

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary

Mpongwe, October – December 2008

The Prologue

Dear Friends

As you know, we will shortly be flying out to Mpongwe Mission Hospital in the Copperbelt of Zambia. Because electricity and internet connections will be variable we plan to send a short weekly e-diary to friends who have expressed an interest in our work and travel. This then is the Prologue!

On Monday Simon and Abigail will be flying with British Airways. Three weeks later, Sue and Oliver fly out with four others from St Cleers chapel {Phil, Geoff, Pete and Netty}, who are planning to renovate and repair the Hospital kitchen and other projects to support the surrounding community. We all return to the UK on December 6th.

British Airways have been very helpful in allowing each adult to take an extra suitcase of luggage out to Zambia {and not to bring it back again!}. Simon & Abi have packed 19kg of surgical and medical equipment – things that we are no longer permitted to use in the UK due to Health & Safety regulations, but that are perfectly serviceable and cleansable, and may make the difference between life & death in Africa.

We are very grateful to Oaklands Surgery and Yeovil District Hospital for providing this equipment. We are also grateful to consultant colleagues at YDH for allowing Simon to spend the last three weeks brushing up on long-forgotten skills in Anaesthesia, Orthopaedic Trauma and Caesarian Sections in preparation for working at Mpongwe.

Tony Pryce Sports store of Yeovil have very generously donated and discounted six footballs and a pump for us to take. Abi's friends have given all manner of cuddly toys to take to the Children's Ward {fewer Infection Control issues in Zambia!}. And Mr Egger, her teacher, has very helpfully given her a whole stack of Homework to cover the Half-Term that she will miss. Sue plans to bring out another consignment of goodies with her when she comes.

Points for prayer:

- travelling safety for Simon & Abigail this week
- health and safety whilst we are there
- for Sue and Ollie left behind
- for new friends and colleagues we will meet in Zambia

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 1

Dear Friends

Abigail and I are now safely arrived at Mpongwe. The BA flight was seamless, and after the requisite officialdom of being given a 28 day visa. The Customs officer advised us that we will need to go to Ndola {about an hour and a half away} to extend our visas, so we will hopefully be able to do this when we collect Sue and Ollie from Ndola Airport.

We were met by Urban Wijk {pronounced Veeck}, a Swedish missionary who took full advantage of the situation, uttering the immortal line: "Dr Bonnington, I presume?" After exchanging US Dollars for Zambia Kwacha {currently about K6600 to £1} we did an extensive grocery shop in a local Mall in Lusaka {where they DO take Mastercard}. Marmite is stocked, Weetabix is not, although Urban says he has seen it somewhere, and then we were headed north towards the Copperbelt along a very straight tarmac road.

Police Roadblocks were frequent, but we were simply waved through. Freight hauliers pay a Levy as they cross from one District to another – perhaps I should suggest that to The Home Secretary?? After just over three hours we turned off onto the dirt road to take the short route to Mpongwe. When the rains start this becomes a mud-rink and is simply not driveable, so the longer all-tarmac route must be taken. The ruts and potholes were slightly bone jarring – though using a travel-pillow did protect my neck from the worst of the impacts. 50 mins later saw us at the Hospital.

Urban's wife Ulrika had organised a late lunch for us – very welcome it was too! Abi had seconds. And demolished two large tomatoes. She is now out playing football and skipping with the Wijk children and some of Mr Tuesday Musaka's clan. And yes, Mummy, she has got sun cream on!

At the Wijk's I met Dr Goran, an elderly Swedish Doc who normally works two days a week here. At 80 odd I reckon that's a fair work schedule! He tells me that next week it is just me and him to run the Hospital as the other two Doctors will both be away. Nothing like in-at-the-deep-end! He will show me around tomorrow.

When we unpacked, some of the food had suffered on the road. Nectarines are distinctly squashy and the bananas are nicely blackening. Two loaves of bread have a strange polygonal shape – but will doubtless taste the same! Glad I didn't buy any eggs... The bottles of water were hot enough to wash with, I'll let them cool down before putting them in the fridge.

We are temporarily staying at the small Agape Guest House that friends from St Cleers helped to complete last year. The main Guest House has just had a new tile floor laid, so we will move there when the glue fumes have cleared. Mossie nets are up, water {pretty low pressure so the shower will be fun later} and electricity are both working, which is nice. Just behind the hut are the freshly dug footings for the new Baptist Church – hopefully there will be no Benidorm-esque cement mixers starting up at the crack of dawn tomorrow...

Right, I'll update you when we have done something useful around the place.

Points for prayer:

- Abigail making new friends, and sharing Home Schooling with Axel Wijk {6}
- Simon as he starts to work at the Hospital later this week.

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



p.s. the photo with Abi & the puppies is at Mr Musaka's outhouse, NOT where we are staying!

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 2

Dear Friends

We have now found our feet a little and settling into a different pattern and pace of life. It is hot and dusty just before the rainy season – though we had a brief rain and hail shower (hail the size of peas) this afternoon. All evidence of moisture has now evaporated as the sun beats down once more. Abi and I are tolerating the heat well – I'm glad I brought my hat!

We await the result of the Zambian elections – Mr Banda (to work towards reform and improvement of the country) or Mr Sata, suspected to be a close friend of Mr Mugabe and there are concerns that life might be more difficult if he is elected. There have been cases of disenfranchised voters – Polling Cards not arriving, names not on lists at polling stations etc. But no trouble has been heard. The vote looks to be very tight. With most of the constituencies returned there are currently barely 25,000 votes separating the leading parties.

I started work properly in the Hospital on Friday – a handover meeting at 8, then a Ward Round with Dr Okoko. We saw 19 patients on Female Ward, 6 have known HIV. One had had a hysterectomy 3d ago and now looks like she might be septic. (It's going to be slightly technical medicine here, sorry) FBC and differential are possible tests to do here, as is ESR and Blood Film for malaria. Urea and Electrolytes, ALT are do-able but K⁺ and Na⁺ are not. There are plain film XRs and USS, but no ECG. I asked Dr Okoko if it would be helpful to have one, knowing that Yeovil Surgeries replace old equipment. Yes, he said, but then we would need to know what to do with the findings. Very fair comment! Blood transfusions are given below Hb of 5, and below 6 if symptomatic. There appears to be reasonable supplies of needles, cannulae, fluids etc, but few Nurses, so the level of care given appears not to be particularly high. Notes are somewhat scrappy and disorganised, as are X-rays, which are stored in one pile, but eventually you can locate the right pieces for each patient.



After that I went to Drs OPD and met Dr Mukunta who is a Zambia post-Intern who is here for 3 years – it was his 1st Anniversary at the Hospital. Sr Ruth and Florence the Clerk were both off to Luanshya today, so Spencer was fetched from the TB ward to translate for me. He is very pleasant and between patients we got chatting about soccer - he plays in a local league. On Sunday afternoon his team plays against the Red Lions. They have no kit, but do have a ball. I shall go to watch if I can. He tells me the Red Lions are a very good team. But assures me that his is too!

In OPD I did a Police Report for a facial injury (meat and drink to me with my nine years of Forensic experience!), helped Dr Mukunta with a circumcision for a very horrid looking foreskin of an HIV +ve male, saw a lady for a BP check {Spencer had to find a Sphyg from somewhere!} and reviewed an old chap with CCF, stopping his Nifedipine, continuing his Frusemide and asking him to come back in 2 weeks. Most patients are first seen by one of the Clinical Officers, who have some diagnostic training beyond normal Nurse training, so equivalent to some of the NHS Nurse Practitioners. The more tricky ones are then sent to the Dr. There are also Medical Assistants who help with Ward work. They have more training than Clinical Officers but are not as qualified as Doctors. The skill levels and excellence of each are variable but they appear to be very keen.

After lunch {once I had re-found Spencer and then the lady with the keys!} I reviewed a healing broken arm, did another Police Report for an assault, and then saw one of the three Dutch Student Nurses who are here for their Elective. She has a temperature and a mild cough and was worried about Malaria even though she is taking tablets. The blood film was clear, which is good.

With no more patients to see, I went to chat to Tuesday about Brian's email about refurbishing the kitchen - tile the floor, paint the walls and provide some fixtures. Godwin, who is the Kitchen Manager, has apparently taken proper measurements and listed the requirements. This has been given to Absolom, to give to Dennis the Procurement Manager, to give to Tuesday. Needless to say, when I saw Tuesday this morning he did not have the list yet! So in the meantime I have paced out the rooms to calculate requirements for tiles and cement, and forwarded details of the broken equipment – oven, cauldron-mixer, freezer and cooling unit for the cold-store, to Phil & Brian to see what parts can be sourced from the UK.

Once the money is through we will be able to order the required supplies, allowing the St Cleers team to crack on with the work when they arrive, rather than spending days trawling round Hardware stores themselves. The Swedish Rotary have helped to fund Gunnar, a carpenter, to come to complete work on another Guest House.

He also has support from his church. He was able to give me costs and addresses for supplies, making the task easier. I believe he is leaving the angle-grinder and diamond blade when he leaves on 12th Nov.

This morning I did a brief Round of Male and Female Wards – the post-op lady is sitting up and smiling, so appears to be improving. The male Nurse who is in charge of Female Ward appears to be very professional in his role, in contrast to some Nurses. This is a matter of great concern for Management. The Hospital is a Mission Hospital, and yet some of the care given does not meet acceptable standards. So Tuesday, Dr Okoko, Dr Mukunta and Sr Ruth, who is the Hospital Matron, are travelling to South Africa next week to learn more about how better care can be provided. Some of it is down to resources – each ward only has one small screen and few curtains between beds, so privacy and dignity during examination is difficult. Whilst they are away I will be working with Dr Goren (as in Erikson) Noren, who is a retired Physician from Sweden here for two months with his wife, also supported by Swedish Rotary and their church.



Meanwhile, Abi continues home-schooling with Axel Wijk, after lessons they are building a tree-house. She also has several African friends and merrily runs off to play with them. Julie, who is in Grade 7, and thus probably 10 years old, is the daughter of Mr Nyirenda, who is one of the Clinical Officers. Oreen, who wrote her a letter last year, is also a regular at our hut. Abi has just lost a tooth today. Tuesday told us that there are no Tooth Fairies in Zambia, which is probably because there are no coins, only paper money. The smallest denomination note I have seen so far is K50, which is worth about 0.75p or 0.38 cents!



We have been to the local market for tomatoes, eggs & onions. This morning we bought Abi two more pairs of shorts (about £2.30 each!) and 500ml of fresh milk. Taking advice from Ulrika Wijk I have 'pasteurised' it – probably too hot as it then smelt like hot milk that Grandma used to make. But it's in the fridge and I'll try some in my tea later. If anyone has any good ideas how to judge when the milk is pasteurised and not scalded, please do email me and let me know!

Avocados are falling from the trees and mangos will be ripening next month, so we are eating very healthily. We've had no health problems, mossie bites fade fast with a little dab of hydrocortisone cream, so we

give thanks for that.

Points for prayer:

- Simon & Dr Noren as they 'hold the fort' this week
- For Tuesday, Dr Okoko, Dr Mukunta and Sr Ruth as they travel to South Africa for the conference, that they may return filled with ideas and direction for the Hospital
- For peace in Zambia as the election result is announced and the new Government commences its work.
- For the collecting and delivery of building supplies to allow the St Cleers team to start work when they arrive

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Agape Guest house



Abi, Julie and Spy the monkey

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 3

Dear Friends

So, the Election results are in, Mr Banda has been returned as President by the narrowest of margins – about 10,000 votes in a poll of 1.8 Million. Mr Sata has cried foul and demanded a recount. Some protests in Lusaka on Saturday were apparently dispersed with teargas but all is quiet in Mpongwe and ‘Vote Banda’ tee-shirts are worn with pride.



On Sunday morning Abi and I went to church a modest stone throw from our hut. Singing started at 10, the Service proper at 10.30. There were about 160 people seated on low wooden benches – very uncomfortable on my bony arthritic bottom! The men sat mostly on the right, women and a few children filled the nave and the left side. I’m not sure if there is a specific reason for this. The church building is very spartan but tidy, the solitary ceiling fan did little to influence the ‘warmth’ of the fellowship and when a breeze blew through it was very welcome indeed. Much of the service was bilingual, with Pastor Makule translating from Lamba to English and vice versa as required. The singing was of course entirely acapella and beautifully melodic. The opening hymn was probably “Lift High the Cross of Jesus” – at least, that was the tune. There were about a dozen song books dotted around the congregation, but most seemed to know some or all of the words. Pastor Makule beckoned Abi and me to the front and we briefly introduced ourselves. A new Doctor for a few weeks was met with nods and murmurs, the news that friends from St Cleers will be coming soon to repair and refurbish the Hospital kitchen was met with much applause. I guess their priorities are right.

(Church related content follows) The Offertory was taken by a procession to the front, rather like Anglican Eucharist, notes being placed in a basket on a table. After a couple of Choirs sang praise songs, Pastor Makule spoke from Hebrews 12 v1-3 and 1 Corinthians 9 v24-26 about the need to fix our eyes on Jesus as we run the race towards the goal. The scripture on the wall at the front of Church reads “Kamulandakanya Ifyakwiulu”, from Colossians 3 v2 “Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things”. This rather reinforced his message. Pastor Shimubanga, who is the Hospital Chaplain, swapped seats with the chap next to me and gave me a running translation, which was very helpful. He had a song book, so I could see that the closing Hymn was “O Happy Day”, albeit to an entirely different tune, and for all I know, different words! Outside there were of course no cars, and no car park. A dozen bicycles and ‘shanks pony’ sufficed for the congregation.



Abi and I had made Shepherds Pie for lunch. I’m having to entirely rethink my catering methods, as the lack of microwave means that leftovers cannot simply be reheated. As a result we had Shepherds Pie for supper too.

After lunch we went up to the soccer pitch at the Upper Basic School (5 mins walk) to watch the local football team, the ‘Angels’, play an amateur league match. We have donated one of the footballs to the team - they gave a round of applause and I managed to take a Team Photo after much cajoling of the players.

(Aficionados of Soccer, read on) The Trainer for the team is Judah Chipelelo (pictured far right, next to his young daughter). He is the younger brother of Edwin who works with Tuesday Musaka for the Mpongwe Baptist Assoc, who helps to run the 100 odd churches as well as the hospital. Apparently this is Judah's first season as a Trainer. 2 weeks ago they won the Independence Cup competition and have used the prize money to buy their kit. Ingmar Johansson is thus getting free sponsorship. The younger lads in green are the Youth Team, the Super Eagles. Joshua Musaka plays for the Super Eagles. I was offered a place in the starting XI, however my pedigree of playing for my Medical School is overshadowed by being kicked off the team after two matches when they discovered how bad I was. I would love to give you a Motty-esque commentary of The Match "Oh, a sniping run by Samuel Matuchinga... and a heroic save, denies a certain goal" but the lack of a. a fur coat, and b. the opposition, makes this impossible. The Kayenda Soccer Academy had transport problems - the guy who had said he would give them a lift had changed his mind! So it's a Walkover and 3 points in the bag. Nevertheless, the match was kicked off after winning the toss, and Number 10 strolled the ball forward, to then crouch and make a Trevor Brooking header to take the lead. Ah well, it's Training on Tuesday, so I may wander up again to cheer them on.

Dr Goran Noren, his wife Sylvia, and Gunnar the carpenter returned from Kafue Lodge, where they had spent the weekend, with illness. So after Ward Rounds Dr Noren took himself home and left me with OPD. This leaves me as the sole Doctor for the whole Hospital. However, Dr Sikuzwe, the District Medical Director, will be running the HIV clinic on Wednesday, for which I am grateful. In OPD I booked two ladies for operations next week, when Dr Okoko has returned – one for hysterectomy, the other for excision of an ovarian cyst – discretion being the greater part of valour on my part. It is very obvious that a couple of Blood Pressure machines would be invaluable here at Mpongwe. Florence was needing to nip off to Maternity Ward to borrow theirs when I needed one to check a Blood Pressure. I don't think there are any spare ones at Oaklands, but my Partner Dr Hogben has kindly emailed round our local surgeries to see if there are any that are surplus to requirement that Sue could bring out with her. Thank you Dick!

This Tuesday saw me doing three Ward Rounds before lunch, covering Female, Male and Maternity Wards. A Medical Associate reviewed the Children's Ward. Because there have been three cases of peritonitis and sepsis following abdominal surgery recently, Mrs Banda, Matron of Theatre has sensibly decided to do a thorough cleansing of Main Theatre this week when no major cases are to be done. She calls it 'fumigation'. Perhaps she is right!



Thus this afternoon we had three urgent but minor cases to be done in the Minor Theatre room. So at 14hrs I turned up. No patients. No Medical Associate. No thought is given to the consequence of this, nor of ensuring that an alternative provision is made. This is rather typical of the low level of professionalism of some staff – and it is this that management wants to try to change. But since the expectations of the patients are so low, this manner is not challenged and thus reinforced. It's not something I can change overnight, but I trust that I can influence it a (very) little by showing a professional and caring attitude myself. However it is easy to write this off as 'That's Africa', accompanied by the equivalent of a

Gallic shrug.

Eventually Nr Niyrenda, a Clinical Officer, came to assist and we were finished by 16.30. He had wanted to get to Luanshya on the 4 o'clock bus, so had missed it. Rather than trying to get away, he simply shrugged his shoulders and decided will go on Wednesday instead.

Abigail is getting browner by the day. She has made many new friends and spends the afternoons playing with them – skipping, football, netball, colouring etc. She has introduced them to Frisbees which was unknown here. Sometimes her gaggle of 'adherents' becomes a little too much and so she retreats to our hut to have some time by herself. Her School work is going OK – she tells me! Doubtless her teacher Mr Eggar will be the arbiter of that. She is also keeping a daily diary.

Today a Medical Associate has not turned up. I have four Wards to cover, but no other duties, so, taking on board wise advice from Ant Webb who has worked here previously, I am pacing myself. I have just nipped home for a cup of tea at 10.30am before my next Round.

Points for prayer:

- For Pastor Makule and the leadership of the Baptist Church as they encourage the congregation
- For Simon working in the Hospital, working as professionally as is possible within the things he cannot change
- For the collecting and delivery of building supplies to allow the St Cleers team to start work when they arrive

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of Pastor Makule and his family and of the football team

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 4

Dear Friends

“Man shall not live by bread alone,” according to the Good Book, and I suppose that if Jesus were giving the same lesson in the 21st Century he might have continued “nor by running water, electricity... or the internet!” Things that we have come to expect as a right in the UK are easier to identify as technological privileges in their absence. We have not experienced the regular daylight hours power cuts that frustrated earlier working parties from St Cleers, instead there have been erratic power outs for variable lengths of time. On Wednesday it was off from 2pm to 9.05pm. It reminded me of the pre-Thatcherite Winter Of Discontent, when we would watch the TV by candlelight. Abi and I had seen a group of workman with a power cable on the ground at the market and supposed that this was the cause. As a result we didn’t expect the power back until mid morning the following day. House Group by candlelight that evening was yet another new experience. Sister Erna fetched some rather splendid tall candles from her cupboard, only to find them warped into strange curves by the ambient heat. Last night the power failed just as we concluded supper at the Musakas’ – there was just enough dusk-light to find the hut, fumbled the key in the lock, then used the dim glow from my mobile phone to find my otoscope and then used that to find my wind-up torch. £5.99 from Overt Lockes, a true bargain and a God-send! Along the pathway home we witnessed a beautiful display by fireflies, small brief flashes of lights in the bushes and floating past and around us. It was something we would have missed had the path-light been on. Moon-less night skies reveal vast swathes of stars that knock the northern constellations into a hat. Quite breathtaking.



Water has been even less predictable and less logical. Sometimes there is water when there is no electricity, sometimes we lack both, sometimes there is no water when the power is back on. Sometimes there is a fair flow, sometimes it is a mere trickle. We keep about 10 litres of drinking water in hand, and there is a small dustbin of water in the bathroom – for emergencies! Water Conservation is a concept that has apparently not yet reached Zambia. Hosepipes are used to wash cars and water lawns, the toilet flush uses gallons in excess of the needs. I’ve asked Pete Spearman to see if he can bring some simple Water Hippos out to reduce the wastage in the cisterns – I’m not sure the local construction bricks would last as long as those of the London Brick Company as a simpler alternative. Many of the taps in the Hospital drip heavily, wasting precious water. Next time I come I shall bring a spanner and a bag of washers – a more lasting benefit than my stethoscope and skill with a blade!



Our Internet access is courtesy of the Wijks’ Wifi and transmitted via a satellite dish in their garden. Not the bijou and compact variety such as the Sky Plus dish from home. Oh, no. This one appears to be Russian Army Surplus, left over from the Cold War. (Going deeply IT technical here) Despite paying about £100 a month for the service from Coppernet, the speed is barely that of dial-up and often there is no signal at all. I managed to achieve 4.5Kb/sec at a peak, mostly around 1.7-2.4.



Urban said he had managed to average 8Kb/sec last month. On a good day the Wijks can Skype with friends and family at home in Sweden. On a bad day, smoke signals or tom-toms would be quicker. Thus large files like uncompressed pictures can take up to an hour to download. Web-pages with heavy ad content take an age, again something that we don’t appreciate with Broadband.



Cooking with a limited number of ingredients is interesting. Breakfast is toast with Marmite and sometimes boiled eggs – the latter is an excellent and reliable local source of protein and comes ready wrapped in its own shell, which helps to prevent germs. (Literary Interlude) Whilst eating these we have discussed Gulliver’s Travels – I can’t remember how he resolved the War between the Big-Enders and the Little-Enders, any ideas?

Onions and tomatoes, small white aubergines and cabbages can be bought at the local market. Loaves of bread are K5000 (80p). We probably won’t be buying any of the blackened dried fish that is sold in

piles from mats by the roadside. However, we do still have rice, potatoes and pasta bought in Lusaka when we landed, along with mince and Fillet Steak in our freezer – this cut is not eaten much by Africans as it does not come attached to the bone, thus the price is barely more than that of mince. Abigail has developed quite a liking! The green beans were starting to go mouldy, so we topped and tailed the rest and stuck them in the freezer too. Our carrots remain OK – I think this must be the most imperishable of vegetables known to man. So if anyone has any good recipes using these ingredients, answers on a postcard to us. Thank you for the many helpful tips re pasteurisation, the lack of a thermometer that reads to 72oc makes it a more tricky process. However, my latest batch of milk was not a success as, like King Alfred, I was unfortunately distracted and it was ‘scorched’. Still tastes OK in my tea, but I’m not quite sure how Ollie’s bedtime drink will be managed – I suppose he may have to develop a taste for UHT. Or UDT (Ultra Daddy Treated!)

We have arranged to borrow one of the MBA’s vehicles on Monday so that we can go to Ndola to do some shopping and find out where the airport is. The change of scenery will do us both good. Quite properly the MBA are requiring that we should have an International Driving Licence. Fortunately I had anticipated this. I would recommend that Phil and the others do the same, if you have time. £12 from the AA, if I recall correctly.

Work at the Hospital continues to be interesting and challenging. Wednesday was a particularly heavy day – I saw 75 patients and then had no electricity and then no water in the evening. Thank you for your prayers after my last email – Thursday was much better. Janet Pairi, the other Medical Associate, had returned from her holidays and covered two of the wards. In the afternoon I had three cases for theatre. (Medical information follows) One was a revision of a debridement of an infected foot in a very poorly controlled insulin dependant diabetic. He had been ordered to be Nil By Mouth from the morning. But had felt hungry, so he ate a bowl of nsima (ground maize porridge to the consistency of mashed potato). The procedure needed doing, so I did so, necessarily without heavy sedation. It hurt. I asked Cristobel, the Student Clinical officer who was assisting me, to explain to him that a Below Knee Amputation would be the inevitable result if we did not attend to the wound properly. He gritted his teeth. There is no intra-operative monitoring of the patient in Minor Theatre, which concerns me more than slightly. To see them still breathing at the end is always a relief. I must speak to Dr Okoko about this – a simple Pulse Oximeter would give an audible pulse rate and sats, enough to be going on with. The cost would not be exorbitant. On the other hand, there is no Oxygen, no suction and I haven’t seen an Ambi-bag either. Perhaps Main Theatre is better equipped – I shall find out on Tuesday. The surgical sets are devoid of drapes to establish a sterile field and the I&D set has no scalpel handle. So I am becoming proficient at requesting exactly what I believe is required from the Theatre Orderly who runs the autoclave. I am undertaking the roles of Scrub Nurse in setting out the instruments, swabs, wash etc., Anaesthetist and ODA, Surgeon and then Recovery Nurse whilst the Ward Nurse trots off to find the trolley to take the patient back to the ward. Transferring the patient from the table to the trolley uses not a Pat-slide, nor a canvas and poles, just a heave on the patient’s clothing. The impact tends to help to wake them up a bit! Yesterday I insisted this was done on a one-two-three-go so I could at least protect the airway.

Abigail is very excited that Elvis (who works for the MBA) is going to cut some bamboo to construct a proper tree-house in the Wijk’s garden. Julie has found an old tyre, so a swing lacks only a rope to be complete. Abi is missing everyone, so this morning we have made a Count-Down calendar using photos of Sue & Ollie to cross off the days until their arrival. She is half-way through her third reading book and is managing to keep her diary up to date. On Friday night she went to Youth Group at Sr Rose’s house (she works in OPD) – there were 23 children along with Elvis and Sr Rose. They had Bible Study and discussion for an hour. She rated this about 80% good and will go along again next week. Her friends continue to drop by in batches. One of the Frisbees is now stuck high in the tree outside our hut – maybe it will come down again when the rains start properly.

We have had some very heavy showers that last no more than half an hour – water cascades from the metal roofs of the Hospital and runs swiftly away in gullies. A few hours later it has all dried out again and the scrub grass looks no greener.

The Norens and Gunnar return to Sweden on Wednesday – we are going to have Sunday lunch with them today (“Nothing fancy,” Goran has assured me). On the same plane another Swedish Doctor from their Rotary will be arriving. Apparently he is a Consultant Gynaecologist from a Teaching Hospital in southern Sweden. There truly will be a clinical culture shock for him, so I shall try to have a quiet word with him when he arrives to at least soften the impact. He will be staying in the nearly renovated ‘Swedish’ guest house next to the Blue House where we will be staying when the others arrive. They are currently spraying our new accommodation to keep the insects down, which is nice. I guess we may be able to move over there later this week, but this little hut with no hot water and no kettle rather feels like home now.

It’s now ten to nine and we can hear the Sunday School singing enthusiastically in the Church. Pastor Makule has offered to write out a short Christmas Song in Lamba for Abi, and has asked me to preach in Church next

Sunday – he will translate, which is helpful. I'll have no Powerpoint for my sermon though, so I shall need to prepare my notes in a more traditional manner. Pastor's mother-in-law is currently in Hospital with a urine infection. She has bladder cancer but no treatment for this is locally available.

Also on the Ward is a three year old boy who was bitten on the face by a fox. The wounds are minor and there is no infection, but the fox undoubtedly had rabies. The Hospital has no Anti-rabies medication. The local vet only keeps it for animals. So the family is faced with the prospect of paying about K275,000 (£42) in Luanshya. Which, naturally, they cannot afford.

Points for prayer:

- For Dr Okoko and Sr Ruth as they try to implement new attitudes and ways of working from their experiences in South Africa
- For Sue and Ollie still at home and for Abi & me here, waiting impatiently for their flight next week
- For travelling safety as we drive to Ndola tomorrow
- For the patients in the Hospital, where prayer must replace medications or treatments readily available in the West

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of the fish at the market and of rain!

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 5

Dear Friends

“I’m cold,” Abigail complained. Well, she was wearing just a t-shirt and thin shorts, it was cloudy and we were driving along with the window open. So maybe she was right, but only in a relative sense. It is true that the weather has cooled a little now that occasional heavy showers punctuate the day or night. As a result it is not unduly uncomfortable to wear long trousers for the morning Ward Rounds, and my feet have been chilled by the ceramic tiles of the Agape Guest Hut I have even worn my slippers once! No socks, just slippers. Walking down to the Hospital I have seen youngsters going to school well wrapped up in a fleece-top, whilst I’m very comfortable in a short-sleeved shirt. By noon, however, the temperature has risen sufficiently to demand a change to 'tropical fatigues' (shorts) and the evenings are sufficiently balmy not to require any further changes.



After Church on Sunday we had been invited to lunch with the Noren’s and Gunnar. No power, no water, but Sylvia had managed to cook before it went off Swedish Meatballs followed by a tin of Pineapple Rings. Alluding to Jerome K Jerome, the tin-opener was found without trouble. A futile wait for tea and coffee allowed time to natter, and Abi amused herself playing games on Goran’s laptop. In Swedish. She is now multilingual in “New Game”, “Save” and Alt+Ctrl+Del “End Task”.

Tuesday, Dr Okoko, Dr Makunta and Sister Ruth returned safely from South Africa on Sunday evening having spent a very productive week learning about the work of a Christian Hospice, and having had time together as a team. So I was very glad to hand-over the eighteen important cases (amongst a myriad of others) on the Wards or in OPD for their attention on Monday morning. And we took a day off.



After I had done my Round of Female Ward, Abigail and I set off in one of the MBA’s Land Cruisers for Ndola.

(Top Gear report follows) Solid. That is a good word. There and Back. Three more. These are the positive points about the Toyota Land Cruiser, the backbone of sub-Saharan medical transport. As ubiquitous as the white Transit van in Europe, yet less likely to cut you up at a road junction. The windscreen bore an interesting pattern of chips and cracks, nay crevasses. Kevin from Auto-Glass would have been hard-pressed to replace yet alone repair without the screen disintegrating into oblivion.

External security features were enhanced by a passenger door lock that had clearly been previously screwdrivered (and was now configured to admit only the most warped of keys) and a rear door for which ‘sticky’ does not adequately describe the brute force required for the opening, and then the closing thereafter. So far as I am aware, the lights and indicators worked. As did the wipers regularly, whenever I wanted to turn a corner. I never did find the Hazard Light switch.

Aesthetically, the multitude of scratches and bumps to the exterior bodywork simply contribute to lines that can be described as sleek and streamlined, but only by a purveyor of concrete blocks. The Bull-bars mounted on the front barely detract from the aerodynamics of a brick. The fur cylinder, single overhead camshaft 2982cc Diesel engine generates 123 BHP and 295Nm of torque, giving a comfortable cruising speed of 80km/hr (50mph) which seems rather faster. The solid suspension made mincemeat of the dirt track to the tar whilst also jarring our own spines. Cornering is best done at a more sedate speed to reduce tilt and screech. The Stig would have trouble taking this round the Test Circuit in under, ooh, 5 minutes?

No matter, it got us to Ndola and back in one piece, which, to be honest, is all we asked!

The journey was, naturally, not without incident. “Slow down for the Police Blocks, they will simply wave you through,” Urban assured me. Not so. Though the Police Officer seemed more intrigued by the psoriasis on my elbow than he was interested in my International Driving licence. Once he had established that I was a Doctor he waved us on. The roads are very straight and the tarmac is in current good repair far better than the A303, but without cat’s eyes.

We reached Luanshya after 50 minutes, I slowed at the Police Block in town to ask for directions to Ndola. “This Officer is going to Ndola,” I was advised, pointedly. Yes, he was delighted to be offered a lift. And so we

played host to Sub-Inspector Chama of the Yard (well, Mpatamatu Police Station, anyway). Thus we were simply waved through all subsequent Police Blocks with a smart salute, making good time we reached Ndola 40 minutes later. En route he pointed out the air-crash site where the UN bigwig was killed some years ago, returning from Congo (or Zaire, as it may have been at the time). We dropped our passenger at Police HQ and then followed his excellent directions (what else could you expect?) to the Shoprite carpark.

Ndola is a town. What more can you say? Wide boulevard streets, Department Stores of an African nature, PEP clothes stores, queues at Bank ATMs, wall-to-wall street vendors and very few children begging. No mime artists or buskers, so not all bad. Urban had helpfully given us a street map downloaded from an Internet site. Unfortunately the road names had changed with or after Independence. Cecil Avenue is now Presidents Avenue etc. Once you get the hang of this it is easy to make the logical jumps to find where you are. Looking for a place to eat lunch we happened upon Danny's Club & Restaurant clearly this had been the Old Colonial Club of yesteryear. Old Port and cigar smoke oozed from the wood panelling. Steak au Poivre for £5.20 was delicious, washed down with a bottle of luminous Orange Fanta.

After lunch we did a major shop at Shoprite replenishing meat, biscuits, fruit juice and the staples that cannot be bought at the Mpongwe market. The prices are not very different to Europe for most things of course when one is purchasing from an African income that makes them really rather expensive indeed. In addition to other provisions that we have laid in for the others when they arrive (yes, Ollie, we have bought some Tomato ketchup), we bought a dozen 2L water bottles. The ongoing cycle of sterilisation or drinking water by sunlight is a daily chore. This is done by filling the 2L water bottles 4/5 full, agitating to aerate and then propping up in the sun for 6 hours or so, so that the UV radiation can kill the bugs. It must be an effective technique as we have had no health problems. It is certainly low tech, non-polluting and negligible cost!

We also found the airport, which is a mere 5 minutes out of town, so will know where we are going to collect Sue, Ollie & Netty next Tuesday. The journey home was entirely uneventful and we were unloaded well before the Vehicle Compound at the MBA Workshop closed for the evening.

Tuesday is Theatre Day. Now fumigated and deep-cleaned, we were able to tackle some cases. (Going medical again) Here there is a Pulse Oximeter, though not always used. Anaesthetic is again Diazepam, Atropine and Ketamine. The first case was climbing on the table when I arrived a bilateral tubal ligation (female sterilisation, usually done in the UK by laparoscope). Dr Okoko was taking his time to arrive, Miss Pairi, the Medical Licenciate was all set to administer the anaesthetic. Sandra, the Dutch Student Nurse who has never scrubbed before, was looking eager to assist, Kelvin Katagona the Scrub Nurse was ready to prep. All that was required was a surgeon. Blow it! I've done this loads of times before in South Africa, albeit thirteen years ago, let's crack on. Transverse lower abdominal incision, through the rectus sheath, blunt dissection of the peritoneum, find the left tube, clamp, clamp, catgut to tie & tie, cut and cut to resect the mid section Manchester technique. Or is it Pomeroy? Or is that something totally different? Anyway, who cares what it is called. Same for the other side. Then out again, peritoneum, non-absorbable for the rectus sheath, then interrupted silk to skin, one wet, one dry, et voila!

By this time Dr Okoko has finished his Round and we start to tackle a very tricky hysterectomy. With no break for lunch we then continued with the aspiration of a large ovarian cyst and finally a repeat laparotomy for post-op peritonitis and sepsis following a C-section two weeks ago. Dr Okoko assured me that if he stopped for lunch he would never be able to get the List restarted again! They use the same room for Holding Bay and Recovery, so the next patient knows what is coming.

Yesterday was quite quiet. After my Ward Rounds I had no more duties, so we strolled around the Market to see what was there. Can you Window Shop without glazing? We bought Abi a pair of 'Tropicals' flip-flops. K3,500 that's about 55p. We were observed with some curiosity by many, but not hassled or pressured and we have no concerns for our personal safety at all. Zambia is a very peaceful country and the people are very welcoming and friendly.

In the evening we went to Cell (House) Group at the Wijks it rotates around the house in the Compound, like our Tuesday Night Group at home. Though here they have a written schedule of Host, Worship Leader and Study Leader for months in advance. See, some things ARE more organised in Africa! Elvis led the worship the songbook is a strange mix of ancient hymns, ultra modern worship songs and Lamba songs. He invited Dr and Mrs Okoko to lead us in a chorus from the Congo we sang "Oui, Dieu est bon" at last, something in another language that I can actually understand! Pastor Siyenge then led our thoughts concerning "Living as a Community of God" from Acts 2 vs 46 & 47, Hebrews 10 vs 24 & 25 and 1 Corinthians 12 v 7. The prayers were a melange of English, Lamba, Swedish and French. There were no Parthians, Medes or Elamites present, but in other respects each of us "heard in our own native language".

Today we are joined by a gynaecologist, Dr Johansson, from Sweden who is here until Christmas under the auspices of the Swedish Rotary Doctors Bank. I have given him a comprehensive tour of the hospital and pointed out who lives where. He has worked briefly in Kenya and Liberia, so it is not all entirely new for him.

You will be pleased to hear that Julie and Chi-chi are now friends again, so Abi can play with them both. Abi is fine, but getting a little bored now. She borrowed an old copy of Enid Blyton's 'Ship of Adventure' from Stella Holmgren and has read it in 25 hours. A chip off the old block! It is only five more days until Sue and Ollie are with us, time flies past yet moves slowly. Today Abi and Axel made name plates for their shared desk in the Wijk's 'school room' and drew up a list of Rules for the classroom. She spends many hours playing Dodge ball with her friends on the Musaka's 'lawn' (for want of a more accurate description!) and computer chess with Axel she has beaten the computer once, but regularly loses against Axel. At home we have been playing lots of Dominos and Pik A Styk, which is strangely addictive just one more throw before it's time for bed!

Points for prayer:

- For Sue, Ollie, Netty, Phil, Pete and Geoff as they travel out next week
- For Abi as the days tick past until she sees Mummy again
- For Dr Johansson as he settles into life and work here at Mpongwe
- For Simon as he speaks at Church on Sunday (as the Holy Spirit leads, but usually finished by 12 hours, brother)

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Dr Okoko, Kelvin and Sandra in Main Theatre with a Hysterectomy case, and of Daktari at the wheel of the Land Cruiser.

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 6

Dear Friends

On Saturday we took a Tourist trip with the Wijks. We went to Lake Kashiba, also known as the ‘Sunken Lake’. About 30km from the Hospital, Urban estimated it would take an hour in the Land Cruiser. The first part was tar road. So far so good. This then continued as a dirt track, deeply gouged by heavy articulated trucks pulling trailers – perhaps eight axles in all. Urban resorted to ‘Swedish driving’ – i.e. keeping to the right, in the less bumpy shallow gully, slowing carefully to avoid occasional oncoming traffic. After passing through a couple of villages we turned right only a smoother dirt road. “This part is much better,” Urban assured us.

“Daddy!” came a plaintive whimper from the back “I don’t like this. How much longer?” A very fair question. I remember thinking to myself that this road would be fun indeed in the rain. But, dear reader, let us not anticipate the narrative, and deal with events in proper sequence. The ‘better part’ was soon marked by large piles of dirt stacked neatly on the right hand side of the road. Clearly a resurfacing process was due to begin. And the piles went on. And on. For miles. Thus everyone was having to drive on the other side, and the surface was suffering as a result. Eventually we reached the tail of the ‘roadworks’ – with not a cone or traffic light in sight. Nor, of course, any workman. And the road improved once again right up to St Anthony’s Catholic Mission. “It gets bad here” our Swede warned.

Rough, boggy, sandy, rutted, rocky. Not too bad, really. And then we arrived. And were amazed to see two ‘minibus’ vans there – the equivalent to VW Camper vans. Quite how they had managed the trip, laden with so many passengers is beyond me. I suppose the truth of the matter is that they were squashed in so tightly that bouncing around on the bumps was simply impossible.

The lake itself is fascinating. There is an apparently circular hole in the surrounding rocks, with near vertical sides into which water has drained to form the lake. It is perhaps 400 yards across, and said to be over 70 metres deep (mixing Imperial & Metric to please both camps). The water surface is a good 20 feet below the rock lip, steep fissures pierce the walls at intervals, permitting access for bathing. It is freshwater, but is slightly salty, presumably because of the evaporation and lack of outlet. There are no crocodiles, and no bilharzia. Efraim helpfully said he had seen a snake. It was a stick. There is no ‘shallow’ part, so Abigail, Axel & Efraim wore LifeJackets as they swam.

It was deliciously cool, warm on the surface, slightly colder 3-4 feet down. The sensation of relaxing in such a vast naturally heated swimming pool as the children shrieked and screamed with delight, jumping from low rocks into the water, was tempered only by the knowledge that we had the return trip to make, and would be inevitably hot, dusty and sweaty when we arrived back at Mpongwe.

Ominously there were a few dark clouds in the sky and we heard the distant rumble of thunder. We enjoyed a very companionable picnic lunch. Regrettably our hard-boiled eggs were now scrambled, but apple cinnamon cake and sandwiches disappeared in quick order. And then the heavens opened. “Would you like to drive back?” Urban gallantly offered, holding out the keys. Thanks, mate. But, not one to shirk a challenge, I accepted.

I now have great admiration for those Celebrities who risk all by volunteering for the latest in British Reality TV, learning to dance on ice. The dust on the road’s surface quickly became slick and slippery. The shallow gully that Urban has used was now a flowing stream along the road’s length. Since the road is not formally made up, it has become eroded below the level of the surrounding land and thus water drains INTO the road and not away. Nevertheless, with four-wheel drive and good ground clearance, a steady sensible speed saw us through the downpour and back to the tar road. I even managed fourth gear at one point. Abi took great delight in emailing Sue to tell her how bad the road had been, “You will get to go, don’t worry. You might be sick cos I nearly was!!”

As mentioned in a previous e-diary episode, the foundation trenches for the new Baptist Church lie empty behind our hut. The children play in them, and the rains have started, threatening the integrity of the walls. I took this as the inspiration for my sermon on Sunday, speaking from Luke 11 v24-28 and expanding the thought to discuss the Fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5 v23. I had forgotten to pack a tie. Not something I usually wear at home, but wishing not to offend, I borrowed one from Tuesday. Then found a clean shirt that matched. Oh, and I polished my black shoes. And wore socks too for the first time since landing. Pastor Makule translated my sermon phrase by phrase, so it took 45 mins or so to deliver. I had prepared in longhand, taking care to avoid English words that might not be readily translatable, which allowed me to print an extra copy for Pastor to read before the Service so he could be ready. Several thanked me afterwards for such a powerful message that the Church had needed to hear. Interestingly, at the beginning of the service Elvis spoke briefly

about what "fruit" means, so I guess this is a subject that hasn't been aired for a while, and 'fruit' may not be a common collective noun in Lamba! I expanded on this: "By their fruits shall you know them" - mangoes show that this is a mango tree, avocados show that this is an avocado tree etc.

Once I arrived home – off came the tie, and off came the shoes and socks.

Work at the Hospital continues to be interesting and challenging. Dr Johansson, the Gynaecologist from Sweden, has settled in quickly. He was very frustrated that the key for the Ultrasound room was missing last week, and had a steady stream of ladies with Gynae problems waiting to see him at Drs Out Patients yesterday. He is a very fast surgeon at Caesarean Section. I assisted him with one Friday, yesterday we had an urgent case of twins with twin one in transverse lie and a protracted labour. I gave the Ketamine anaesthetic and made sure the patient was monitored with Pulse Oximeter and manual BP checks. E*, another of the Dutch Nurses scrubbed to assist. It was the first time that she had scrubbed, an urgent complicated C-section with small, rather flat babies was a bit much for her. She looked rather shell shocked at the end! Mother and both babies were fine.



On Female Ward we have a steady stream of odd infections that turn out to be HIV +ve. (Health warning: Medical details follow) On Thursday the Clinical Officer admitted a lady with a provisional diagnosis of Bullous Dermatitis – a bodywide eruption of small lumps – it looked like the lumps of Von Recklinghausen's Neurofibromatosis, but with barely any gaps between the lesions. The history was of just two weeks, the lesions discharging pus and blood after a few days. So I gave her a trial of Cloxacillin over the weekend, and sent her for Pre-Test Counselling for HIV. Yesterday morning the lesions were no different, and she was, of course, found to be reactive (the euphemism here for HIV +ve). And so I scratched my head. In my recent USMLE

revision notes I had come across a question about a woman with skin lumps and a positive Acid-Fast stain of a skin smear. Could it be? I checked in the Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine that Cristobel carries in her pocket. Mr Spakman agreed that they could do the test. On my way home yesterday Mike from the lab called after me. "Doctor, you are very clever!" No, it was just a very fortunate guess. The test had been positive. Leprosy. I've never seen it before, but have pulled a diagnosis almost out of thin air. She will now start a 6 month course of medication, and it should come under control.

Now that Sue is on the aeroplane, probably currently over Congo or somewhere, it is safe to tell you all about the creepy crawlies (so those arachnophobes amongst you might wish to skip the next couple of paragraphs – be reassured that I have not attached photos of nasty bugs!)

Mosquitos and ants are the main nuisance. Abi appears to be particularly tasty from a mosquito's point of view and she has up to 50 bites at a time, they come in batches. The mossie nets have proved very effective – so long as you check that there are none inside with you when you settle down to sleep. Patricia, who is Angela's sister (who cleans for the Blue Guest House where we will be moving when the others arrive) and Esnart's daughter (who cleans for the Wijks, and worked for the Webbs when they were here years back), tidies and cleans and does laundry twice a week for us. She had helpfully remade my bed. The next morning I found NINE mossies inside the net. All were duly squashed, leaving smears of MY blood on the net. Patricia has washed the net since. Since then I make sure that I have tucked the net in myself.

Because the rains are starting there have been 'plagues' of flying ants for the past three evenings. The bodies are far too heavy for their temporary wigs and they hurtle around the room without course or control, colliding with furniture and people en route. The ceiling light has nicely filled up with dead bodies, and my slipper has accounted for a higher tally than the Red Baron! We came across a colony of ants apparently moving home in the woodland between our hut and the Blue Guest House. Tarrying too long to watch and photograph them, one of the 'warrior' ants made it onto my shoe and gave me a smart nip with his jaws. Ouch, it really did smart. Perhaps he just didn't like Paparazzi.

Last week Abi spotted a column of ants creeping along the wall inside the hut. Following this we found they had started to make a couple of nests. One under the suitcase, the other under my black shoe! It had been fast work on their part as Patricia had swept through only the previous day. We bought a couple of canisters of Insect Killer spray in Ndola. The aerial spray is moderately effective, the ground spray that we use on the threshold of the door is powerful stuff indeed. No more ants have made it inside.

We haven't seen any snakes, though Ulrika claims to have seen a couple, and Mr Spakman from the Hospital Lab helped to kill one in the evening last week on the waste ground towards the market. But we have seen lots

of snails, again they have emerged with the damp weather. The photo attached shows a large specimen with a pen for size comparison.

Points for prayer:

- For Sue, Ollie, Netty, Phil, Pete and Geoff as they settle into life here at Mpongwe
- For Abi and Simon as they adjust their daily routine to 'community' living with everyone over in the Blue Guest House.
- For the building work at the new Baptist Church, for Pastor Makule, the Building Committee and the Finance Committee as they oversee the project
- For the rains, that they might be heavy enough to properly water the land, but not too fast or too hard that the crops would be washed away.

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of Lake Kashiba, the road home, and of a large African snail.

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 7

Dear Friends

So, the others have safely arrived and we have now relocated to the Blue Guest House on the other side of the pine tree plantation, three minutes walk closer to the Hospital. Hot showers! Luxury! But, we anticipate.

The journey to Heathrow was without event – our thanks to Alan Richardson for being the chauffeur.



Clearing Customs at Lusaka was without problems, and it appears that the Entry Visa fee has dropped to from US\$140 to US\$50 per person in three weeks! Tuesday met us at the airport and took us to Lusaka town centre for a drink and to change some money. Zambia Millionaires are not very rich at K6600 to £1. Whilst Tuesday set off with Phil, Pete & Jeff in the Land Cruiser with all the hold luggage for the overland journey to Mpongwe, Sue, Ollie & Netty took a taxi back to the airport to wait the two hours until their flight to Ndola was due to depart at 12.25. This too was delayed by half an hour.

The Zambian Airways aircraft was a small 20-seater with a single row of seats either side of the aisle. Being able to see the pilot fight with the turbulence was disconcerting to say the least, but Ollie thought it was a rather splendid Fair-ground Ride and shouted “Wheee” with every lurch and drop.

Meanwhile, Simon and Abi had left Mpongwe early enough to meet the 10.30 arrival at Ndola, not entirely sure which flight they would be able to take. Already half an hour down the road when Tuesday phoned us, we decided to press on and use the time shopping for food and supplies. En route we called in at the Immigration Office at Luanshya to extend our 30 day Visa to allow us to stay until 6th December. No, we could not do this now; we have to return on the day our Visa expires.

Gunnar had recommended that we buy a float with toothed edges to use when laying the tiles in the kitchen, saying he had seen one in a hardware store in Ndola. At our fifth enquiry we struck lucky. Only to discover that Phil had brought one with him from the UK! Ah well, the more the merrier.

Shoprite was still bedecked with Christmas decorations on sale. Abi was recognised and greeted by one of the shop assistants who had helped us pack on our last visit; I recall that his granddaughter has the same name. We arrived at the airport in good time and waited in the Bar beside the runway. And waited. And waited. The midday flight from Jo’burg discharged two dozen burly South Africans. Yes, we were assured, it would be a small plane. It would be landing at 13 hours. At the allotted time a small single prop passenger plane came into view, touched down, and then lifted off again. Round it went, touched down, and lifted off again. It landed and taxied to the far side of the Terminal building. We scampered quickly over to the far fence to watch the passengers alight. There were none. No, this was not the flight from Lusaka. That flight is due to arrive at 13.28. Eventually a twin prop with a Zambian Airways tail-fin landed neatly and taxied round.

They saw us waving frantically through the fence, and I’ll confess to a couple of tears as Sue & Ollie climbed down the few steps. Since this was a Domestic Flight they simply walked through the Arrivals shed (and I mean ‘shed’) with their hand luggage. Ollie ran towards me, only to be swept up by Abigail. Poor Netty must have felt a little left out at our hugging and kissing.

Back at Mpongwe we arrived only minutes before the Land Cruiser, long enough to pay a visit to the Wijks and demolish an apple cake and a most welcome cup of tea. Mrs Musaka had prepared for us a Zambian supper of chicken, nsima, rice, cabbage & spiced sauce. Just as we were arriving, the electricity failed. Thus eight hungry travellers tucked in with enthusiasm by torchlight. On arriving back at our house we discovered that the water was also off. Hot showers would have to wait. As I said at the beginning, we anticipate!



For Abi & me the adjustment from our ‘solitude’ to now living in a community household initially came as a sharp challenge. We had our little routines and roles, now we had to incorporate others into our lives, and not just Sue & Ollie. The Guest House is twin three bedroom bungalows with a communicating doorway. The children are sharing a room, Netty has the other

room our side and the gents entertain each other with a snoring competition in the other half. Each denies that they are the source of the noise; each has been heard and witnessed to be a snorer. Four days into our new arrangements and everything is running fine. Everyone has been very helpful with and tolerant of the children.

The work in the Hospital Kitchen is well underway. Netty, Phil, Pete and Jeff have been spending a good eight hours a day washing down, painting and tiling. They are ably assisted by Godwin, Webb (who alternates from paintbrush to cabbage chopping) and Uncle Tom Cobley and all as new faces drop in with enthusiasm to participate in the project. Painting the confined store room with a very pungent masonry gloss has been quite overpowering. That being said, the cabbage pile vies to be the dominant odour. The cabbages themselves should now be described as a brand new variety: Speckled Greens. So far only two rats have been spotted. The first was splatted with a spade. The second made a clean escape. Evidences of other creatures from under the Mealie-Meal sacks has now been cleared so that the work can continue. Many evening conversations revolve around quantities of cement and paint and projections for tomorrow's endeavours.

Sue has been frequenting the market stalls for tomatoes, eggs and bread, preparing lunch for the ravenous workforce and looking after Abi & Ollie. On Thursday afternoon I took her for a brief tour of the Hospital. She was amazed at the facilities, or lack of, and realises that her finely honed Nursing Skills would be largely superfluous. However, she hopes to come to help in Theatre next week. Perhaps the patients might benefit from some observation before and after the operation? She and Netty have been invited to speak to the Ladies' Sewing Group next Friday afternoon. This fills them with some trepidation, but think they will be OK if they are both together.

Abi is enjoying a deferred Half-Term this week, her friends have found her in our new 'home' and there is a steady trickle of kids to the house. She has been sharing 'French Elastics' games with the Zambian girls and they have been swapping different versions. Grandpa's little remote controlled helicopter has been a real hit with the Wijk boys and the local kids too. Abi is now quite adept at flying it; I have only had to flick it down from a tree with a long stick once.

Electricity and water cuts are erratic and unpredictable, so we have secured buckets from the market. For emergencies. In the toilet. When both are available we have been enjoying hot showers, particularly important for the work team as they return dusty, dry and exhausted at the end of the day.

We have had some very heavy and persistent rain showers, up to 12 hours of alternating drizzle and downpour. Ollie is not quite sure that he finds thunder and lightning as exciting as Abi says that she does. But last night they both slept right through the hammering on our tin roof (oh, for the thatch of the Agape hut). Once the sun comes out everything dries out fairly promptly, though not before Ollie & Abi have enjoyed splashing through the puddles in their boots.



I am continuing to see a steady stream of new and different patients in the Hospital. The lady with Leprosy remains on the Ward as we have no medication to give her! Rifampicin is only available in a four drug combination tablet for TB, Dapsone is not in stock and the Dispenser has never heard of Clofazimine. Mind you, nor had I. District has none, so Dr Okoko is ringing round the other Hospitals to see who might be able to help. The patient lives too far away to go home and return. She also lives too far from her local Clinic to attend there if she has any minor wounds or injuries to her anaesthetic areas of skin. Since she is HIV +ve it is possible that Leprosy is actually the least of her worries. But there appears to be no great urgency in solving the problem, and she herself doesn't appear to be overly concerned either. I guess that is just simply the way that life is lived in rural Zambia.

A post-script to the creepy crawlie subject – Angela the housekeeper killed a small Black Mamba with her broom at Dr Johansson's yesterday. He lives next door to us! His version is that HE laid the fatal blow, which he recounted with great animation and theatrical re-enactment in OPD. I have now heard the tale from six different people and it has grown in the telling.

Points for prayer:

- For continued good health for us all
- For Sue & Netty as they speak with the ladies on Friday
- For continuing enthusiasm and responsible ownership from the kitchen staff as the project work progresses
- For Tuesday, Urban and the MBA leaders as they wrestle with funding, personnel and ever present demands

God bless
Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of us reunited, and of the 'extended family'

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 8

Dear Friends

The Jungle Doctor meets Scrapheap Challenge.

On Saturday there is no formal Wardround, but we review those patients who are particularly ill, or particularly well and can be Discharged. After I had seen a half dozen on Female Ward I went over to the Children's Ward to see an eight year old girl with a fractured distal radius & ulna (both forearm bones close to the wrist). I had tried to reduce this under Ketamine anaesthetic on Friday, but the post-reduction X-rays showed that it needed to be done again. Whilst there, Francis, the male Nurse, suggested I review all the patients as there were not many. One girl of seven had a clinically obvious fractured midshaft left femur (thigh bone). The X-ray showed a very obvious displaced fracture.

I was always taught as a Medical Student that you should never see an X-ray of a fractured femur that isn't already in a Thomas splint. This is a long metal U-shaped bar that sits either side of the leg, welded to a circle of metal that locates around the upper leg, tight to the groin. It allows immobilisation of the limb and some traction to reduce pain and further damage. Mpongwe has no such appliance. Because of her young age I wasn't happy to simply consider weeks of traction leaving her with an inevitably shortened leg and thought that internal fixation at the proper length at Ndola Hospital was the proper thing to do. So I went to chat this over with Dr Okoko. He agreed, but observed that there was no transport to take her and no Thomas splint to apply in the meantime. We could provide her mother with funds to transfer her to Ndola (presumably by bus!) but what to do in the meantime?



Right. Let's see what is lying around at the workshop. Dennis and a colleague were stripping some sort of engine down under the corrugated roof, a pile of scrap metal lay behind the carpentry shop. Broken beds, wheelchairs, bits of bicycle and obscure antediluvian medical devices were heaped with bits of twisted metal and wood.



Half an hour later, after a nifty bit of scavenging, using an angle grinder, two bolts, assorted washers, a hefty hammer and the vice, I was finished. Proper job! Robert Llewellyn would have been proud of me indeed. There was no powerful V8 engine to produce a throaty vroom vroom vroom, but it should do the trick. Now then, was it long enough? Yes, by a good four inches. Padding with cotton wall gamgee and bandages from Theatres, a rope from a dusty cupboard, copious amounts of sticky strapping tape and the limb was immobilised and in traction. Possibly the most useful thing I have done here.

After this, the resetting of the forearm was a bit of an anticlimax.

The rain that had been falling since midnight finally relented at lunchtime and the sun broke through. Steam rose from the ground as we ate a sandwich lunch and agreed that the weather looked fair enough to permit our planned trip to Kafue Lodge & Game Reserve. Eight of us piled into the Land Cruiser and taking Urban's sketchy directions we set off. 35 minutes was his estimate. The first 7km on tar was straightforward, but once we were on the muddy dirt road we had to take things at a more sedate speed. After a mere hour and five minutes, just as we were wondering if we could possibly have taken a wrong turn and would soon be crossing into Angola, the gates of the Reserve came into view. Once inside we swiftly spotted an antelope. On a road sign. However, this was not to be our total 'bag' for the afternoon as we then saw pair of waterbuck lurking in the bush close to the roadway.

At the Lodge we enjoyed a very welcome cold drink and enquired about a Game Drive. The response from the old Boer was the Afrikaans' version of sucking air through teeth. "Ah, you won't see much as it is too wet and too hot." In the event this was a cunning marketing ploy. He suggested that since we had our own 4x4 he would send Issac with us. Phil drove as we lurched along faint tracks winding through the termite mound studded veldt. By 17.00 hours we had seen Eland, Impala, Bushbuck, Waterbuck, Reedbuck, Zebra, Sable and Warthog, Egrets, Paradise Flycatchers, an African Jacana and a Reed Cormorant. The only monkeys we encountered were Abigail & Oliver as they clambered around and chattered in the Land Cruiser. All in all it had been a very enjoyable 'safari' and the road on the way back was considerably easier because much of the mud and puddles had dried out. The return journey only took 55 minutes and we arrived before dark, just in time for the electricity to go off. We had sandwiches for tea too.



Church on Sunday was a rather subdued affair. We had had another long heavy rainfall overnight and into the morning. When we had squelched our way through the pine trees to the yet silent building, padlocks still on the side doors, I had a horrible thought that I had missed a vital announcement or somesuch advising about a change of time or venue. Not so. Pastor Makule and his wife were there already but he indicated that the rain would mean that many would be delayed in their journey to church that morning. So rather than the 237 in the congregation of last week, we commenced with a mere 20 odd, the Zambians were outnumbered by white faces if you include the Bonnington and Wijk children and semi-retired missionary Dr Henry Holmgren, Swede by parentage but Mpongwan by birth. No choir to shuffle and sing, just Prudence from the Praise Group to lead us in a song before the Sermon. Pastor proposed that the service be back to front, the Sermon at the beginning and the offertory at the end. The leadership had decided to defer the additional Pastor's Basket offertory until next week, when there would be a larger congregation. So all those who had stayed at home to avoid this will be caught out!

He spoke from Colossians 3 v12-17 and 1 v10-12, expanding upon my thoughts of the previous week about the need to bear much fruit and the hazard of a lack of concern about not being fruitful in our lives.

By the end of the service Pastor had entirely forgotten to take up an offertory at all and had to be quickly prompted by the Treasurer. Justyn, you are in good company! It felt just like being at St Cleers. So we had an extra hymn as we duly processed to the front, around the basket to give our offertory and back to our seats. Then he announced that next week would not only be a Baptismal service down at the river at 12.30 and Communion back at the church at 14.00, AND a Pastor's Basket offertory would be taken, but also that the 10.30 service would be taken in toto by the visitors from the U.K.

Phil, who was sitting on the bench in front of me, woke with a start.

Interestingly the Church Notices had included public announcements from the District School Authority concerning application and registration for the local Upper Basic School, and from the District Health Authority about arrangements for the childhood immunisation programme. I can only suppose that this is exactly how public announcements were made in the UK before local newspapers, magazines and radio stations took on the role.

We enjoyed a proper English Sunday lunch of roast chicken, roast potatoes, Yorkshire Puddings (thank you, Patricia, for the pancake mix packed in Phil's case) and veg, washed down by a fine vintage of apple juice. Silence reigned as eight sets of molars chomped with great satisfaction, broken only by Abi to ask for some more cabbage.

After lunch, whilst washing up was done and post-prandial naps were taken, Abi and Ollie took great delight in splashing in the large muddy puddles in front of the Guest House (see picture below!). It was like a scene from

Peppa Pig. Ollie's sole complaint was "There's mud on my dummy!" said with great indignation. They were coated with mud and required copious showers to remove the caked dirt before being allowed back into the civilization of the Living Room. Sue is still struggling to wash the mud from their clothes; she said it had not been like washing, it had been more in the nature of a Time Team excavation. Perhaps Angela's sister Patricia, who is helping with our laundry, will have better joy. The local children played happily outside all afternoon, rewarded with a sweet from Sue's basket at home time. They dutifully lined up like Snow White's seven dwarves, though none scampered round to the end of the line for a second helping.

Since the kitchen project required further supplies of tiles and paint, and we needed some grocery provisions, and Edwin from the MBA office needed to go to the Bank on MBA business, Phil can now add Ambulance Driver to his Resumé. On Monday morning, with Tuesday's agreement, the lass with the midshaft femur fracture (now wearing the patent Bonnington-Thompson splint) was slid into the Land Cruiser on a mattress and transferred to the Arthur Davidson Children's Hospital at Ndola. Four birds with one stone.

The Theatre List on Tuesday was quite a lengthy one: a 3 year old with a painful hernia, a tubal ligation, two hysterectomies, a phimosis for ?circumcision, two MUA & POP (Manipulation Under Anaesthetic & Plaster Of Paris) for broken arms in children and a laparotomy & proceed for an abdominal abscess. But we had a new assistant with us, so we knew we would manage. Since Abi is now back at home-school in the mornings, Netty had very kindly offered to look after Ollie for the morning, allowing Sue to accompany me on my Ward Round and then to help in Theatre. In the event, one of the hysterectomies didn't turn up for her operation, the other had unexpected hypertension (190/110) and has been deferred to Thursday. The foreskin dilatation and the MUAs were done in Minor Theatre, so in the end we only had three major cases to do.

Sue gave the anaesthetic for the first, squirting in a little bit of ketamine or pethidine whenever the laddie looked like his level of anaesthesia was wearing off, so that Dr Okoko and I could operate. In England this would ONLY be done by a Consultant Paediatric Anaesthetist, but we didn't have one of those, instead we had Sister Sue. Her efforts were somewhat hampered by other people moving the ampoules of drugs around so keeping track of what was what was a challenge!

For the tubal ligation I asked C*, the Dutch Nurse on elective, if she wished to scrub to assist. No, she was concerned that she might feel faint again. So it was a husband and wife team, just like 'Hart to Hart' (for those who can remember the rather naff 70's series) but without Max. Sue is a very able surgical assistant, handicapped only by the Surgeon's inability to remember Left from Right. "No, in your OTHER left hand." But since, from years of marital experience, she knew this would be the case already, perhaps she had an advantage.

After lunch I said I would go down to the Hospital to sort out the second MUA. Four cases later I made it home again! This is the very beginning of Mango Season and the sweet slightly unripe amber fruits are eagerly harvested from the trees by local children – just like apple scrumping in Somerset. I suppose that mango trees must be harder to climb, or mangos hang more precariously from the branches, or that children here are younger when they hunt this particular Holy Grail, as there are an inordinate number of broken arms as a result. I suggested to Francis, the Nurse on Children's Ward, that this showed that Zambian children can't climb trees. He laughed and told me that HE had picked plenty of mangos without accidents.



When I arrived back at the Guest House, Sue & Netty went to the market for some provisions. Having bought the necessary, they were window-shopping the colourful fabrics displayed at the stalls when a somewhat intoxicated gentleman accosted them. To escape his molesting and touching they considered poking him with their umbrella. They say he followed them for a good half a mile until they found Urban and Pastor Makule chatting. Pastor took him off for 'prayer'. When Netty went to the market a couple of days ago she was made to feel very uncomfortable by a 'Working Lady' who showed too much interest in her shorts. She says she's not going again! Still, I'm sure it's no worse than one of the regulars from the Royal Oak at home.

Post-script re. the lady with Leprosy. She has been discharged, to return to OPD in two weeks, by which time we hope to have found the correct medication for her.

Points for prayer:

- For the Baptism service on Sunday, and for us leading the 10.30 service
- For Simon & Abi as they go to renew their Entry Visas on Friday; that this might be a simple bureaucratic process.
- For the kitchen project; that it will be completed by the time we leave

God bless
Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of the Scrapheap Thomas splint, of Abi & Ollie in the mud



and of Hart To Hart - Simon & Sue operating together in Theatre

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 9

Dear Friends

This then is to be my ante-penultimate e-diary entry. Next Sunday we will be back in Blighty, waking up in beds not covered with mosquito nets, with reliable (though expensive) water and electricity, sullen grey skies and dank miserable weather. And I shall be very sad to leave. Despite the frustrations and privations, I am thoroughly enjoying my time here in Mpongwe. More particularly so now that Sue and Ollie are here with us.

The medical work is challenging and stimulating; without paperwork, meetings, budgets or endless diktats from local or national control. If you can do it, you do, if you can't, you don't, or you 'make a plan' to try to do it differently. Very simple, with no space for argument and a population that accepts the status quo without grumbling. Every day I have had the opportunity to really improve health and even directly save lives – not rely upon statistical significance to probably affect an outcome. I fear that as a result returning to work in the NHS will be even more challenging for me.

On the other hand I have also found it far too easy to drift into the accepted standards and sub-standard (from a European perspective) practices at Mpongwe. Initially horrified that a heavily sedated patient under Ketamine with an unsecured airway is neither monitored nor necessarily watched whilst a minor surgical procedure is undertaken, I am now very happy to knock them out and crack on, glancing occasionally at the chest to make sure it is still moving. The UK Government want more procedures done in GP surgeries and fewer in Hospitals; I've now got some rather good ideas...

And I am also acutely aware of the social limitations and relative isolation here at Mpongwe, especially for Sue and the children, as well as the educational challenges that we would face for Abi and Ollie if we were here for longer.

Sue came to Theatre again on Thursday morning and was my Anaesthetic Assistant for a hysterectomy case. Halfway through I wanted some Pethidine (a morphine type analgesic injection) for the patient. Yale, the Theatre cleaner and backroom man, duly trotted off to fetch some. Ten minutes later he still hadn't returned.

Eventually he appeared round the door and thrust a 2ml syringe full of a clear liquid into Sue's hand and then disappeared again. "What's this?" she asked me "There is no ampoule with it!"

No syringe labels are used either. Apparently the procedure is that the Midwife draws up the Pethidine in the Maternity Ward and keeps the ampoule in a box of assorted 'empties' to return to Pharmacy so that they will restock the supply. Sue went off to Maternity to ask for another one, this time in an ampoule. Sister refused. "Dr Simon will just have to believe what it is. That is what we do here."

There is no Pethidine held in Theatre because there is no Controlled Drugs cabinet; one locked cupboard within another. Somehow the process outlined above is felt to be safer or more secure. We had a chuckle to ourselves about how this might be viewed in the UK. If I have time I shall build them a Controlled Drug cabinet in Theatre!

Meanwhile Ollie went with Netty and Phil to the Pre-School to deliver some story books donated by 5 year old Rhea from Pitney, near Somerton. The classes were brought together, from little tots up to age 9, and the books were gratefully received. The children there are now making some pictures for Rhea; Phil hopes to bring them back with him.

In the afternoon Sue and Netty returned to the market, with Abigail for protection against lecherous drunks. They chose some material for a skirt each (and one for Patricia, Phil's wife) to give to Innocent (Angela's husband) who is going to make them. He came to dinner that evening with Angela and to measure them up for size.

This week I have been On-call at night. Having offered to take a share of the night cover, Dr Okoko was very happy to take me up on this. The first few nights were very quiet, with more disturbance from mosquitoes whining round our net and Ollie losing his dummy than from the Hospital. Most patients are seen and sorted by the duty Clinical Officer, with only Maternity and very sick patients being seen by the Doctor, so the role is not dissimilar to that of a pre-Blair NHS Consultant. Messages to call the Doctor are written by the Nurse in a Ledger and then brought by the Night Security Guard to the house. This makes sure that the message is not garbled and you have some idea why you are being called. On Thursday night Phil was woken from his deep slumbers by a loud and insistent rapping on his window. He imagined it was the Second Coming! Scrambling desperately from under his mossie net, he opened the front door a crack and with bleary eyes made out the figure of a man, teeth glinting brightly in the torchlight. The Ledger and "Doctor?" gave him the clue, so he stumbled across the house to wake me. Sue and I are asleep in the front bedroom on the right, Phil is on the left!

I had been called to see a lady with persistent bleeding after giving birth, the Midwife was querying a torn cervix. By the time I had arrived there was no bleeding to speak of, and about 200mls lost in total, so not even definable as a post-partum haemorrhage. So I went back to bed. No worries, I would rather be called a dozen times and not be needed than have the Nurses not want to disturb me when I should have gone.

Amusingly it appears that the Security Guard had not been told that we had moved from the Agape Hut to the Blue Guest House, so had already startled a group of Swedish visitors now staying there! They thought he was a drunk and had told him to go away. In Swedish.

An hour later there was another knock on the window, this time on ours. I went to see a lady who has just arrived from a peripheral clinic who had been in labour for 21 hours and was not progressing. She had had two previous deliveries without problems, but this looked to be a big baby. No option but an emergency Caesarian section. This would be my second of my time here, hopefully less traumatic than the one I did last week with Dr Johansson.

(Medical details follow, possibly best not to be read whilst eating your breakfast) That had been a 3rd repeat section by midline incision.

There was no orderly dissection through the layers; skin, fat, rectus sheath and linea alba, then peritoneum to reveal the uterus. Instead I had been confronted by a confusing tangle of tissues and old sutures. Slowly, slowly, then this MUST be peritoneum, blunt dissection through, only to meet an arm, the umbilical cord and green meconium liquor. Dr Johansson took over; I'm very glad he was there. The uterine incision ended up being T shaped – both transverse and classical, but the baby was fine and we gradually stitched bits back together in a more organised manner. Hopefully we have left it easier for next time, if there is a next time. Subsequently she has opted for a tubal ligation so Dr Johansson will do this before



he returns to Sweden. That had been my first Section since my time in South Africa 13 years ago, and had been the most horrid that I have ever done.



The case on Thursday night proved to be far more straightforward, for which I am thankful. I had assisted with half a dozen at Yeovil Hospital in the few weeks before coming out to Mpongwe, my thanks to Ken Kamath and Hanne for allowing me to refresh my memory. With Mr Nyirenda the Clinical Officer to give the Ketamine and act as Runner, and Kelvin Katongo the Charge Nurse to be Scrub Nurse

and Assistant, we put knife to skin at 3.30am. By 5am I was finished, mother and baby both fine. Not quite the 40 minutes standard that I had enjoyed in South Africa, but to be fair I was a little rusty and working with a less familiar instrument set.



I managed to scrape an hour's more sleep before the morning meeting, then Abi and I set off for Ndola to have our Entry Visas extended. This time we took the Nissan minibus. You will doubtless recall my recent somewhat negative and scathing appraisal of the Land Cruiser. I take it all back. Compared with the minibus, the Land Cruiser is like driving a Rolls Royce. Nonetheless, aching and stiff, we reached Ndola by 12. We had several tasks to undertake whilst we were there and nearly managed to do them all.

Unlike our previous visit to the Immigration Department in Luanshya last week, the official at Ndola failed to submit us to a rigorous interrogation as to our activities in Mpongwe. He then trotted us past three queues and, after commenting that our Visas had in fact expired the previous day, he duly stamped them for a further 10 days without any further discussion.

We then visited an electrical retailer that had been recommended to purchase a new Deep Freeze for the Hospital Kitchen. There is some money still in the Project Kitty and I have used money donated by my parents to go towards this. Many thanks to Mum and Dad for your generosity. I needed to change some of our US Dollars into Kwacha to fund the purchase and visited the Post Office. Very interestingly the Exchange rate for \$50 bills and larger is MUCH more favourable than smaller notes. K4400 for larger notes and K3200 for smaller denominations. So if people do bring US Dollars on subsequent visits please remember to make sure that you only bring \$100 or \$50 bills.

The Freezer will of course not fit into the minibus, so I had to link up with Caesar and Mr Spakman from the Hospital who had taken the small truck to Ndola to purchase food supplies for the World Aids Day festivities on Monday. Caesar's cell phone battery was nearly dead. And so was mine.

After lunch we loaded the last ten boxes of tiles for the Kitchen Project, nine bags of cement and two tile cutter discs. The tale of this transaction requires a whole letter in its own right, accompanied by dramatic interpretation of the finer points. I shall entertain you with it at a later date!

We then visited Shoprite to stock up household provisions, as well as some shopping for Dr Johansson. They do take Visa and Mastercard, but be prepared for a 5 minute wait whilst someone is fetched to authorise the transaction. I apologised to the chap behind me in the queue but stoical waiting is something that Zambians appear to do very well and he wasn't concerned.

Caesar found us in Shoprite and we loaded the Freezer onto the truck before Abi and I started for home. We made it home just in time for her to attend Youth Group. She has been learning Memory Verses this week for that evening. They had a competition; it was a dead heat between the boys and the girls.

Meanwhile, Sue and Ollie had had a guided tour of the Kitchen Project courtesy of Jeff. She has captured all this on video. The work is really coming on very well and looks to be pretty much on schedule. Evening discussions here in our house continue to include detailed debate as to the next day's work and ways to negotiate the assorted challenges that they are meeting. None of the floors are level, and none of the walls are square. We have also had time to get to know each other well, and chatted about many other issues from theology to politics to farming.

At 14hrs she and Netty went to the Sewing Group meeting. The ladies gradually arrived one by one and Sue and Netty read Psalm 73 and the Bible teaching for that day in their 'Our Daily Bread' book. This was followed by prayers. We hope they understood what was said! They followed the reading in their own 'Lamba' Bibles. They then talked about the things that they had been making in their group and brought a few of their 'wares' to show them.



The shipping container that arrived two weeks ago was to be opened that afternoon, so after a couple of trips backwards and forwards to Tuesday and some messages sent to the boys in the kitchens everyone gathered at the workshop to watch the unveiling. There ended up being quite a crowd. Phil took up position in the container with his Inventory list and ticked off the boxes as they were unloaded. Piles were made according to recipients. There was much singing and dancing from the ladies group with loud ululations (we have some very good video footage of this). After some speeches, at last everything was unloaded. Some of the boxes were taken off by tractor to Sister Erna's. The rest were reloaded back into the container as the ladies' Sewing Room will not be ready until next week.

Saturday was a quieter day, largely due to a morning of heavy rain and a power cut from 14.45hrs to 19.45hrs. The local Sub-Station had been hit by a lightning bolt – the thunderclap was so loud that Ollie jumped a good two inches into the air! Abi and I had managed to do some baking before lunch; so we had Tiger Cake and ginger biscuits in the afternoon (without a cuppa as there was no water and no power). We were planning to have Roast Chicken for dinner, but ended up begging some charcoal from Pastor Makule and cooked on the veranda on the small metal brazier-stove.

Abigail & Oliver's week has been much the same, school in the mornings for Abi and walks to the market for Ollie. In the afternoon variable numbers of friends turn up to play. They are very good about playing with Ollie and are fascinated by his nappy and pushchair. The two of them need to be separated from time to time as they annoy each other, but yesterday they wandered off together to have an 'Adventure' for half an hour down a side track from the Hospital thoroughfare. It is lovely that they can play so freely here without worries about safety or security.

Sunday has been a very busy day, but my letter is long enough already, so I shall save that for my next e-diary entry. Time to send this before turning in for the night (and possibly yet another Caesarian).

Points for prayer:

- For the Kitchen Project work, that the tiles will suffice for the task and that aching knees will hold out to the end of the week. We give thanks for excellent working relations between us and the Hospital Kitchen staff
- We give thanks that the shipped consignment had arrived safely and with the contents intact
- For Innocent and Angela as they scrape a living on his tailoring skills, their modest fields and her housekeeping work for the MBA
- For the Ladies Sewing Group, that the promised Sewing Room would be soon ready for them to use

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of Abi, Ollie & friends, and of Chicken a la charcoal brazier

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – Chapter 10

Dear Friends

As I said in my last e-diary, Sunday was a busy day. You will doubtless recall that last Sunday Pastor Makule had announced at the end of the service that the UK visitors would be leading this Sunday's morning service.

We had prepared a sketch about Philip & the Ethiopian (Acts 8 v24-40), a song to sing with the congregation and a short talk from Phil. The sketch was based on one that I recall performing at University when our Chaplaincy visited a small local chapel. Pete played the Angel (with a yellow Frisbee for a halo and a bamboo cane scroll) and also the chariot-horse (with cardboard ears and yoghurt pots for the clip-clop), Abigail spun Netty's umbrella for the Chariot wheel (as per 'I'll do anything' from 'Oliver'), Jeff was the Ethiopian with a Zambian cotton-print 'robe', a feather duster shoved down his collar for a fancy hat and another bamboo cane scroll. I played Philip without props or costume (the advantage of being the Director!) and Netty Narrated. After a couple of rehearsals here at the Guest House we reckoned we were ready.

We had also agreed the words and actions for "The Wise Man built his house upon the rock". The tune was, of course, a matter for personal interpretation. We were due to walk up to Church for 10.30.

At 9am the Ledger arrived; a lady with prolonged labour! Oops. This could drive a chariot and horses through our plans. I went off to see her and Phil quickly started to understudy his namesake role for the sketch. (More medical details follow) The lady's membranes were bulging, preventing the descent of the head. She clearly needed an AROM (Artificial Rupture of Membranes). No nice plastic amniohooks here to gently snag and part the thin tissue. Oh no. Sister passed me a wickedly toothed Kochers forceps with which to grab and tear the membranes open. A gush of meconium stained amniotic fluid flowed and the head started to drop with the next contraction. Fortunately an Oxytocin drip was all that was then required and 25 minutes later the baby was born. Sister said she would send the Security Guard up to Church to find me if required.

Church started on time as there were many items to fit in. The Choir were chivvied to the front without their traditional swaying shuffle dance to speed things along. After a couple of songs they still shuffle danced back to their seats despite Pastor's best efforts. Then he welcomed our Swedish visitors. Dr Gunnar Holmgren, brother to Henry, had been the sole Doctor here some 17 years ago. He had returned with a small group to visit the Hospital and local sights before heading down to Livingstone and then Victoria Falls later this week. As it was the first Sunday in Advent, the most important Sunday in the Swedish Church calendar, they sang a Swedish Carol and then, to bring the calendar full circle, 'Thine be the Glory' in Swedish, to much applause.



Notices and Offertory followed, then another offering for Pastor's Basket. This appears to be an occasional top-up to his stipend. Then it was our turn. The actions of 'The Wise man' had them in stitches, more so when we insisted they stand to join in as we sang for the second time through. I'm fairly sure that the Swedes were singing along in Swedish. The sketch was very well received. The chariot entering from the rear door and clip-clopping down the aisle raised a good laugh, especially so when Pete made an equestrian jump down from the platform.

We then had a tri-lingual rendering of 'This is the day that the Lord has made' as each sang in his own language. At 12.10 Phil was invited to speak after the Praise Group had sung. He managed to be brief and succinct, speaking from John 9 v1-12 about the Blind Man healed at the Pool of Siloam and his public witness thereafter. With Pastor's translation he had finished by 12.35. But we weren't finished yet! More Notices, and the

announcement of the newly elected leaders for the Youth Group and Choir. With the closing Hymn “Rock of Ages”, the close of the Service was announced. At 13.00!

But we STILL weren't finished yet. The Church then walked en masse ten minutes down to the Mpongwe River in the baking midday heat for a baptismal ceremony where nine candidates gave a public witness to their faith and were baptised in the sluggish but clear waters. Each gave the Elder their name on a small slip of paper and as he baptised them this was cast into the waters, swept away under the bridge. This seemed very symbolic as they celebrated entry into a new life. We kept our eyes keenly peeled for crocs, but saw nothing more menacing than a couple of small fish. Then back to the church. On the return leg I chatted to two of the Swedish visitors, Pastor Tomas and his wife Karen. Karen is a Midwife, and was very keen to see the manner of Obstetric practice at Mpongwe. Of which, more anon (unless you are tired of tales of childbirth; in which case I shall give you due warning).

Arriving back at Church at 14.00 it was now time for Holy Communion. Tri-lingual renderings of ‘I surrender all’ and ‘More, more about Jesus’ were followed by more short speeches from Pastor Makule, Tuesday, Pastor Tomas and others before we shared the bread and wine. Not the soft bread rolls and fortified Port of St Cleers, nor squares of sliced loaf and de-alcoholised wine from my Baptist youth, nor yet wafers and fruity Merlot of the Anglican tradition. No, here the elements are represented by two huge Victoria Sponge cakes and watered red fruit juice in small individual plastic cups. Two sheets of A4 were passed around the congregation on which we were to write our names. The importance or relevance of this is uncertain, whether it is intended that they be stapled to the back of The Book of The Lamb in Heaven, or whether they pertain to voting rights at the Church Meeting I am unsure. Jeff was number 39 on his side of the Church, so there must have been 90 or so present. Another prayer and we were finally finished; at 15.00hrs. 4 1/2 hours of Church is by far the longest I have ever enjoyed; truly this is African style. And since there are no cars to wash or lawns to mow, no Sunday Supplements to read after a family dinner and Grandparents live next door anyway so no obligatory visits are required, why not? The local market appears to be unrestricted by any Sunday Trading laws, though whether the shops in the towns are also open, I do not know.



We had been invited to lunch, along with the Swedes, by Tuesday and Dr Okoko. I fancy that benches from Church had been whisked along the track and into his living room to provide sufficient seating at the tables. Just as we sat down to eat the man with the Ledger appeared! Junior Doctors learn very early in their career how to finish a meal in seconds flat in response to a Crash Bleep or an urgent call. This ability is never truly lost as they become more Senior.

At this point the heavens opened and I was drenched by the time I reached the Hospital, squelching through puddles in my sandals. There was another lady with prolonged labour and another Caesarian was required. Karen came along (wearing a very sensible Swedish rain-poncho to keep her dry) to observe and ended up scrubbed and assisting. I explained this would be called a ‘Busman’s Holiday’ in England. I’m not sure this translates directly into Swedish or Lamba, but they understood the general idea. I’ll spare you the goriest of details, suffice to say mother and baby are now both fine; a baby boy who was definitely too large to make it through her pelvis.

Halfway through I asked the Clinical Officer who was giving the Ketamine, how her Blood Pressure was, knowing full well that he had not put a BP cuff anywhere near the patient during the whole procedure. “Oh, fine,” he reassured me “A very strong pulse.” If I were here for longer, or had any authority, I would challenge this slap-dash attitude. But, as Sue observed, if not too many patients die as a result, where is the driver for change?

Meanwhile I am told that the others enjoyed a marvellous and leisurely feast. Thus do I suffer for my profession. (Sue: Ahhhh, diddums) My clothes were still sodden by the time I had finished, so I wore my scrubs home, carrying my dripping clothes at arms length. The Wijk, Okoko and Bonnington children had had great fun running in and out of the torrential rain, all seven were wet and muddy but the squeals of delight as they dared each other to chase through the sheets of water made it worth the washing down afterwards.

What was left of the afternoon and evening petered out with chit-chat and several games of Rainbow Towers with Oliver.

My last night On-Call was unbroken, until 03.00. Maternity Ward had two ladies in protracted labour. (More Obstetrics hereafter) The first only needed a small trickle of Oxytocin before out popped baby whilst I

examined the second. She had bulging membranes, so I did an AROM (see para. 4 above) and left instructions for a Review in 1 hour if there was no further progress. Back to bed. At 5.30 the Security Guard was tapping on the door again. Baby's head was nearly at the introitus but mother was now exhausted. So I did my first Ventouse vacuum delivery for umpteen years, putting the antiquated apparatus together like a Meccano set, with Sister standing on the plug in the extension lead so that the pump would work. I don't think my episiotomy was large enough, or I was slightly too enthusiastic with the traction, as she ended up with a sizeable 2nd degree posterior tear. But the baby girl cried quickly and was fine.



Meanwhile, delivery number three wanted to start pushing so I offered to stitch my lady back together as Sister was then buzzing frantically around. Unfamiliar Stitch Holders and using a large Mosquito clip instead of toothed forceps with a known HIV +ve patient meant that I took my time!

As I said, Sunday was a very busy day indeed! Still, my week On-Call is now over and I caught up nicely on sleep on Monday night.

Abi had an INSET day (the Wijks were out and Esnat, who keeps house for them, couldn't find the Classroom key) so she came home and did some work books instead. Another heavy overnight downpour meant that Sue's daily trip to the market was muddy and sticky. She bought five more rolls of material, some at Rachel's request to bring home for her, the other for Abi to have a skirt made like Mummy.

Innocent brought the finished products round that evening. Netty will tell you the tale of the upside-down tribesmen when you see her! Sue was delighted with her skirt and has ordered a copy of Angela's two-piece skirt-suit. Innocent is confident that he will have this ready by the time we depart. Perhaps she'll be able to wear it to church on Sunday?

We have had no hot water for the past three days, since the sub-station was knocked out. We aren't sure why as the cold is mostly (sometimes) working and the electricity is OK. Dr Gunnar Holmgren has suggested that the boreholes and pipe-work installed by the early Swedes some 40 years ago has silted up and the intermittent power shortages allow blockages to form. There seems to be some merit in this theory, but I'm not sure it explains our hot water situation. This morning I was up at 6am and there was hot water in the tap! I quickly went to have a shower, only for the water to peter out once more just as I stepped behind the shower curtain. So I've reverted to our tried and tested yoghurt-pot shower and now feel clean again.

Netty accompanied me on my Ward Round on Tuesday morning. 28 beds to one Nurse is not quite how she remembers nursing in the UK. She was struck by the lack of communication and haphazardness of the notes. The Nurse has little knowledge of each patient's needs or care, there are no Kardex nursing notes and blood results may or may not be available two days later. She says she has plenty to tell her daughter Jemma, who is a newly qualified Nurse.

The Kitchen team have now run out of tiles. They report only two tiles broken out of 100sq metres, and even those bits were cut down to fit round tricky pipe-work. In doing so they had to negotiate a pipe bound with string, plastic bag, tape and several decades of grime hiding a 2 inch hole. It still dripped! The floors are now clean enough to eat your dinner from, though only if you care for the taste of cabbage with tomato gravy. Phil's enthusiasm with a saw when slicing an inch from the bottom of the internal wooden doors managed to set one alight! That being said, it WAS the first time he had used an angle-grinder on wood. The broken windows in Children's Ward have also been reglazed.

We hosted a Soiree on Tuesday evening for the workers in the kitchen, friends from Church and the community and colleagues from the Hospital. We reckon about 40 guests mingled in the Guest House. Pastor Makule said Grace at 18.20 and the Buffet tables were cleared in quick order. We noted a couple of very interesting Zambian dining habits; when taking buffet food from serving plates they always used a utensil, never their fingers. When I discussed this with Urban he suggested this was totally contrary to the manner of eating with nsima rolled into balls and hand-dipped into a common stock pot. Abigail had baked three cakes for dessert, Lemon, Tiger and Chocolate variants on her Swedish sponge recipe. It was fascinating to observe our guests take a slice from EACH cake at the same time, thus the first 20 odd were well served and the latecomers to the table were disappointed. No consideration appeared to be given for sharing and equality. We presume this is simply an ingrained cultural 'feast & famine' phenomenon rather than in any way a lack of courtesy. Around 19.50 Pastor spoke a few words of thanks for the party and our work here, and then announced the end of the evening!

Everyone had gone by 20.00, leaving a modest amount of clearing up. Fortunately we still had electricity and even hot water and had not needed to fall back on our carefully pre-positioned candles and lamps.

It appears that I may have made a splint for my own back. During my Ward Round on Wednesday morning Dr Okoko requested my advice for a case in Children's Ward. Another child, another mango tree, another fractured midshaft femur. Another Thomas splint was clearly required. So it was back to the Workshop and the Bonnington-Thomas splint Mark II was fabricated; this time featuring a complete, properly angled ring at the top and a V at the base for secure affixation of the traction cord. STRICT instructions have been given to the lad's father to return the splint to Mpongwe after the necessary internal fixation operation at Ndola has been performed. I'm not sure I am terribly confident about this, but stranger things have happened in Africa.

Wednesday afternoon looked to be our last chance to visit Lake Kashiba; a return for Phil, Abi & me, a first visit for Sue, Ollie, Netty Jeff & Pete. The Kitchen work has reached a hiatus whilst wooden door thresholds are prepared in the Workshop and more tiles MIGHT be being brought from Ndola, though the collective opinion is that the already tiled strip at the back of the Loading Bay is wholly sufficient and more are not needed. Tuesday said that the weather was 'sceptical', but it would be 'sceptical' tomorrow too. Mr Kapindula, the Guest House Manager had forecast rain. We took this as a good sign, so quickly set off in the Land Cruiser.

The roads were a little worse than our first visit, I shall leave the others to describe our journey in their own words! But the beauty of the lake quickly brushed that from our minds. The waters had risen a good two feet and were still a deep blue and warm. Netty and Pete swam right across the lake to view a flock of storks. The approach of a pair of eagles concerned us slightly. We did not relish the challenge of climbing to a treetop eyrie to rescue the intrepid swimmers from hungry eaglets! Our return was uneventful (if you ignore the potholes and slippery road-wide puddles) and we now await a supper prepared for us by the Ladies Sewing Group.

Could somebody pass onto Jenny that their group remains enthusiastic, finished articles are of excellent quality and they are very much looking forward to moving into their new Sewing Room in the near future? They are absolutely thrilled with the goods from the container that arrived recently. Jenny's guess-timate of £40 for repairing Innocent's sewing machine looks to be accurate and Phil will endeavour to pass on this money before we depart.

We are nearly at the end of our time here at Mpongwe, the Kitchen project is very nearly completed in so far as painting and tiling is concerned. Repairs to the defunct equipment will need to wait for another visit but everyone is delighted with the amount and quality of the work that has been done. Godwin and Webb are very proud of their new working environment; we hope that it will be maintained in a responsible manner.

Points for prayer:

- For farewells and continuing friendships
- For those we will soon be leaving behind with dust, rain, mossies, flies, power cuts and water shortages while we return to Western luxury
- For the Baptised ladies, that they can remain strong in their faith and witness as they face challenges in the next few weeks
- For Pastor Makule and the ongoing witness and work of Mpongwe Baptist Church

God bless

Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of Netty & Sue with their new skirts with Innocent their tailor, and of the Baptism service

The Bonnington Zambian e-diary – The Epilogue

Dear Friends

I had supposed that our epilogue would be merely a short message, wherein we tidied up loose ends, packed and departed on a pleasant flight to Heathrow. Not so fast. I feel that we owe it to our readers, who have been with us for every step of our time in Mpongwe and who have supported us with thoughts and prayers, to recount the most latterly of our adventures.

On Thursday the finishing touches were put to the Kitchen Project. Another box of tiles had been fetched from Ndola, whether by Mr Moses or with some other consignment of goods I do not know. Mr Moses is the Senior Hospital Manager. He continues to live in Ndola and ‘commutes’ by Public Transport on the days that he comes to work. This meant that Phil, Jeff & Pete had their work cut out to cut and cement the tiles before lunch, grouting in the afternoon so that all was in place and secure before finally packing up their tools.

You will doubtless recall the leaking pipe in the Hospital Kitchen from my previous e-diary. The good news is that Pete has mended it with: a piece of car tyre cut with a kitchen knife, four pieces from a metal chain-link fence, two carrier bags from the market, putty and some string. It is no longer dripping.



Photo – Kitchen Before and After

Sue & Netty made a further visit to the Pre-School to collect the beautiful pictures for Rhea and to distribute some goodies (pens, crayons and pencils) while Abi played Daughter Christmas with sweets and little games for the youngsters.

My anticipated brief Ward-Round before packing was to be no such thing. Dealing with the intoxicated father of an 18 year old with terminal AIDS was a challenge. She had been in denial and refused to adhere to the anti-retroviral therapy, thus her condition was very severe. Cachectic and withdrawn, I very much suspect that she will not be able to recover sufficiently to avert a rapid decline. I ensured that she consented to me speaking to her father, probably at odds with the cultural norm.

And then Janet Pairi came to ask if I would be in Theatre that morning. There was a lady with known HIV and a probable intra-abdominal abscess that needed a laparotomy. However, all the Theatre Nurses were off on a trip to Ndola or off-duty having worked the previous night.



Photos from ART CLINIC

Dr Okoko was holding the fort in ART Clinic reviewing HIV cases, so that just left Janet, myself and Dr Johansson. Cristobel, the Student Clinical Officer, came in to give the anaesthetic.

The lady was not well. Scrubbed and assisting Dr J, I recommended that Cristobel use the Pulse Oximeter. A pulse of 115 and Oxygen Sats of 40% did not look good! The patient looked pale, paler than Cristobel's anxious face as she floundered badly out of her depth. Stripping off my gloves I switched to Anaesthetist; airway and breathing, BP of 100/60. OK, no oxygen to give, no proper anaesthetic agents, no suxamethonium; so let's do what we can. Move the probe to another finger, scrub off the flaky remnants of nail varnish and try her toes, no, it won't fit on her earlobe either. Sats of 56%. A bit better. I sent Cristobel off to the lab with blood samples for an Hb and an urgent cross-match for 2 units of blood. Meanwhile Dr J and Janet had found over a litre of pus in

a walled off abscess behind the uterus. I asked Yale to fetch some Pethidine, anticipating another unlabelled syringe to be presented. Interestingly he promptly returned from Maternity with a fresh unopened ampoule! Who knows, perhaps things CAN change slowly?

The lack of proper anaesthetic facilities at Mpongwe nearly led to the demise of the patient. I suppose in retrospect she was ASA IV, but we had to try with what we had as she may not have been able to wait for a transfer to Ndola. Once we had her stabilised once more I reverted to surgeon. The dense adhesions made anatomical landmarks hard to determine. We think it was a case of appendicitis that had caused the abscess, which we finally resected and then finally managed to wash out and close. Cristobel started to dab at my face with a cotton wool ball soaked in Meths (that well known antiseptic, used widely at Mpongwe!) at a couple of spots of blood (bear in mind the patient's status). I reassured her that I had actually nicked myself shaving that morning, so it was my blood and I wasn't at risk of infection. The patient went back to the Ward in a stable condition with a blood transfusion running; on Friday she would be reviewed by someone else. I shall try to find out how she is.

It would be impossible to be both surgeon and anaesthetist for a laparotomy in the NHS. The diversity of roles that are possible at Mpongwe is similar in some respects to General Practice, but of course at a far deeper level of intervention and treatment. This is very much part of the reason why I have so thoroughly enjoyed the clinical work whilst I have been there.

After lunch we did finally call it a day and started packing. We left a suitcase of clothes and shoes with Pastor Makule for distribution in an appropriate manner to the most needy. Innocent delivered more finished articles of clothing after minor alterations to accommodate the better nourished Western frame and Angela brought round five stitch-work bags that Sue had bought from the ladies' Sewing Group. Pete and I went to the market to buy a bag of charcoal for Pastor Makule's wife; we had borrowed some on our electricity-free evenings with which to cook. We knew the going rate was about K10,000 for a sack. We were quoted K15,000, dropping to K14,000 after a brief haggle. We declined, and walking away we bumped into Innocent. So HE bought the sack for the proper fee and then helped us to transport it to Pastor's house carefully balanced on the back of his bicycle.



In the afternoon Phil, Jeff, Sue, Abi & Ollie went off to Tuesday's farm for a couple of hours, shown round the 12 hectares by his daughter. Phil has a notion to return as a swineherd for Tuesday's pigs, but Patricia may wish to have an opinion about this! Ollie very much liked the pigs too. Most of Tuesday's family lives out at the farm during the early Rainy Season to help with the planting, so Abi went off to play with Gracious who she had not seen for two weeks. All the maize seed is planted by hand; surely this is back-breaking work. Despite the fact that a tractor is hired in to plough, till and furrow the land in preparation, a seed-drill is not used. Phil asked Tuesday if there had been many advances in farming over the years. "Oh, yes. The seed and the fertilizer are much better these days." Perhaps it is still seen as a necessary social chore, and I do wonder how farming in Britain might have been were it not for the iniquitous Enclosure Act that drove millions to the industrial cities that were the powerhouse of our Industrial Revolution.

On their return several of Abi's friends called round and she distributed some of the toys that we were leaving behind.

Supper that evening was punctuated by a series of visitors dropping in to wish us a fond farewell. Stella and Henry Holmgren called round and we had an impromptu Graduation Ceremony when Abi was awarded her Explorers Certificate for completing a whole course of Bible Studies with the Youth Group. She had had to complete Lesson 10 that day as she would be missing the last meeting when we were in Lusaka! Stella said that she had been her first ever English student and had fitted in really well with their activities. We left the remainder of the toys with Stella to be gifted at Christmas through the Youth Group.

We planned to make an early start for the long drive down to Lusaka on Friday morning, confounded slightly by yet another power cut and water stoppage. But we did manage to get underway, after yet more farewells, some tearful, by 7am. Because we took Tuesday's car as well as the Land Cruiser we followed the longer tar road via Luanshya (where Tuesday stopped for fuel, oil and a quick business meeting with some contact or other). The roads were fairly clear down past Kapiri, where the dirt road to Mpongwe meets us again, to Kabwe. Driving in convoy was an interesting challenge as Tuesday clearly believed that the rugged and rattling Land Cruiser much preferred to hurtle along at over 110kph. I dutifully kept pace in his saloon, swerving to avoid the worse antics of oncoming Zambian drivers as they overtook with apparent abandon.

At the Fig Tree Café south of Kabwe we took a welcome comfort stop. This was the same spot that the boys had stopped on their journey up, and been the first customers of the newly opened venture. The South African host recognised them instantly (perhaps early days of trade have not yet been over-brisk!) and with immense bonhomie ushered us inside. We enjoyed a splendid Brunch and heartily recommend the establishment to future visitors. It marks the halfway point via the dirt road or 1/3 of the distance from Lusaka by tar.

Thus we arrived at the Southern Baptist Guest Accommodation by the early afternoon. If this can be taken as a benchmark, then it appears that Southern Baptists from America enjoy comfortable beds, glorious long hot showers and cavernous but noisy refrigerators. Yup, probably sounds about right, and at US\$20 a night made an excellent stop-over on our long homeward journey.

After a quick refresh we dropped Elena (one of the Dutch Nurses on Elective who we had given a lift) at the shopping mall whilst a few more Dollars were changed into Kwacha before we visited a small market where souvenir shacks sit cheek by jowl with tiny commercial outlets offering copying or computer printing and hairdressers complete with huge helmet hairdryers. Assorted nick-nacks were duly purchased. I was sorely tempted to buy a beautifully carved tabletop for which the vendor would have accepted a mere £80, but realistically getting it back on the plane without proper wrapping would have proved foolish. Abi came away with a couple of Zambian musical instruments, following her School Music Project instructions. She will no doubt be delighted to show them to Mr Egger and her class next week when she returns to School for the last two weeks of term.

We had chosen to dine that evening at 'Rhapsody', on the recommendation of Elena. It is part of a South African chain, so we might have anticipated Pretorian organisation or Cape Town standards. The food, it is true, was very good indeed. When it arrived, that is. The service was, in contrast, very poor. The finer details of our meal will have to wait for the full tale to be told. Wounds must heal first; the memories are as yet too raw. It was not quite at a Basil Fawlty level, but rates up there with 'TGI Friday' in Southampton and the hostelry near Chatham Historical Shipyard. Pete puts it second only to a hotel outside Gothenburg. We didn't leave a tip.

Apart from the now unfamiliar drone of traffic, the night was disturbed for each of us in different ways; Sue and I had the noise of two competing bass beats from nearby Night Clubs coming through the window until dawn, Phil was dive-bombed by countless mosquitoes INSIDE his net, Jeff and Pete were too hot and Oliver rolled out of bed. Another early start beckoned as we piled ourselves and all of the luggage into the Land Cruiser so that Tuesday could run us up to the airport. This travel arrangement is OK for the very shortest of trips, but not recommended for anything longer.

Booking In was painless but tedious. Two cases weighed in at just under 23kg, the rest were comfortably under the limit. The lady at the desk was very thankful! By the time we had our Boarding Passes the tannoy was urgently beckoning us to board. A long queue snaked behind us still. The souvenir shops air-side take US Dollars, and offer a particularly usurious rate if one wishes to pay by Kwacha. So, some fiscal advice for future visitors: take enough US Dollars for your Entry Visa and accommodation in Lusaka on your return trip, bring the rest in Sterling. If you do bring more US\$, make sure you have \$50 bills or larger. Smaller notes are not worth as much if you exchange them! Spend your Kwacha before you reach the airport, purchase gifts or souvenirs from traders who call at the Guest House, or from the Lusaka market. The swatches of cotton print material are far cheaper at Mpongwe, though some are not actually cotton; if in doubt Angela or Innocent will be able to tell you. And negotiate.

The flight, once more with British Airways was eventless and decidedly pleasant (and this from someone who sees flying as a necessary evil, a time gap in my life as I travel from A to B). Abi and Ollie were immaculately behaved. Abi had been sat between Pete and Netty, so she had no choice but to be demure and fidgetless. The snores from Jeff and Phil didn't even reach back to our row. Our thanks once more to BA for such an excellent journey. Steve Roles met us with the Chapel minibus at the door and

We thank you for sharing our e-diary over the past few weeks; we trust that it has been enjoyable and informative (or that you have skipped the dull or uninteresting parts). We look forward to our ongoing life in the UK with some sadness at leaving behind the relatively stress free and slower paced lifestyle that we have enjoyed in Zambia. We shall catch up with you all in the near future and will be back on our old email address sbonnington@doctors.org.uk as soon as this email reaches you.

God bless
Simon, Sue, Abi & Ollie



Pictures attached of our Farewell Party with the Sewing Group, and of Abigail's 'Graduation Ceremony'