

THE BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL NEWSLETTER

registered charity no 1064469

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE APPEAL

The Bansang Hospital Appeal was formed in 1992 by Anita Smith. Anita had witnessed at first hand the lack of medical facilities in The Gambia and was determined to do whatever she could to help improve the standard of medical care in the country and in particular at the Bansang hospital. The Gambia has two major hospitals, one in the capital Banjul and the other in Bansang, plus a third that was recently opened at Farafenni on the North bank of the river Gambia.

Bansang hospital is 200 miles, by road, from the capital city Banjul, and serves 600,000 people with only 160 beds. It deals predominantly with serious conditions, as it is not usual in Africa to go to hospital with minor ailments. Patients admitted are all in need suffering from, burns, malnutrition, malaria, meningitis, pneumonia, TB, anaemia, snakebite and dysentery to name but a few. Cross-infection is a further major hazard that complicates the already complex conditions experienced by all at the hospital.

In 1992 the hospital's facilities were in a desperate state and the following is just a snapshot of the appalling conditions witnessed on my very first visit.

- * Desperate overcrowding with landings, corridors and hallways used as makeshift wards.
- * Inadequate lighting, excessive heat and overpowering smells mixed with the total sense of despair.
- * Totally inadequate operating theatre, pathology lab, A & E a room with nothing in it, an appalling sluice and sterilisation room, no blood bank, no mortuary and an acute shortage of nursing staff.
- * One hundred and twenty desperately sick children packed three to a bed into forty old beds with no bed linen and lying on contaminated foam mattresses.
- * The labour ward where four women would give birth in a squalid 12ft square room with very limited medical equipment, not even running water was available..
- * No pain relief or dressings to treat tragic burns victims.

The Bansang Hospital Appeal, over the years since 1992, has made real progress and its impact has been felt across all departments. Volunteers from the UK, working in the most hostile environment of heat and humidity they have completed an extension to the children's ward, a complete refurbishment of the maternity ward and installed a body refrigeration unit and a blood bank. They have also carried out major refurbishment projects to many other departments. Nearly all beds and mattresses have now been replaced.

The twenty five containers sent to date have been packed with vast quantities of vital medical equipment: oxygenator=s, resuscitation equipment, incubators, operating theatre equipment, patient trolleys, delivery beds, uniforms, bed linen, ward furniture, syringes, drip stands, tons of books, sewing machines, generators etc. in fact the list is endless.

BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL IN ACTION

The Appeal continues to be active in the following ways:

- * Purchasing vital life saving medical equipment and medications.
 - * Obtaining redundant medical equipment from hospitals and medical clinics across the UK.
 - * Raising awareness of the hospitals problems with lectures and presentations to hospitals, schools, church groups, Rotarians, businesses, in fact any where that the message can be effectively delivered.
- SOME OF BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEALS MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS**
- * Kettering General Hospital were officially twinned with the Bansang Hospital during 1999.
 - * Wellingborough Junior School raised in excess of ,2,500.00 to fund an infant incubator and an

- oxygen concentrator. An additional ,2,300.00 has since been raised by the Senior School.
- * The British High Commission have funded the purchase of and installation of an incinerator.
 - * August >97 - Documentary filmed by Anglia TV and transmitted to the Anglia TV region September >97 and repeated May >98.
 - * Major donations of medical equipment from the following hospitals: Kettering General, Northampton General, St Marys Kettering, Isebrook Wellingborough, St Crispin's Northampton, St James' Leeds, Colchester General, the Three Shires Northampton and the Woodlands Hospital Kettering..
 - * Manfield Hospital donated a body refrigeration unit, Bedford Refrigeration provided an engineer to dismantle it and travel to The Gambia to install it. Huxloe Inner Wheel, Kettering Branch, paid the engineer's fare.
 - * The distributors of Forever Living Products have funded the temporary extension and re-furbishment of the Children's Ward.
 - * Over 60 volunteers have visited Bansang at their own expense to offer their specialist knowledge in all areas to include surgeons, doctors, nurses, midwives, construction engineers and computer technicians.
 - * Staff in the Xray department at KGH funded the refurbishment of the labour ward that included new showers, toilets, electrics and sewer=s.
 - * All Saints School, Northampton. Fund the employment of Wopa, a children=s play nurse attendant. There continuous fund raising efforts have raised a total in excess of ,6,0000.00.
 - * Twenty five, 20 foot and two, 40 foot containers full of equipment, drugs and medication have been sent to The Gambia since 1992. Average cost to ship a container is ,1,750.00!
 - * Technical and construction projects are carried out by a team of UK volunteers led by Rae Davies from Wales. This group have worked tirelessly on behalf of the hospital and community since 1998.
 - * Northampton Rotary funded the purchase of an ,8,000.00 autoclave. The presentation ceremony was attended by The Gambian High Commissioner, Mr John P Bojang.
 - * Barclaycard continue to donated and install computer equipment. A computer network within the hospital and nursing school has dramatically improved their efficiency and effectiveness.
 - * British Pest Control Association sponsored and implemented a very successful vermin control program to eliminate a huge infestation of rats and cockroaches from within the hospital and grounds.

THE WORK OF Dr PETER McCORMICK ON BEHALF OF THE APPEAL

Dr Peter McCormick, a retired Kettering GP, became interested in the work of the Appeal in 1997. Peter spent a total of seven months at the hospital split into two separate visits. In preparation for his visits he completed a three month tropical medicine course at Liverpool University. Following his final visit to the hospital he was able to produce a most detailed and comprehensive report that identified the most urgent and pressing needs of the paediatric department. The Appeal was able to respond in full to his recommendations and assisted in the implementation and financing of the patient care procedures that were advised, many of which have proved to be life saving. One particular procedure that Peter was able to implement during his last visit dramatically reduced the alarming fatality rate from malaria. The following malaria season a reduction of deaths from 17% to 11% of admissions for malarial conditions were recorded. Whilst there may have been other additional factors which contributed to this decrease, the Appeal believes that his procedure was central to these remarkable results. Another initiative that Peter carried out was the creation of a small laboratory that significantly improved the diagnostic procedures used to identify the many complex infections and disease=s existing on the wards. Peter continues to be the Chief Medical Adviser for the Appeal. His love of paediatrics has since taken him to the Cameroon & Ghana.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP THE APPEAL?

We constantly require more funds, resources and expertise to maintain this extremely active Appeal and any show of support would be extremely welcome. If you would like to know more about the Bansang Hospital Appeal or feel you can help in any way please contact:

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