

October 2009 Newsletter

Half a Century of Dedication.

Earlier this year 5 UK trustees met with our midwife trustee, Beverley Stewart, in Addis Ababa. Many representatives from organisations which support the Hospital from around the world were there also to share in the **Golden Jubilee** celebrations to mark the 50 years since Dr Catherine Hamlin and her late husband, Reg, first arrived in Ethiopia.



Drs Reginald and Catherine Hamlin.

They have devoted their lives mending the physical and social problems of destitute women who suffer from childbirth injuries.

Their service in Ethiopia was marked with two events. The first was a special day for all the staff and invited guests. Among these were His Holiness Abune Zekarias and other important dignitaries, and trustees and partners from all over the world. Many spoke of the work and aspirations of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and its Outreach Centres. Dr Hamlin was the first recipient of the highest award that can be given by the Ministry of Health.

Fifteen staff who have been with Dr Hamlin since her arrival in Ethiopia were recognised for their long service and given a certificate and a gift.



“My long service award”

The core purpose of the 50th anniversary celebrations was a “Thanksgiving Service.” Dr Reg Hamlin’s words, “**Let us light a candle for Africa**” were marked by songs and Bible readings in Amharic and English. God’s help and guidance can be seen in every activity of the hospital and its hope for the future.

The Hamlin Midwifery College.

Part and parcel of the special 50th Jubilee of the Hamlins arrival in Ethiopia was the realisation of Dr Catherine Hamlin’s dream. After half a century the **Hamlin Midwifery College** was officially inaugurated. **Dr Tewodros Adhanom**, the Minister of Health, and **Dr Hamlin** cut a ribbon and unveiled a plaque, a sign of the official opening of the college. Everyone lit a candle as a symbol of prevention of obstetric fistulae through the work of the midwifery students.



Sr. Annette Bennett

Sr. Annette Bennett, Dean of HMC said that the number one requirement is the need of qualified midwives to prevent obstetric fistula and to minimise maternal mortality and morbidity. The college has as its motto, “A Midwife for Every Mother.” The college will make every effort to produce competent midwives and keep the name “**Hamlin**” as a sign of excellence. Sr. Bennett gave an overview of the college and its future plans.

The first students at the HMC have now completed their second year and the third intake started in September.

The students are very enthusiastic and diligent in their studies and sometimes on a national holiday they can be seen in a sheltered spot, all with their books, revising. Celebrations and get-togethers help all our staff and friends around the world to come close and to create a family attachment which our hospital has had for the past half-century and we hope will continue to have in the future.

Dr Hamlin has spent her life in putting the finest human values and principles into practice. She is a source of inspiration and courage to all of us.

Stories of Patients.

Enatnesh, (*not her real name*) a former obstetric patient, came to the hospital in Addis four years ago. She was married at the age of 12 and at 14 she had her first baby. She was in labour for three days and gave birth to a baby girl; rare indeed to have a live baby, but she also developed an obstetric fistula. She was brought to the hospital by her father three months after the birth and her fistula was successfully repaired. Like all our patients, she was told that if she became pregnant again, she must get herself to a hospital for the delivery by Caesarean section. All our hospitals now have a waiting ward where patients can stay until they go into labour.

Enatnesh is now 18 and came back to us to await the delivery of her second baby, a girl, born successfully after Caesarean section. She thanks God for her recovery and as she now has two daughters, she intends to do whatever is in her power to protect them from developing an obstetric fistula. She and her husband will be working hard in the fields to save enough money to send their daughters to school.



Enatanesh with her new baby.

Adina, (*not her real name*) is a 60 year old lady who has had a fistula for 30 years. She has had an operation and the staff expects that she will be cured. Her bladder has been out of action for so long that all the nerves to make it functional again will need to be re-activated, so she will need some special training. She is a good patient who now needs good nourishment to make her strong for when she is discharged. Dr Hamlin went through a list of foods she thought would tempt her appetite and she replied, "I can only eat potatoes." Adina has a will of her own!

Medical News

During the last six months at our five hospitals we have carried out 1,248 procedures on women with obstetric fistulae. With four operating tables in our main hospital and two in each of the outreach centres we are equipped for long operating lists.

Our lack of sufficient post operative beds is sometimes a problem, but our nursing staff does their best at these times in finding beds by moving patients from ward to ward. They are a dedicated, efficient and kind group of nurses and nurse-aides with a matron who holds them together, not only as an efficient matron, but also as a 'mother'.

Bethlehem ward at the Addis Ababa hospital has become a research ward, studying particularly those women who are still wet despite having their fistula closed. New findings have been discovered which will have relevance to patients throughout the world, so enabling new and effective treatments to be given to these young women.

SEED Honoured Mamitu

The Society of Ethiopians Established in Diaspora honoured **Mamitu Gashe** along with five other Ethiopians for their outstanding contribution to their community in their field of specialisation.



Mamitu

Mamitu was one of the distinguished honourees invited at the 17th Anniversary of SEED.

Sister Ejigayehu and Mamitu were welcomed by board members of SEED. The society salutes Mamitu as one of the world's premier obstetric fistula surgeons who, despite never having been to medical school and having endured a fistula herself, has enabled countless fellow Ethiopians to live a healthier and longer life.

Mamitu deserves the distinguished award for being a role model and for all her many attributes. She is a woman with a tremendous sense of humour who is exemplary with her hard work and willingness to help the fistula patients.

International Visitors

Addis Ababa hosted a meeting of the **Inter-Parliamentarian Union** and representatives from parliaments in Britain, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA, together with the **Health Commissioners** and the **Human Rights Commissioner** of the **European and African Union**, all visited our hospital in Addis. Discussions took place with our senior staff, this helping to raise awareness of the plight of the fistula patients around the world.

The Minister and State Minister of Women's Affairs of Ethiopia paid an official visit to discuss issues of minimising mortality rate, the occurrence of obstetric fistula and also about the Midwifery College.

All of these visitors were given a warm welcome and after looking around the hospital, were served with tea and coffee on the lawn.

Desta Mender.

Ato Ephrem Aklilu, the manager of Desta Mender has recently got married and a reception was held at the marvellous site beside the lake here at Desta Mender.

Ephrem strongly believes in reintegrating patients back into their own community as soon as is possible and he is working on developing a training curriculum for them.



Patients working at Desta mender

Many of the patients can't see a future for themselves. They often say, "I can't do it," but Ephrem is training them in skills and education to make them realise they can do it and that there are opportunities out there.

They are becoming proficient in cookery and waiting on tables in the new Juniper Café, looking after hens, dairy farming, growing crops and vegetables and they have many handcrafting skills. By working and selling some of their produce they earn a small wage and from it they pay a little towards their living costs at Desta Mender.

Staff News

Senait Tachbele, a member of our kitchen staff has recently married and **Sister Wongelawit** gave birth to a son, we pass on our congratulations to them.

Farewells

Mrs Rae Newman, a person who worked day and night without complaint to establish the **Juniper Café** at Desta Mender has now left for her home in Australia. She has been a most friendly and loving person and has helped the residents at Desta Mender to be self sufficient and become excellent waitresses and cooks truly worthy of themselves.



Rae Newman with the trained staff at Juniper Café

Rae was not only a trainer in catering, but a mother, a sister and a friend, helping them to stand on their own with confidence. They have already become well known for their delicious Australian meat pies by every visitor. We wish her well and hope she will return.

It was with sadness that we said 'goodbye' to **Dr Einar Lande** at a party we held for him. He has worked at **Yirgalem Outreach Centre** since its opening and has now returned to Norway with his family. We wish Dr Lande every success for the future and we look forward to seeing him back in Ethiopia. Since his arrival here he has done such devoted and excellent work for our fistula sufferers. He has been replaced by **Dr Fekade Ayenachew**.



Dr Einar Lande

In mid July we also said 'goodbye' to **Beverley Stewart** who returned to the UK after spending six months here in the Midwifery College. Her help has been invaluable in assisting Sr. Bennett in administration, management and training of students. Dr Hamlin said, "She is a highly skilled midwife and she was like a new breath of life to our midwives and tutors. Everyone has benefited from her time here. We hope she will come back to us in Ethiopia soon."



Beverley Stewart

A FAREWELL TO ONE OF OUR UK TRUSTEES. Mr Clive Hewitt has made the decision to step aside from our trust where he has held the position of Honorary Treasurer for almost 18 years; he has been the driving force behind the UK Charity. He will still maintain a close interest in the work of Dr Hamlin and the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and will continue fund-raising as in the past.



Clive Hewitt

Clive is well into retirement age and he has taken this step to allow younger trustees to become involved. He will be greatly missed from our Board of Trustees.

Please note our new office address and telephone number :

Hamlin Fistula UK
4 Parade Buildings
Nimmings Road
Halesowen
West Midlands
B62 9JJ

0121 559 3999