not move on to fulfill her dreams. She was energetic and self supporting with the income she generated from the market and the support she received from her grandfather. She dressed cheaply and mostly walked bare foot.



One day when the New Generation University management team including the president Mr. Mathew Gichile and Rev Alemu were sitting outside with coffee, Rahel's old grandfather brought her to the table, asking for help and showing the documents from Rachel's high school

certificate. Immediately, she was referred to Rev Alemu for investigation. Her situation was confirmed and Rahel was invited for interview and scholarship candidacy. She was granted University in-country scholarship to do her level 1-4 equivalents to Diploma in Information Technology for the three years under the scholarship grant from an individual sponsor, through Exeter Ethiopia Link.

Thanks are due to her individual sponsor who contributed to her education for three years. Rahel graduated in July 2011 with distinction. She has submitted applications to several offices for a secretarial job in a firm. If she passes the government Quality Assurance exam in September, she will be offered a job. Besides that she is preparing to establish her own secretarial services office in a kiosk in the vicinity of the town, leading toward being a self employed shop owner. She is just waiting for a start up fund from her own earnings. She now has knowledge, skill and confidence.

### **Gift Catalogue**

*The 2011/12 gift catalogue is now on our website with a booking form which details how to pay. We're trialling the opportunity to donate online for the first time this year in order to make it easier to buy gifts from the catalogue. The weblink for this is*

[www.charitygiving.co.uk/eelgift](http://www.charitygiving.co.uk/eelgift)

## **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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**[www.exeterethiopiaLink.org](http://www.exeterethiopiaLink.org)**

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