

BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2008

<http://www.bansanghospitalappeal.com>

Charity No. 1064469

KETTERING AND FAJARA ROTARIES **CHILDRENS UNIT**

This 80 bed unit is now completely equipped thanks to The Rotary Clubs of Kettering and Fajara who masterminded the Rotary International Matching Grant. The final consignment was loaded onto "The Truck" and driven to Bansang by Bruce Lamford of Kettering Rotary thus fulfilling an ambition of his. The official handing over from the Rotarians to the hospital was a momentous day. The Rotarians from Fajara came up with Jim Wadda a past President, and also our 'Jim'll Fix It' who kindly acted as Master of Ceremonies for the day. Visiting dignitaries included the British High Commissioner, Phil Sinkson OBE and his wife Clare, representatives from The Ministry of Health, Bansang's MP, The Alkalo (The Chief of Bansang Town), the Governor for the Central River Division, and many representatives from other villages. Gambian TV filmed the handover along with the fanfares and congratulations. We held a minutes silence in memory of John Idell who died suddenly in November 2007. John from Kettering had spent 5 years on the paperwork for this project, which was mountainous and extremely detailed. Without his meticulous attitude I would suggest the Unit would never have been built. Equipping the unit cost £45,634.60. The building of the Unit was funded by all you wonderful people fundraising and donating with such enthusiasm and caring.

THE MITIE HOUSE – Staff Accommodation

As I left The Gambia in December, I was able to say Hi/Bye in the airport to a 3 man MITIE team of plumbers and electricians heading to Bansang. The conversion of the old Colonial house into staff accommodation is proving to be a challenge. MITIE want to ensure the building has as many modern and sustainable properties as possible in such a hostile environment. The sheer logistics and complexities of working in Bansang are overwhelming. Opening the 40ft container and seeing the mass of equipment; water tanks, pumps, pipes, sewage pipes and electrical items, which had been so generously donated by companies from within the MITIE group, and despite all my years of experience in Bansang, I did not realise the difficulties the men were going to have to overcome. Difficulties which included trying to eject the deadly snakes found in the surrounding ground, and in the attic! Our thanks again to all those volunteers/specialists who are giving of their own time to work on this project...

Recently I attended a Sportsman's Dinner with Barry McGuigan as guest speaker. This was organised by MITIE as part of their ongoing fundraising for the MITIE House. I am delighted to report it was a rousing success and has probably raised around £21,000.

NORWICH ROTARY

Preparations are well underway for a specialist unit for burns patients. As a result of Norwich Rotary's enthusiastic fundraising Dr Bill Askew, a Northampton GP and a former volunteer from 1997, will be going out in June to open the unit. Bill has undertaken research into dressings, feeding, and infection control, in fact everything concerning burns and how best to treat patients in Bansang's restricted environment.

UK-GSERS

My trip in January was timed to coincide with the arrival of the Geezers. Again, ever gluttons for punishment, they have ridden 7 Honda C90 scooters from Plymouth to Banjul. This time the story that will go down in Geezer history is The Story of the Minefield! Camping on one is never a good idea!! Being told you are in the middle of one when answering the call of nature behind a tree is also a tad discombobulating! Thankfully all arrived in Bansang safely. Their first delivery of scooters is still in full working order. The second delivery will be used in different areas such as, visiting HIV/AIDS patients, pregnant mothers at high risk, and rehabilitation work with the disabled, blind and those with mental health problems most of whom would never come into the hospital. While they were in Bansang they befriended Manseur, a 10-year-old boy, who was terribly disfigured in a fire. His survival was a miracle but his severe disfigurement and physical injuries will make life very difficult for him. The Geezers will sponsor all of his needs, including his schooling, and the building of a compound (one room extension) beside his uncle's home. This will enable Manseur to live in a family environment.

HAPPY MEN

Clive Bradley who is the MD of Dove Nest Group, a people consultancy company, and Michael Costello, a business psychologist, drove 'Bert' a Landover 1.10 Defender station wagon, from the Lake District to Bansang. This will enable the trainee SEN nurses to be transported to do their practical elective work in bush clinics. Then Michael spent one day with 5 key members of staff. His remit was to find ways to raise staff morale and create a sense of community and purpose. What was achieved in those few hours was nothing short of amazing. The 5, now known as The Task Force, are leading the staff in community projects for the hospital, engendering a sense of pride and team spirit. We have handed over a building that will be The Task Force base and community centre. It is now up and running as the first staff canteen ever.

BARCLAYCARD SERVO

Stewart Robinson and his son Daniel plus Steve Clist returned to Bansang to install a Meridian internal telephone system linking the entire campus. Bansang Hospital has become the first in The Gambia to have an internal communication system. It was a big project involving all the maintenance team and because of time constraints they were working well into the night. Up until now, to contact a doctor in an emergency at night would require somebody to run to their compound and as much as 20 minutes could be lost. Emergency test results can now be a phone call away, the running of the hospital has become much more efficient.

AMPUTEES

Two amputees, Demba and Chernon, will be arriving in the UK in April, to attend the Northampton Prosthetic Limb Centre, who have once again kindly volunteered their services while The Bansang Appeal will fund all the components. We are so grateful for all this help as The Gambia has no prosthetists.

Demba and Chernon are following in the footsteps of Alhagie and Mariama, both of whom received new limbs and returned home to successful lives. Alhagie holds a responsible job at the hospital, and has married with a young son, and Mariama is in her final year at school and will then pursue her career in nursing attached to the hospital. The stigma attached to disabled people in The Gambia had previously prevented them from working and living normal lives. Bansang Hospital is showing that amputees can be integrated and become self-sufficient individuals.

Demba is working in the records office and is very good with the computers. His Elephantiasis leg was amputated and he is using a badly fitting prosthetic limb that was donated to the Limb Centre in Banjul, which has now closed down. Chernon is an interpreter and as there are 8 tribal languages he is a vital link between the doctor and the patient.

YATAM

Youths Against Tuberculosis and Malaria. My cousin Christine Norman visited Bansang with me in November 2007 and was extremely impressed with a group of volunteers who were tackling these diseases. They give talks in schools encouraging young people to take responsibility for their environment. They use role-play, which the children love, to show them how small measures can prevent disease; simple ideas i.e. keeping rubbish in one place by using oil drums cut in half and filling in potholes to prevent malaria larvae breeding. Christine will be offering them continued support and backing. This kind of initiative helps to reduce the number of patients needing medical treatment.

THE FEMALE WARD

For 70 years female patients have had to climb two steep flights of stairs, or be carried very precariously on stretchers after operations. The ward is depressing for both staff and patients; it is a nightmare of overflowing toilets, broken windows and dangerous electrics. We must remember that in Gambian society a woman is the matriarchal focal point of the family and, if she dies research shows that it could affect an average of 30

people. I have felt for a long time that it was imperative we improved this area of the hospital. To this end the old Children's ward has been completely gutted and rebuilt to a most impressive standard. It will have 48 beds both medical and surgical. I was completely overwhelmed by the transformation taking place. The ward is all on ground level, light and modern, an inspiring working environment for the staff and a welcoming place of healing and comfort for the patients. A container left in March with brand new beds and equipment and it will be a great relief to both staff and patients when the ward is opened at the end of April.

THINGS TO COME

The Guernsey Retired Ambulances to Africa will be bringing two ambulances and a boat across the Sahara!! These will be received at Bansang and used 35kms away at the medical clinic Basse There, Child Advocacy International whose aim is to reduce maternal and child deaths, will train traditional birth attendants to recognise or prevent emergency situations arising and arrange transport to Bansang Hospital. The boat will be used as a river ambulance.

Our grateful thanks to these volunteers who are organising the whole project and the training programme which includes paramedics and mechanics going out to The Gambia.

26TH April 2008 At The Lighthouse Theatre based at Kettering Leisure Village there will be a fundraising performance by the Kettering Centre of the London College of Music & Media, entitled 'In Harmony Together' Proceeds will be split between The Bansang Hospital Appeal and The Cransley Hospice. This will be a chance to see Kettering's brand new theatre. Tickets from Lighthouse Kettering Conference Centre 01536 414141

Sunday 15th June 2008

At Sharnbrook Theatre, Beds, a delightful converted old mill, a professional group will be staging 'Back to Broadway' a West End Performance of songs from the shows. Tickets are £15, to include a glass of wine, available from Anita Smith 01933 679001

THANKYOU

To my friend Kath Harvey who after typing my letters for 16 years at last made it out to Bansang with me last November. She undertook to train Kumba as a Play Therapist, and to show Kumba how to take charge of Julie's Playroom. Along with helping me she has now been able to put faces to names, and the layout of the hospital, all of which will be helpful back in the UK.

I personally send my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the appeal. Your continued caring and generosity helps us to continue to support and sustain this wonderful hospital and its hard working dedicated staff who, despite all the hardships always give one hundred percent to the welfare of the patients.

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