

Hamlin Charitable Hospitals Trust

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue No. 11 Spring edition

2009

Dr Hamlin to visit NZ

Dr Hamlin will speak at our AGM in Christchurch to be held at the St Margarets College Chapel, Merivale, on Tuesday, the 3rd November at 7pm. Parking areas available off Andover Street and Shrewsbury St -main entrance off Winchester St.

Later meetings in Nelson and Napier are arranged. Please refer to our website for details of time and place.



Dr Catherine Hamlin speaking at the Jubilee celebrations

Tony and Helen Andrews

were representatives of the NZ Trust at the "50 years on" anniversary. They had spent 4 years in Ethiopia nearly 10 years ago.

Here is their report:-

Jubilee celebrations

On May 30th 2009, 600 people gathered at Desta Mender (Joy Village) to celebrate the arrival of the late Dr Reg Hamlin from

New Zealand and his wife Dr Catherine Hamlin.

Tributes from many people were interspersed with items from the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital Choir. The Minister of Health, Dr Tewdros Adhanom announced the highest ever distinction his government has awarded for Dr Catherine. Other tributes came from ambassadors from Australia and the USA, from partner organisations and from a former long-serving board member.

At the same time, the new Juniper cafe, staffed by women who have not been able to be completely healed of their injuries, was formally opened by the President of Soroptimists International. The Hamlin School of Midwifery, which operates on the same site, was opened by the Minister of Health and Dr Catherine.

Sixteen staff members who have served at the hospital since it opened were officially recognised. Included was Mamitu Gashi, a former fistula patient herself but now, through having watched Reg work, an Honorary Surgeon of the Royal College of Surgeons, UK. Also honoured was Ato Birru who has faithfully served the Hamlin family and the hospital, especially as an expert gardener for 50 years. An audio-visual display about the hospital's past activities and the operation of the 5 new branch hospitals accompanied the celebrations. Through these

Centres and the Midwifery Training College, great advances are being made in the prevention of obstetric fistulae.

The theme of the Jubilee Service a week later was taken from Reg Hamlin's own words "Lighting a candle for Africa" calling on others to make known the issue of poor maternal health and to bring hope for the future.

Mission and Vision statements of the Hospital Trust

Vision: To see improvements in maternal health bringing to an end Obstetric Fistula

Mission: Wholehearted commitment, with God's love and compassion, to women with childbirth injuries.

General Observations

Electricity

The recurring talking point for everybody in Addis Ababa and throughout Ethiopia, was the fact that electricity was off all day every second day and occasionally for periods in the days between! Explanations for this crippling reality of everyday life varied: hydro shortages, (but when the rains came in July the cuts continued!), lack of essential equipment, the credit crunch, political scheming! It meant that institutions, businesses and factories that could not afford a generator were closing down. Some hospitals were turning away patients and many had lost jobs.

On one occasion Dr Catherine experienced a power cut while operating, the hospital generator was not able to kick in, so she completed the surgery by torchlight!

Hospitality

Not just because we had many old friends to catch up on but also because it is a characteristic of Ethiopian life, we experienced great hospitality. From the other world of the Sheraton restaurant at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, to the very Ethiopian world of the traditional coffee ceremony:- grass strewn on the floor, coffee beans roasted in your presence and then sniffed by each person present, unsweetened popcorn and then consecutive small handle-less cups of coffee of declining strength. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee and the original home of the coffee plant, "coffee arabica". There were also several meals of the traditional "injera" made from teff, a wheat-like staple, made into a sour pancake with the appearance of sponge rubber but surprisingly tasty when accompanied by the great variety of wats (sauces and stews) on offer.



Injera with wat - ready to eat!

We also enjoyed cups of tea, served with anzac biscuits, in the home of Dr Catherine.

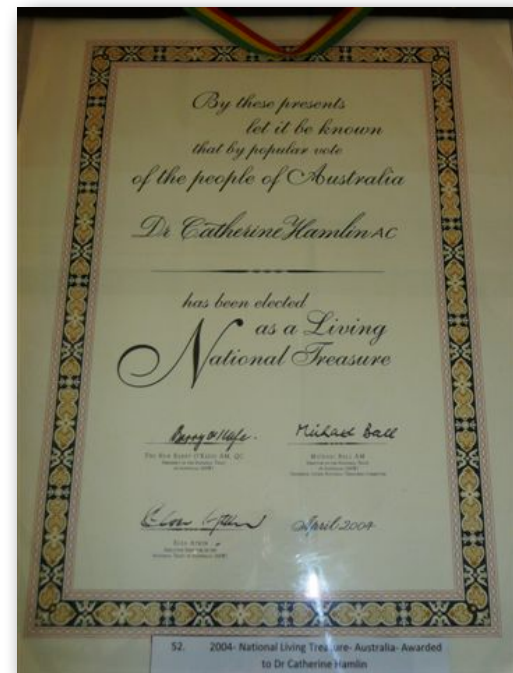
Perseverance

It was great to reconnect with friends who have spent a life time working in Ethiopia. One American translator was celebrating 53 years there! It was clear that for so many the love of the hospitable people of Ethiopia counters the inconveniences of things like electricity cuts. We were able to revisit programmes we were ourselves very involved in a decade ago, in particular the Jerusalem Homes work which began amongst orphaned children after the drought of the 1980s. It was exciting to see how this work has developed to focus on child-centred community care rather than institutional care and to grapple with issues like the impact of HIV/AIDS and the empowerment of women.

Over tea in Dr Catherine's home, we reconnected with the remarkable Valerie Browning, subject of a recent book by John Little called "Maalika" which tells of Valerie's life of service to the Afar people of North-eastern Ethiopia.

We noted other changes like the dramatic expansion of buildings in Addis Ababa and the improvement in the main arterial roads but we also noticed that poverty is as much in your face as ever, with thousands sleeping on the streets each night. In this regard, it was exciting to be part of new programmes of the St

Mathew's church, feeding 40 needy local children with breakfast each morning and running a library to assist hundreds of local children in their studies.



One of the many awards given to Catherine

Habitat for Humanity building in Desta Menda

Desta Menda is an agricultural property where women with severe birth injuries are accommodated and offered training to enable them to live with their injuries

Marty Van Der Burg, from Auckland, is a skilled craftsman builder. He responded to the need expressed by Mark Bennett, the CEO of the hospital in Addis Ababa.-

"We have started a midwifery college so that we can train highly skilled midwives who will be located in rural areas to assist in prevention of the terrible problem of fistula. We have been granted new land to expand the midwifery college but the land already has about 40 families living on it in shanty accommodation. These people will have to leave so that we can commence construction of the new college. In collaboration with the local municipality we have arranged for them to be

granted land near where they are now so that they can have a permanent place to live. Our plan is to invite a team of people to work with us and the community themselves to



Former shanty accommodation

houses had been dug and 7 roofs were on! During the three weeks, they worked alongside the village people whose houses they were building and also the local carpenters the hospital had employed. The team loved it! They were able to stay in one of the houses in Dester Mender so they had a first hand insight into this wonderful village and how it runs. They made friends with the hospital patients, the trainee midwives, the staff and the village people. Thanks for the wonderful work you and your team were able to do Marty!



Desta Mender where Marty's team stayed



The building site for 45 houses

develop good new homes for these people to live in." Marty jumped at the chance. His team's philosophy is to help others and use their skills and resources to make a difference in people's lives as they believe it is important to give as well as to receive. This is their way of putting back into society.

The project consisted of building 45 new homes, designed by Habitat for Humanity, to rehouse the families living on hospital land next to Dester Mender. When they arrived in late April, only one footing for one house had been dug but when they left 3 weeks later, all 45



Three weeks later the new houses take shape



New friends! This week Marty is returning to Ethiopia with many blankets from NZ for the hospital patients.

From the Trustees

We thank the many supporters who contribute not only their funds, but also their love through prayers and the knitting and sewing of shawls to give to the patients.

Locally, we have been impressed by a group of Brownies from St Martins Anglican Church, Lincoln Rd, Chch. The average age of the girls is 8 years but they, with the help of leaders and Parents, have knitted and donated 5 blankets so far and more are on the way! Such a wonderful

group - Thankyou!

Help the work of the Trust

Hamlin Charitable Fistula Hospitals Trust, P.O. Box 6395, Christchurch

Email address -hamlinht@xtra.co.nz

new website www.hamlinfistula.org.nz

N.B. "every cent of every dollar donated is available for the work of the Fistula Hospitals"

I would like to help the work of the Trust .

Please send mecopy/copies of Dr Catherine’s book-”Hospital by the River” at \$25. (Cheque with order)

Please send mecopy/copies of “Catherine’s Gift” by John Little at \$35

I wish to make a donation and enclose a cheque for \$.....

I wish to make a regular donation of \$.... to the Trust Account National bank no 060817 0264043 00

I wish to help with the expenses of running the Trust in NZ and donate \$..... to National Bank account No 0608170264043-02

Please debit the sum of \$.... to my Visa or Master credit card noExpiry date.....

Please send me brochures so that I can interest others in the work.

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Email:

See our new website at www.hamlinfistula.org.nz

Hamlin Charitable Fistula Hospitals Trust,
P.O. Box 6395, Christchurch



**HAMLIN
FISTULA**
INTERNATIONAL