



The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Making a difference in rural Namibia

NEWSLETTER

No: 40

Spring 2019

It all started so well!!!!

Today, it's Thursday 9 April 2020, and we are at home in West Mersea although our itinerary says we should be at Catherine's clinic at Oshivelo and tomorrow being the start of Easter we should be in Etosha. What happened, the Coronavirus thwarted our plans, but more of that later.

It all started so well when we flew out on 18 February with Ethiopian Airlines to Windhoek via Addis Ababa where it was slightly disconcerting as quite a few people were wearing face masks. When we arrived at Windhoek we had to fill in a form advising where we had come from and have our temperatures taken. Unfortunately our journey through customs was not trouble free when we had to open the two cases full of donated knitted items and endure a lecture from a custom's officer who because she was wearing a mask became very hot and flustered. Apparently, we should have had a letter from the Namibian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance authorising the items. Anyway she allowed us to proceed and we met up with Gehas from Komeho our Namibian partner ngo, who had brought our Hilux Double Cab to the airport. After spending a couple of days with our friends, Robert and Noleen West we drove to Gobabis, picked up our provisions for the week and onward to Otjimanangombe arriving on Sunday 23 February.



The 'ambulance' based at Otjimanangombe

The next day we went over to the clinic and discovered that an 'ambulance' and two drivers were temporarily based there. The 'ambulance' is a bakki (pick-up truck) with a canopy over the rear space with a mattress on the floor. It serves four clinics, the furthest away being four hours from the hospital at Gobabis, so an eight hour wait if the ambulance is at the hospital. The reason it was at Otjimanangombe was that there was a shortage of vehicles due to break downs and our clinic was in the middle. The 'proper' ambulance that the Foundation donated was out of service due to hitting a cow in the south of the region.

So for the next four weeks we got into our routine, with me taking N\$4 from the patients for treatment, and issuing voucher receipts to those who can afford it and Linda assisting clinic nurses Linear and Frieda. At the weekends we travelled to Gobabis to pick up provisions and relax at the Die Dam Lodge.

On Monday mornings, the clinic can get very busy with patients turning up in bakkis, donkey carts or hitch hiking from all directions. On one particular morning, the patient's wait was a bit long as two patients with injuries from a fight were being treated as well as a young lad who was pushed against a barbed wire fence by a cow. One day a heavily pregnant San Bushman lady came to the clinic and her documents stated she was 64 years old which caused a bit of consternation at the clinic. A call was made to the hospital in Gobabis and it was advised that she should come in to have a scan the next day. The following day she arrived at the clinic with a couple of friends to wait for the ambulance. By lunch time she was getting bored, so they all went to the back of the clinic and crawled under the fence and made their way to the bar where they proceeded to spend all the money that had been given to them for food. When the ambulance arrived, it drove to the bar and Sister Linear got her into the ambulance. Suffice to say that if she was 64 she would have gone down in the annals of medical history, but more likely an error had been made on her identity card.



Lin with a baby to be vaccinated.

Lin with 'Veri' and Sister Linear Tomas

On another occasion, at around mid-morning a San Bushman family came in with two children, the adults and one of the children tested positive for malaria. While they waited for the ambulance which did not arrive until late afternoon, one of the adults and the child were given medication and IV fluids. They spent a day in hospital and then released with medication.

While, we were at the clinic, there were two serious car accidents on the gravel roads which need to be driven with care. Sister Linear and the ambulance were called to an accident at least an hour away from the clinic where a bakki had turned over, killing two people and badly injuring two more including the driver who was drunk.

During our last weekend in Gobabis on Saturday 14 March, our world started to implode, with only two cases of coronavirus in Namibia, the Namibian Government announced a State of Emergency and that the Independence Day celebrations on 21 March had been cancelled and that flights to and from

Windhoek by Ethiopian Airlines, Qatar and flights to Germany had been cancelled for 30 days. In the UK there were 1,140 cases which were increasing daily and the London Marathon was cancelled until 4 October. The next day the BBC announced that those over 70 would be asked to self isolate up to 12 weeks. Our thoughts were that we might as well stay in Namibia if things did not get worse. The same day the Namibian Ministry of Education announced that all schools would close up to 14 April. When we returned to Otjimanangombe the hostel children were already leaving to go back to their homesteads and everywhere became very quiet.



The children from the hostel getting a lift home.

On Monday 16 March, we received a call from Kate Airey, the British High Commissioner in Windhoek, enquiring on our welfare and if we were continuing with our trip which we confirmed we were. She advised us that if we were asked to leave and we declined our travel insurance may no longer be valid. The following day, Kate rang again to tell us that the Foreign Office had advised against any non essential travel. Later, David Cartwright, a friend and Managing Director of ATI our travel company in Namibia rang to advise us of the situation. Reluctantly, we decided that we had no choice but to return home.

During the next couple of days we concluded our work at Otjimanangombe, and on Thursday 19 March we return to Windhoek after saying our goodbyes at the clinic where everybody was sad to see us leave. On arrival in Windhoek, we went straight to the Ethiopian Airlines office and they booked us on a flight on Sunday 22 March via Johannesburg. The initial flight to Jo'burg would be with Air Namibia at 16.35. Job done we thought now we can relax!

In order that we did not have to stay in Windhoek all weekend, we booked a couple of nights at the Elegant Farm Guesthouse just out side Okahandja, about an hour way. After a relaxing couple of days, we returned to Windhoek and Gehas drove us to the airport arriving in plenty of time for the flight and said our goodbyes. We went into the departure hall and shrinkwrapped our cases and turned the corner to the check-in desks to see on the screens 'FLIGHT CANCELLED'. So there we were, no flight and no car! We finally managed to contact Gehas and he came back to collect us and we went back to the Rivendell Guesthouse to make another plan.

On Monday morning, we went straight back to Ethiopian Airlines office, just as they were closing up because of the fear of catching the Coronavirus. We persuaded them to let us in and they re-booked us on another flight on the following day, again with Air Namibia to Gaborone in Botswana. That evening, Kate rang as David Cartwright had told her of our plans. She strongly advised us not to fly to Botswana as the situation had changed and we would be sent back to Namibia and then possibly quarantined. She added that she was working on a plan to repatriate us and other Britons, but in the meantime she said she would try and get us on a German repatriation flight, but this did not materialise as we were right down the pecking order as EU citizens were being given priority.

So we spent the next few days at the Rivendell Guesthouse, with guests arriving, all looking for flights. Germans, Swiss and fellow Britons all getting in touch with their embassies or High Commissions. KLM flew in twice and Lufthansa carried out a number of flights to repatriate Dutch and German citizens respectively. Each day we would receive a visit from David (ATI) and a phone call from Kate advising that

something was being arranged. On Wednesday 25 March, the Namibian Government announced that the Khomas region including Windhoek, and the Erongo region would be locked down as from midnight on 27 March. At that point we made a decision that we would drive to Oshivelo, which we would have to do, to get out before the start of the lock down. Kate rang again and strongly advised us not to go north and that a repatriation flight was on the cards, so we decided to take her advice.

On Friday 27 March, we received a phone call from Kate to advise that the flight was on and that we had to be ready to leave at 06.00 am the next morning. As dawn was approaching and the sun coming up, we were picked up by a bus with the Union Jack emblazoned on the side from our guesthouse and then proceeded to drive round Windhoek picking up other Brits, finally liaising with another bus at the High Commissioners residence to await a phone call advising us that the authorities had opened the airport for us. We then proceeded in convoy with a British High Commission diplomatic car in front. We felt very emotional as we were driven to the airport to be leaving our friends and our projects behind. When we arrived at the airport it was completely deserted. In the departure area, the High Commission staff and David (ATI) weighed our bags and we paid our fare for the first leg of the flight. A Westair plane had been chartered to take us to a neighbouring country (for diplomatic reasons it is not named). With the check-in finalised we sat in the departure lounge and we were not allowed to board until it was advised that the Ethiopian Airlines flight had left Victoria Falls. Once this information had been received, we and 46 others boarded the plane and flew to our first destination.



Boarding the Westair charter flight in Windhoek on the first leg of our journey. (Photo: David Cartwright, ATI)



Boarding the Ethiopian Airlines flight for the second leg of our journey

The High Commissioner had negotiated with its government that we could land there and when we arrived we were not allowed in the terminal, but stayed on the plane until the Addis Ababa flight arrived. Meanwhile, we re-tagged our luggage and paid for the Addis flight and onward to London by credit card on the tarmac. We walked across the tarmac to the Addis flight and arrived there at 21.45. It was rather chaotic when we arrived as there was no one to meet us and after about 30 mins we found someone to help us and get us out of the airport. The Skyline Hotel where we were supposed to go was full so we were moved to the Debre Damo Hotel, which was okay, but a bit basic and we stayed two nights. During our stay we were not allowed out of the hotel, so spent our days watching the world go by and chatting to our fellow travellers. On the last night a girl involved with Rhino and Vulture conservation and another girl who was at the Nankuse Foundation gave a talk on their experiences followed by Linda who gave a talk about the Foundation and received some wonderful donations and more as we left the plane in London. Luckily a friend offered to drive us home and we finally arrived in

West Mersea at 20.00 on Monday evening. So with some sadness we found ourselves back home after only doing half our trip and not getting to Oshivelo.

Our grateful thanks go to Kate Airey, the British High Commissioner and her team and David Cartwright (ATI) for getting us home safely and to our fellow travellers for their companionship and generosity. Donations at the hotel and on the plane totalled ZAR/N\$5,078, £20 sterling and 6 US dollars which equated to about £260.

Multi-purpose hall

As previously reported, this is our current project at Omuhaturua Primary School and Hostel in Otjimanangombe. There has been some progress since our last visit in October, but not as much as we had hoped. This was mainly due to the long break over Christmas and then our contractor, Riaan losing his mother meaning that he was off-site organising the funeral. Work was due to start at the beginning of April, but this did not happen due to the Coronavirus restrictions. The work schedule and completion date will have to be reviewed once these are lifted

The provision of a borehole for Eiseb Primary School and Hostel and the state clinic.

When we left Namibia last November, our main concern was the chance of drilling a dry borehole and the additional costs it would incur. These concerns were voiced to the Omaheke's regional office by Mrs Nelago Kasuto, the Managing Director of Komeho our Namibian partner ngo and on 9 March we went to a meeting at the office with the Governor, Mr Festus Utiele and his special adviser, Pijoo Nangante. There we expressed our misgivings over the borehole drilling, which led them to arrange a meeting for us with Mr G. van Niekerk of Van Niekerk Drilling, an hour later at the office. The meeting was very fruitful and he agreed to give us a price with him giving the guarantee to find water and with him taking the risk of drilling a dry borehole which was encouraging. The following Thursday we drove to Eiseb Primary School, which took two hours on a gravel road, to carry out an inspection of our projects there and advise Mr Marenga, the headmaster and his staff on the borehole progress. The next Saturday, we met with another drilling contractor, Mr Booysen, who had drilled the borehole for the police station at Eiseb. Although he would not give us a guarantee price, he was 98% sure of finding water. So we now await their quotations and we will proceed from there.

An ambulance for Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic



In 2008, the Foundation donated a state of the art ambulance to the Omaheke Regional Health Ministry and this was based at Epukiro Clinic some 60 kms from Otjimanangombe. Now twelve years later it is coming to the end of its operational life not being helped by recently being in collision with a cow. So with a critical shortage of 'proper' ambulances in the region, the Foundation has decided to provide another ambulance to be based this time at the recently extended Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic. This is the project that we are currently fundraising for.

Left: The type of ambulance the Foundation hope to provide for the clinic.

Good Hope Primary School, Okovimburu

While we were at Otjimanangombe, we visited the Good Hope Primary School at Okovimburu to see the two large industrial electrical cooking pots in the hostel kitchen, that were funded by St Mary's Senior School for Girls in Colchester. We were pleased to see that the pots were working satisfactorily and we stayed on to see lunch being served. The girls at St Mary's continue to fundraise for us and are eager to undertake another project at the school.



The Hostel children at Good Hope Primary School enjoying their lunch which was cooked using electric pots provided by St Mary's Senior School for Girls, Colchester.

LifeLine Clinic, Epukiro



This is a private clinic around 45 mins drive from Otjimanangombe and is run by the Nankuse Foundation and caters primarily for the local San bushman community. One of its claims to fame was that it was sponsored by Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt when they were a couple. We have visited this clinic for many years and try to get there when they have their mother and child feeding days where we help serve the food. The clinic hosts volunteers and usually a doctor on a short term secondment. This time there was no doctor but they had three volunteers, a girl from Denmark with a Masters in Molecular Biology, one from High School in Switzerland and another Elinor from Cardiff University studying medicine and doing her elective at the clinic. Once all the meals had been served we donated some knitted blankets to those who were most needy which had been knitted by our local community in

Mothers and children having their meal at LifeLine Clinic



Elinor, on the left, and the two other volunteers with the blankets.

The ladies with their blankets

More donations of blankets to the San Bushman communities

On Wednesday 11 March, we visited two San Bushman communities with Veritjimue Mujoro (Veri for short) who works for COHENA a charity funded by the Global Fund to combat TB and she is based at the clinic. She works mostly with the San who are susceptible to TB and she took us to two settlements where she would take sputum samples to send to Gobabis hospital for analysis. Firstly, we visited Okaturua and then drove on to Otjimate, and at both settlements we handed out blankets.



'Veri' and a San recipient of a blanket at Okaturua



Left: 'Veri' taking sputum samples from the San at Otjimate. Right: Blankets being donated at Otjimate.

And there s more!

We reported in the last newsletter that we had twenty-eight dustbin bags of knitted items on the high seas on the way to Namibia in a Namibian High Commission container. These arrived just before we did in February and were delivered to Komeho's office in Windhoek, having been transferred to large cardboard boxes. The plan was to transport them to a farm near Otavi where we would pick them for distribution when we went to Oshivelo. Obviously this did not happen and we will distribute them on our next visit.

Fundraising Namibian style



Omuhaturua Primary School's fundraising stall beside the road at Otjimanangombe.

This year Omuhaturua Primary School and Hostel is celebrating its twentieth anniversary. Currently, it is planned to hold celebrations on 30/31 October to include the opening of the Multi-purpose Hall with Government Ministers in attendance. Obviously, this is now subject to the coronavirus situation.

The school and hostel board have given themselves the task of raising N\$50,000 to pay for refreshments and other items for the celebrations and they have set about fundraising. This has so far included a road side stall selling cooked meat and fat cakes and much to the amusement of the school children an evening where the male hostel workers dressed up as Herero ladies and did a fashion show. The children were charged N\$2 to attend this hilarious event. Unfortunately there were about 20 children who did not have N\$2 and we paid for them to come in to what turned out to be a very successful evening.



The male hostel workers dressed up as Herero ladies.

Fund raising UK style

Shop Collections

We held our final shop collection of 2019 at the West Mersea Tesco where we raised £260.17. Many thanks to Nicky, Shirley, Sandra and Eilish for their help

Indian Lunch



The Foundation again held its ever popular annual charity lunch at Titash Indian Restaurant in West Mersea. It was held on Sunday 2 February and the restaurant was packed with friends, family and supporters and a total of £1,716 was raised. This included a raffle, and an auction featuring the Lion's Beach Hut for a day and one of the 'Strood poppies' donated by Chrissie Westgate

After an excellent meal provided by Dil and his staff, the diners were updated by Trustee Roger Bullen on the Foundation's current project which is a multi-purpose hall at the Omuhaturua Primary School Hostel at Otjimanangombe which is currently being built. The Foundation's next project will be to provide a borehole for Eiseb Primary School and hostel and the local state clinic.

They are currently sharing a community borehole which does not have sufficient capacity which is causing conflict. There are a number of technical issues to be resolved, but once these are sorted, the project will proceed.

An appeal for donations

In common with other charities, the Catherine Bullen Foundation is having to suspend its fundraising activities during the period of Government restrictions and until it is safe for our volunteers to participate again.

It would be very much appreciated especially at this time, if you feel you could support us with a donation for our projects in Namibia. As we are a UK charity working overseas we are not eligible for a British Government grants which were recently announced.

It can be made on line on our website www.namibia-aid.org.uk through 'virginmoneygiving' or 'Paypal'.

By sending a cheque made out to the Foundation to 15 Colchester Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, CO5 8RS

By bank transfer to:

Account Name: The Catherine Bullen Foundation Registered Number – 1110516

Sort Code: 20-22-67

Account No: 53717690

Thank you and stay safe.

Regular giving

Some of our donors have made a more formal arrangement by setting up a standing order to donate a regular monthly or yearly sum. If you would like to support us in this way, please use the above banking details so that you can set it up.

Presentations

The Foundation is pleased to give presentations to groups and clubs on its work during the day or evenings. In January we gave talks to the Halstead Rotary Club and the Activ8 club. While we were in Namibia, Chrissie and Colin Westgate kindly gave presentations to the Colchester Probus Club and Colchester Photographic Club on their visit to Namibia with donations coming to the Foundation.

Obviously this is now on hold due to the coronavirus situation.

Forthcoming Events

At the date of going to press, we have the following events planned. Due to the coronavirus, events and shop collections have been cancelled up to mid June 2020 and may be beyond that depending on how things develop.

If you would like to organise an event in support of the Foundation, please let us know. We will add events to our list on the website and in the next newsletter.

Sunday 21 June 2020

Blackwater Show – China smashing

Saturday 25 July 2020

Shop Collection - Manningtree Co-op

Sunday 2 August 2020

Five Parishes Show – China smashing

Saturday 8 August 2020

Mersea Lions Summer Show – China Smashing

Saturday 15 August 2020

Shop collection – Frinton Triangle (to be confirmed)

Saturday 22 August 2020

Shop Collection – Brightlingsea Co-op

Sunday 30 August 2020

Clacton Car Show – China smashing (to be confirmed)

Saturday 5 September 2020

Shop collection – Stanway Co-op

Sunday 6 September 2020

Brightlingsea Scout Car Show – China smashing

Seafood Supper, Company Shed, West Mersea – date to be advised.

Saturday 5 December 2020

Shop collection – West Mersea Tesco

Saturday 12 December 2020

Shop collection – West Mersea Co-op

Make a difference!

The Catherine Bullen Foundation is working with local communities to help build and nurture a new life for the people in rural Namibia. Because we are a small charity, our overheads are small and are personally covered by the trustees, so that every single penny donated to us goes to the intended project, with spending strictly monitored by the UK trustees and their ngo partner in Namibia. All visits to Namibia are self-financed and no charitable funds are used for this purpose. Please help us make a difference by making a donation, either on line at www.namibia-aid.org.uk or sending it to the address below.

How to contact us

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Donation/Gift Aid Declaration

(The Catherine Bullen Foundation – Registered Charity No. 1110516)

Details of donor

Title..... Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....
.....
.....

Post Code.....

Signature.....

Date.....

I want the charity to treat

*the enclosed donation of £..... as a Gift Aid donation

*the donation(s) of £..... which I made on/..../..... as (a) Gift Aid donation(s)

**delete as appropriate*

**You must pay an amount of Income and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year.
(currently 25p for each £1 you give).**