

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | September 2009



Service of Thanksgiving

Dr Hamlin will be visiting Australia in October 2009 and will attend a special service of thanksgiving for 50 years working in Ethiopia. The service will be held at St Thomas' Anglican Church, McLaren Street North Sydney on Saturday 24 October 2009 at 2.00pm.

The service will be followed by an afternoon tea for which tickets will need to be purchased beforehand either via our website www.fistulatrust.org or by returning the attached slip to the Fund's office with your payment or by contacting the office on (02) 9449 6725.

Tickets are \$25 per head.

DR HAMLIN'S LETTER

My Dear Friends in Australia

Again it is time for another letter. This may possibly not be interesting, as we are enduring the long and tedious 'rainy season', when fewer patients arrive, and everyone's mood is more subdued. Many take leave at this time, hoping to escape the 'rains'.

But today the sun is shining and a very sick patient in the ward who had an emergency operation at 9:00p.m last night is much better and smiling this morning so we are all happy! Our senior surgeon, Dr. Habte did a great job!

New health centre

We have just equipped and opened a local Health Centre in Gojam south west of Bahir Dar at a town called Dangalla and handed it over to the local Health Bureau to run. The money

for this was given by USAID, so that we could buy all the equipment needed for the small operating theatre, a ward with four beds in it and various outpatient rooms.

The official opening is today, so Professor Gordon Williams, our Medical Director, will be there with one of our doctors, the local Health Bureau Officials and the USAID people. We hope that next year two of our newly trained midwives will be in the same village and so they will be able to refer women who need caesarian sections to the Health Centre. Possibly our ante-natal clinic will be there too, or nearby. I would like to have our clinics separate from the Health Centres, but it depends on our available funds. The health officer in charge is one who has been trained to do emergency surgery. I expect difficult surgery will be referred to the Bahir Dar Hospital, and I am sure our Fistula Centre there will also be involved. We have provided the needed vehicle, which will be available to transport only our patients, but I feel sure this will be a major difficulty, unless the Health Bureau provides another car for the Health Officer! We are hoping this will be one of the best equipped Health Centres in the country. Most are very poorly equipped and staffed, and so of little use! We all hope this one will stimulate others to follow, so that Health Centres are not just bare buildings with little inside to help the sick patients.

2010 Calendar

The 2010 Calendar will be available in October. Orders can be placed through our website www.fistulatrust.org or by returning the attached slip to the Fund's office with your payment. The cost is \$20 (incl GST and postage).

Celebrating 50 years in Ethiopia

I know in my last letter I mentioned the planned celebrations we were about to have. So I must mention these exciting days and thank all those who came from Australia to be with us. I was indeed touched and honoured to think you would travel this long distance for such events. It was a pleasure to welcome you all here, and others from our Trusts in four different countries.

Our two main functions were held at our lovely site at Desta Mender, on May 30 and June 6 near the lake and our new Juniper Café – which of course was busy supplying refreshments. International Soroptimist President Margaret Lobo was a special guest.



Dr Hamlin with Margaret Lobo

She unveiled a plaque on the café wall which thanks the tens of thousands of Soroptimist women from all around the world, who worked so hard to raise the money to build the café and buy all the equipment needed. I thank you for your concern and generous help.

The staff of Desta Mender had set up everything perfectly – an open-ended marquee, lots of chairs, and a loud speaker, our hospital choir, special comfortable seats for V.I.P.'s and pots of bright geraniums lining the paths. Everything went well, with lots of speeches, by Government Ministers, or their representatives, a Bishop from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, our own Trustees, and many members of our staff.

The only worry that Saturday morning was a strong wind that became quite a gale! I was sitting beside the Minister of Health under an acacia tree (thorn tree) with a big branch over our heads. But fortunately it did not break. Giving our speeches was difficult as the wind blew our papers about and the loud speakers crackled, so possibly some of us were not heard. Later in the morning we all walked to the nearby Midwifery College to officially open it by cutting a ribbon – which I did



Dr Hamlin cuts the ribbon at the new Midwifery College

with the Minister of Health. Then I drew a drape off a plaque on the wall – speeches were made in one of the bigger classrooms and a short skit – role play – was performed by the pupils. After this there was a delicious lunch provided, on the big lawn of Desta Mender. The wind had by then died down so it was an enjoyable afternoon, finished with coffee again at the Juniper Café.

During that week we held meetings with all our Trustees from other countries, our own from here, and senior members of our administration and medical staff. The business side of our work was presented and the future plans, important issues, and some exciting happenings were all reported and discussed. These were great meetings, with an atmosphere of good will and cooperation and where good decisions were made.

Later that week some of our visitors and staff went to Yirgalem in the south of the country to see our Centre there, and to stay one night at the delightful Aregash Lodge nearby.

The next Saturday (June 6) was one of thanksgiving when again we met near the lake at Desta Mender, to thank God for his care and sustaining love over 50 years. I am sure we all were there that morning to honour Him and Our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a perfect morning, no wind this time! – with the lake shimmering in the bright sunlight with music and singing



Rae Newman and café staff

from our choir, with Bible readings, a few speeches, hymns and prayers. Then lunch at the café for those who wanted to stay. Many of course did and so our girls were busy and Rae Newman who trained them all so well, was again the perfect hostess. Never flustered, always serene and helpful and charming – how we miss her now that she has returned to Canberra.

Our guests all left during the next week, leaving us feeling rather flat after ten days of excitement and bustle.

I am glad now I agreed to have these celebrations. It was for me a special few days, as I remembered Reg and our early, often struggling times. I witnessed the enormous love and commitment of our staff, and I think for them too, they saw how much they were loved and held in esteem by so many supporters and friends. I know we all had an experience that will long stay in our memories.

I thank many of you who are reading this letter for your long years of support and recently for the many presents, cards and letters I received and for which I know I have not thanked you adequately.

Browning baby

A piece of news that some of you may already know – our Dr. Andrew Browning and his wife Stephanie have had a 2nd baby – another boy. We hope they will soon be back to join us. I know Andrew will get a huge welcome from the Bahir Dar Centre when he returns.

New nursing aides

As I walk up to the ward every day I am excited to see 8-10 girls in blue striped uniforms all working hard, cleaning, making beds, filling water bottles or other simple tasks to help our patients and make the main ward spotless, all with a warm greeting for me and a sweet smile.

These are our new trainee nursing aides, who all have been previous patients – some will go eventually to our new Metu Centre and some as extra help to our other Centres. They are all so happy to have been chosen and do their work willingly and eagerly. It is wonderful to see such joy displayed in doing menial tasks, which will not always be menial ones, as some will rise to become highly trained and skilled, but all remain with touching gratitude, and with the manners and charm from their peasant upbringing. They could all be princesses!

We have started our Training Program again and this week three doctors from Somaliland arrived, a male gynaecologist and two nurses, and a female gynaecologist from Japan who works in areas of the Pacific where obstetric fistulas are common. So we hope we can provide them with the teaching they desire, during the next few weeks.

Other news

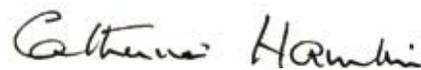
In other news, the patient mentioned in my last letter went home cured as have many others since then.

Another excitement was for Mamitu (whom many of you know well) when she was given an honour by the Ethiopians living in America. She and Matron Ejigayehue flew to Washington to receive this award and had a wonderful few days there. I have seldom seen Mamite with such joy, and Matron was of course delighted to go with her. All their expenses and fares were paid for by their hosts.

I will be visiting Australia in October and the Fund is organising a Service of Thanksgiving to be held at St Thomas' Anglican Church North Sydney on Saturday 24 October. I hope that I might see some of you there.

Well I have probably said enough for now but this news comes with my heart felt gratitude for your help and your concern for our poor patients.

And with my warm greetings and love.



Dr E. Catherine Hamlin AC

CELEBRATING THE HAMLIN GOLDEN JUBILEE

The Fund is very grateful to so many people who have organized and supported Jubilee activities during the past few months. Together we have kept the need of the Ethiopian women who suffer from obstetric fistula and the work of the Hospital very much alight in people's minds.

The Fund's 'Lighting a Candle' event

On 25 June members of Dr Hamlin's family were joined by over 100 people in Sydney at the Fund's Lighting a Candle event at St Alban's Lindfield.

Colourful patchwork shawls, candles and tasty Ethiopian food created a wonderful atmosphere in which to mark 50 years of the Hamlins' work.

HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

PO Box 965, Wahroonga NSW 2076 Australia | Phone 02 9449 6725 | Fax 02 9440 4764
email: fistulaltd@ozemail.com.au | www.fistulatrust.org
Newsletter design donated by Pure Graphics Pty Ltd



The audience saw a DVD of Dr Hamlin's Jubilee Message in which Dr Hamlin expressed her appreciation for the support which the people of Australia have provided over many years. The atmosphere of the Jubilee celebrated at the Hospital earlier in June was clearly conveyed through a presentation of photographs called 'An Ordinary Miracle', prepared by our honorary graphic designer, Lucy Perry of Pure Graphics. Mark Bennett, the Hospital's CEO and his wife Annette were visiting Sydney at the time and provided an interesting overview of the Hospital's work and the midwifery initiative. The Rev. Stuart Abrahams AM, who for many years ran the Australian Fund, concluded the evening with a short reflection on the significance of the Hamlins' Christian faith in undertaking their work amongst Ethiopian women.

Jubilee Packs

Our office has had a very busy few months sending Jubilee Packs to supporters across Australia. We have had wonderful feedback on the success of these small events and Dr Hamlin was very moved to hear that many hundreds of candles across our nation have been lit for her beloved African women. We have decided to extend this promotion so if you would like to host a morning tea or other Lighting a Candle event and would like to use a Jubilee Pack then please contact our office 02 9449 6725 or visit our website www.fistulatrust.org.

Golden Celebration Rose

Another way of supporting the work of the Hospital is through the purchase of a David Austin Golden Celebration Rose.

These can be purchased through nurseries which stock David Austin roses throughout Australia. A portion of the sale proceeds will go towards supporting the work of the Hospital.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Knickers and Knit

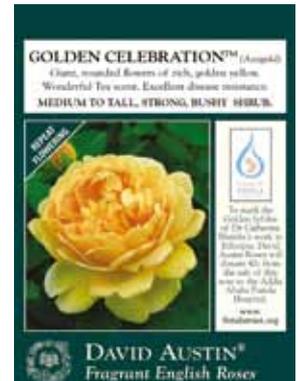
In June the Fund was invited to participate in the Sydney Craft and Quilt Fair. While *Wrap With Love* supporters knitted squares together, we collected 'knickers' in the thousands for the women at the Hospital. We are very grateful to Sydney resident, Maria Evans, who upon returning from a visit to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital decided to initiate this 'knickers drive'. The generosity from the craft community was overwhelming and our thanks go out to the hundreds of people who so generously contributed knickers and donations at this event. Such was the response that the Hospital has sufficient knickers for some time to come.

ABC Knit In

In early August, the Fund was invited to participate in the ABC's Knit In. We had a very busy stand in the ABC foyer displaying large vibrant photos of the Hospital's patients in their knitted wraps.

ABC presenter Deborah Cameron interviewed *Wrap With Love's* founder, Sonia Gidley-King, and Chairperson Jayne Goodes on how the wraps are made and distributed, while Annette Bennett, Dean of the Hospital's Midwifery College and who lives at the Hospital, spoke of how everyday she sees the women at the Hospital walking past her kitchen window wearing the wraps.

Shipping wraps to Ethiopia is an ongoing financial cost for the Fund. A donation of \$20 will help pay for the cost of sending a wrap to a woman at the Hospital. If you would like to make a donation for this or any other aspect of the Hospital's work then please refer to the donation slip attached.



With so many volunteers offering to assist during the Jubilee it has not been necessary to call upon everyone. But the Fund is very grateful to everyone who has offered to help.

A baby and a fistula

Enatnesh Kasse was married at the age of 12. She was brought to the Hospital by her father four years ago aged 14. Three months before she had been in obstructed labour for three days and surprisingly gave birth to a live daughter. This is rare indeed.

But her long labour also resulted in her having an obstetric fistula. Her fistula was repaired successfully. Like all the Hospital's patients, she was told that if she became pregnant again, she must go to a hospital to have the delivery carried out by cesarean section.

All the Hospital's centres now have a waiting ward where patients can stay until they go into labor and where they can recuperate with their new baby as pictured.

Enatnesh is now 18 and her second daughter was born successfully after a cesarean section. She thanks God for her recovery and she intends to do whatever is in her power to protect them from developing an obstetric fistula. With God's help she and her husband are working hard in the fields to save enough money to send their daughters to school.



Please accept the attached donation for the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital through the **HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF & AID FUND**

Please post to PO Box 965 Wahroonga NSW 2076

Donations of over \$2 are allowable Income Tax Deductions.

DGR 900484487 (Please print clearly)

Title Mr Mrs Miss Ms Dr Rev
(please circle)

Name _____

Address _____

P/CODE

Phone _____

Gift or Cheque Attached \$ _____

Please send a greeting card with my receipt

Allocate for Hamlin Fistula Int'l Foundation

Send to me suitable wording for a Bequest

Send to me a free DVD and brochures to interest others

I would like to order:

Tickets for St Thomas' afternoon tea - \$25.00pp

2010 Calendar - \$20.00 (inc GST + postage)

OR Please debit the sum of \$ _____ to my

MasterCard

Visa

CCV*

*three digit security code on the signature strip of your credit card

Name on card _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature _____