

PAPER 3

**THE HOVERDOCTOR SERVICE 1978-1989:
12 YEARS OF ADVENTURE WITH A PURPOSE**

By

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The count down has begun to March 1990. That's the date when the Hovercraft to China Expedition start its unique attempt to navigate the upper reaches of the giant Yangtze River, to trace its source in the mountains of Tibet.

In 1974, two RAF Squadron Leaders returned from a leave-time mission of mercy to the then hidden famine of drought stricken Ethiopia. They had lived amongst the suffering people. They delivered life-saving water drilling equipment.

In 1975, Dr. Bill Gould, then Director of a Mission Hospital in the mountains of Nepal, challenged one of the RAF Officers, Michael Cole, to find an economical vehicle which could operate on the turbulent rapid strewn Himalayan rivers which bounded his practice and bring swift help to isolated peoples.

Tim Longley, a pilot engineer of MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) was carrying out some highly regarded pioneering work on lightweight hovercraft. He produced River Rover.

To the Napalees the Kali Gandaki is the Goddess of Death, a vicious, swirling river. For River Rover it was a natural, if formidable, highway. Bill Gould's medical area was bounded by sixty tortuous miles of this river. The nature of the terraine was such that it would take many days for the patient to reach the hospital, often carried on the back of another member of the family. The journey deprives the fields of essential workers.

The logic is appallingly simple:

If you don't plant the rice the whole family dies.

If you don't bring in the sick only one person dies.

In 1978 the two River Rovers made numerous regular journeys over this testing river. A notable British invention of remarkable simplicity backed by a dedicated team had founded the first hover doctor service. In 1979 the River Rover tackled the remote mountain area of Irian Jaya, airlifted to it's destination spectacularly slung beneath a helicopter.

Notable progress had been made. In 1982 a further challenge - The Amazon.

The expediton to the Amazon headwaters in Peru was due to start in May 1982 - it was not to be!

When Mike Cole visited Peru in April 1982 he was greeted with the news of possible war in the South Atlantic.

The crisis deepened, the project postponed.

In September, clearance to go ahead was fully given.

At first sight the Amazon's source tributary, the Rio Apurimac seems like paradise but the metaphoric serpent uncoils everywhere. The treacherous rapids claims many lives. The water which looks so inviting is infested with parasites which preclude a tempting paddle.

The River Rovers breached the standing waves and powered through the Barrier Rapids where the Andes squeeze the rock walled river into a boiling cauldron.

A hover doctor service calling at 11 clinics was established amongst Quechua and Campa Indians. The doctors and dentists were always welcome.

Peruvians were trained to drive and maintain the craft under the direction of engineer, Gordon Davies. A 1000 kilometer journey to the heart of the jungle region was undertaken. These regions, formerly beyond relief, have been brought into the scope of medical care.

The President of Peru was so impressed that he visited the team in the heart of the jungle and rode the rapids in River Rover.

At the end of the project he held a lunch in the team's honour in the Presidential Palace in Lima where he spoke in glowing terms of the contribution made to his country.

The hovering doctor service had made a most positive contribution to the restoration of goodwill between Britain and South America.

The timing had been perfect.

Now, the hover doctor team sets out for what must be the ultimate test - the Yangtze headwaters and its source (see map at Annex A)

Of more importance will be the medical and scientific projects undertaken. Aboard the diesel engined 20 seat Griffon and the 6 seat River Rover hovercrafts will be doctors, engineers and scientists who will be studying and working with the Chinese on rural health, water quality, aeronautical and materials engineering and a United Nations (UNICEF) vaccination programme for children.

The project has the patronage of the former British Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath MBE MP, a friend and frequent visitor to China, together with the support of the Chinese and British Governments.

The invitation to China has been made under the twinning arrangement which exists between Leicestershire County Council and Sichuan Province and Chongqing City and Leicester City Council. Appropriately, Loughborough University with co-operation from Chengdu University will lead the expeditions technical and scientific programme.

The Expedition itself will last three months and will cover the upper third of the Yangtze River's 3,900 miles. It is the third longest river in the world. More than three quarters of the river's course runs through the mountainous terrain.

The Yangtze journey which Mike Cole has described as 'The Hovercraft equivalent of climbing Everest', will be against the natural current and flow of the river and in the later stages the Hovercraft will be operating at an altitude of over 15,000 ft. At that height exacting stresses are put on machinery and men. The air will be thin and the weather unpredictable. No assault on mountain peaks has required more dedication.

The primary aim of the Expedition is to set up a vaccination project for UNICEF in remote areas where boats cannot operate. This is part of the plan to vaccinate all the world's children against measles, whooping cough, polio, tetanus, diphtheria and tuberculosis by the year 2000 (see Annex B)

The medical team will be led by Dr. Rachel Pinnigar (currently in Bhutan) with assistance from Dr. Bill Gould and Dr. David Langley, GP's from Brixham.

The third objective of the Expedition is under the direction of Dr. Mel Richardson of Loughborough University and designer, Tim Longley in conjunction with Chengdu University and Chinese Academy of Science, are to study and undertake field trials on materials and structures for Hovercraft. They will be testing and looking at ways of making Hovercraft Technology more efficient by experimenting with various materials under stress at altitude.

Several young people will be selected to join the team to pass the Expedition's ideals to the next generation.

The countdown has begun to a project which promises much. Mike Cole, returning from a recent recce. commented 'China has its own culture shock, wall to wall people. The urban areas are like Wembley on Cup Final Day.' Beyond those millions lie the remote areas of this third largest country in the world, where communities are about to experience the potential of British Hovercraft to save lives in remote areas.



UNICEF

Hovercraft Expedition to China

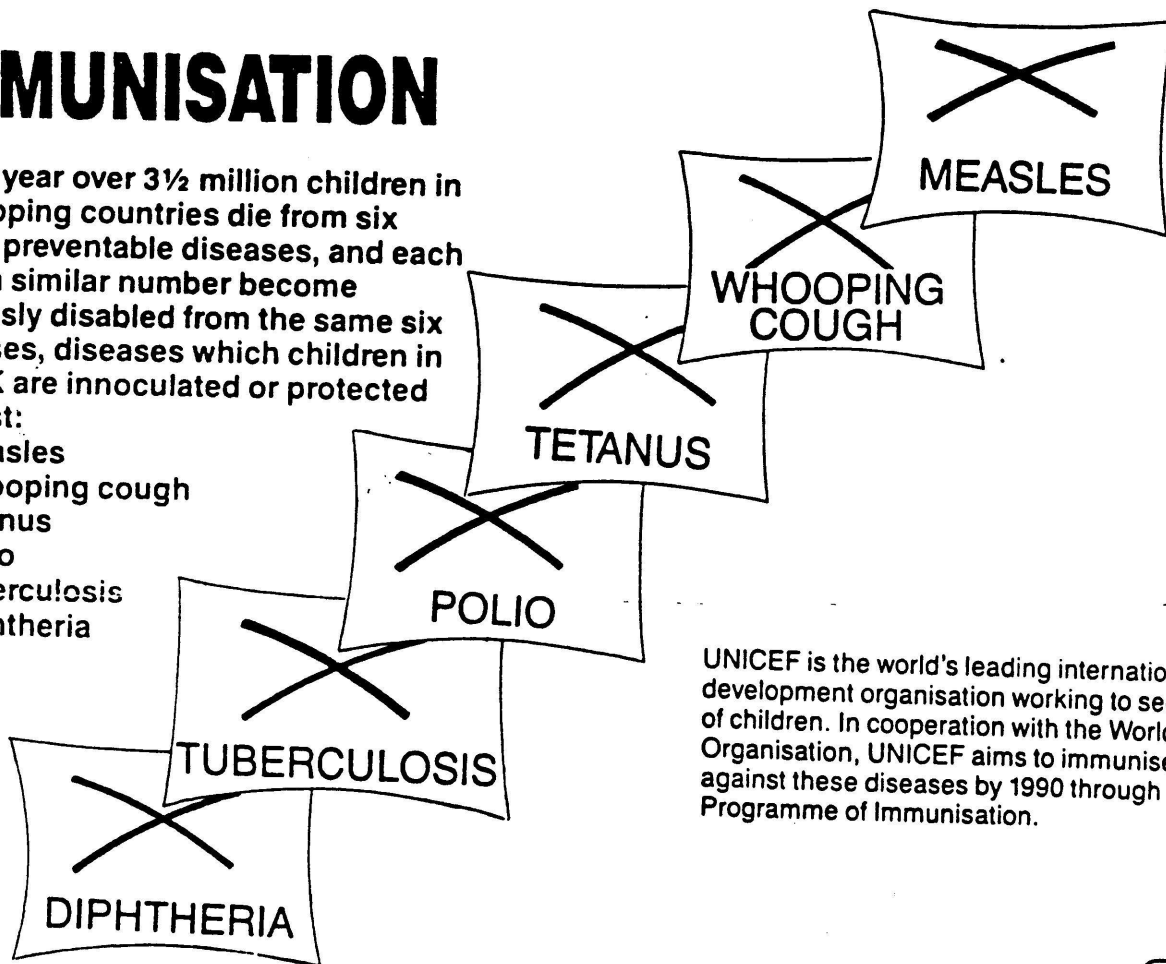
气垫船友谊互助的探险队

THE HOVERCRAFT EXPEDITION TO CHINA WILL BE WORKING WITH UNICEF IN THEIR WORLD-WIDE PROGRAMME OF CHILD IMMUNISATION AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE.

IMMUNISATION

Every year over 3½ million children in developing countries die from six easily preventable diseases, and each year, a similar number become seriously disabled from the same six diseases, diseases which children in the UK are inoculated or protected against:

- measles
- whooping cough
- tetanus
- polio
- tuberculosis
- diphtheria

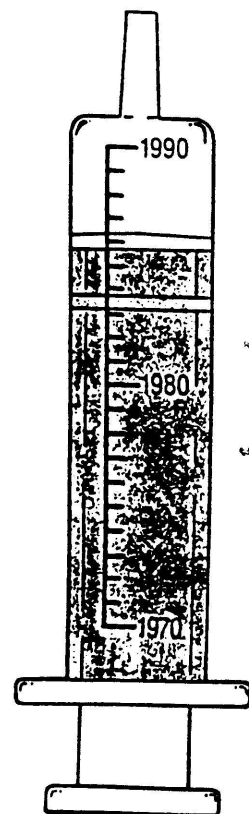


UNICEF is the world's leading international development organisation working to secure the lives of children. In cooperation with the World Health Organisation, UNICEF aims to immunise all children against these diseases by 1990 through its Expanded Programme of Immunisation.

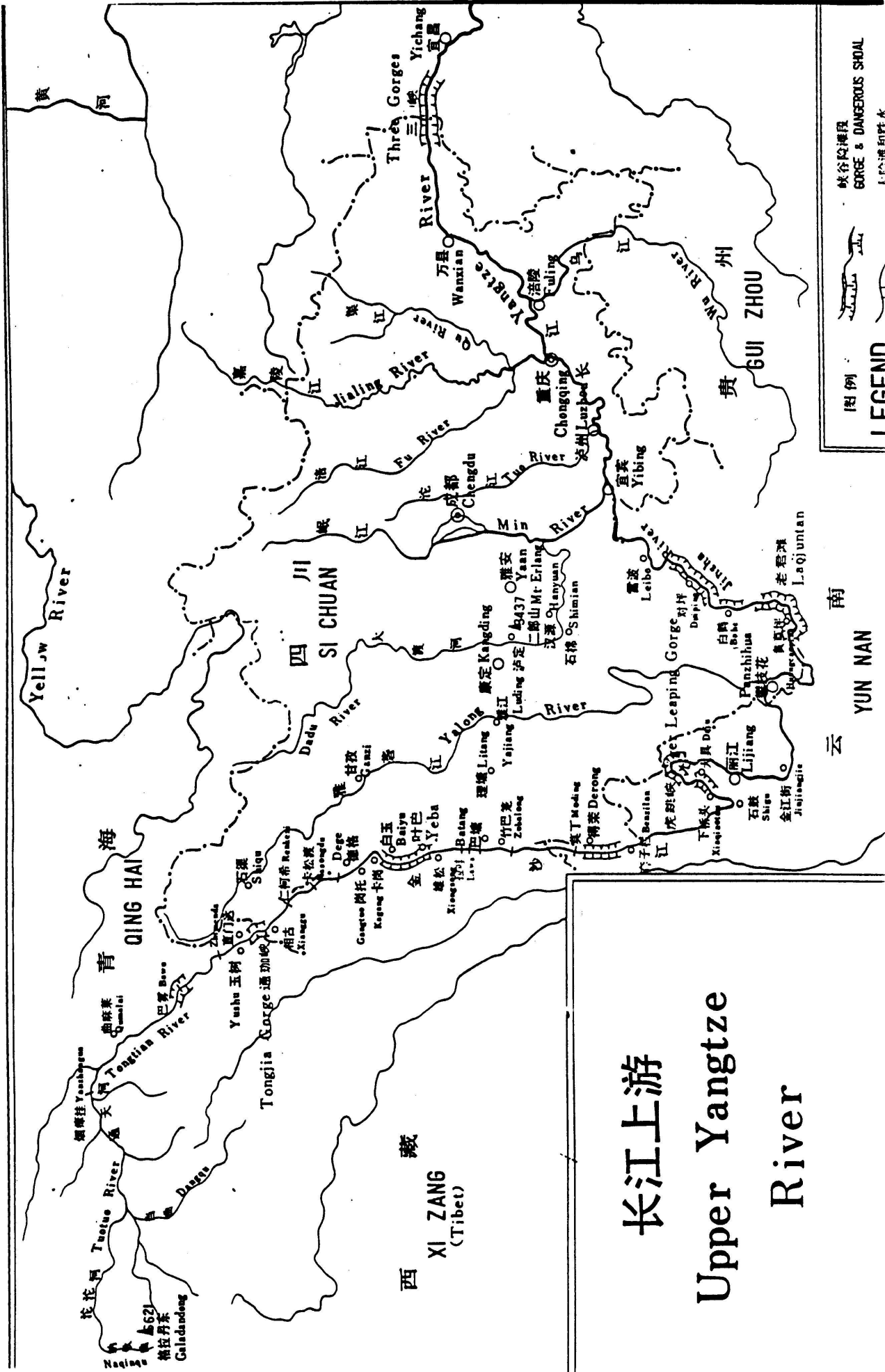


THE TARGET: immunisation for all children by 1990. This goal was considered almost impossible when first announced in 1977, but so was the goal of eradicating smallpox in the 1960s. Over 60 countries are now committed to achieving this target.

CHINA.. is one of those countries. The Expedition will participate in reaching the children living along the upper reaches of the River Yangtse in Spring 1990, in the Provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai.



队长 Team Leader: Michael Cole 电话 Tel: 098982 323 UK



长江上游 Upper Yangtze River

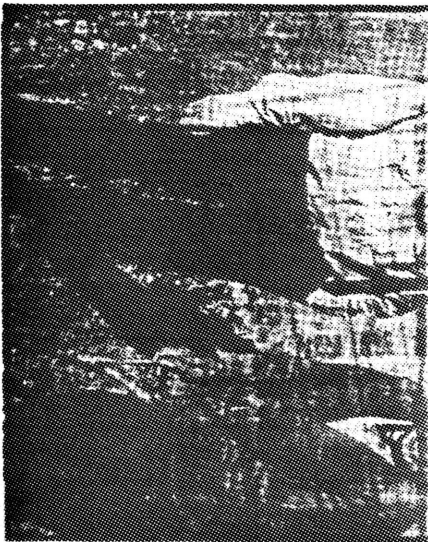
图例
 峡谷险滩段
 GORGE & DANGEROUS SHOAL
 危险湍急河水
 DANGEROUS RAPID WATER

云
 YUN NAN
 南

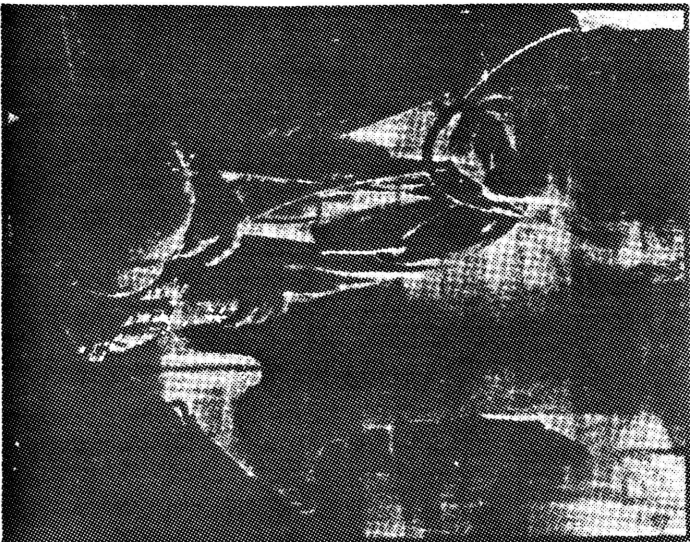
贵
 GUI ZHOU

四
 SI CHUAN

西
 XI ZANG
 (Tibet)



■ Mike Cole with an 85-year-old man who spent his lifetime praying for a church to be built in the Andean community, British youngsters, led by Mike Cole fulfilled his dream! Every morning, the man was there, breaking stone with them.



■ After setting up the service — the hover doctor in action in Peru.

unfortunate.

Over the years on leave from the RAF, he has led many major expeditions to places like Java, Hong Kong, Nepal and Peru.

He and his teams have built bridges, hospitals, clinics and schools; they have established life-giving clean water supplies and helped to eradicate disease.

Mike of London, near Ross-on-Wye, has taken two major expeditions to establish vital hover doctor services. In 1978 he took a party up the previously un navigable Kail Gandaki river — overlooked by the jagged peaks of the Himalayas — to set up a hover doctor service for the sick and injured in the remote villages of West Nepal.

Expeditions

And in 1982 he headed an expedition to take a similar service to those living in the regions of the upper reaches of the Amazon in Peru.

Now, with the ravages of "mad" and many more comforts being included in my "backpack" — Mike is preparing for what could be his last major mercy mission and perhaps the biggest adventure of his lifetime.

He is heading an expedition of 25 by helicopter to the upper regions of China's Yangtze River.

The aim is again to bring the life-saving hover doctor service to the people of remote areas.

Mike is calling this trip his "Everest climb", according to 17,000ft against the weather, which will be far from easy.

It will be a test not only of man, but also the hover machine, which will have on board some of Britain's newest and best equipment, including especially to see how it stands up to the wear and tear, a project in conjunction with Loughborough University.

The party, who leave in March, 1983, will also be taking part in a nine-month

Mike said: "It will be a tremendous test. I do not know how people or the craft will stand up to it. The air is pretty thin at 17,000ft, and within an eight hour period you can get a tremendous variation in weather. Anything from a tropical sandstorm to sleet and hail."

The I.C.I. — sponsored trip is costing £220,000, which Mike is confident of raising.

The royalties of all books written about his previous expeditions are being ploughed into it. And, again like previous trips, the venture will be the subject of a TV documentary.

Important

As with other projects, Mike will be looking to include young people in his party. The idea of getting the young involved is very important to him. Over the years, he has motivated and included hundreds of youngsters in various forms to help the underprivileged of the developing world.

His son, Nick, and daughter, Carolyn, have also been bitten by the bug. Nick is just back from heading a party to India where he has been working with Mother Theresa of Calcutta. And Carolyn has been to Peru, Nigeria and Brazil.

Mike said: "I see it as my task now to pass the concept of worthwhile adventure — on to the next generation. "Young people have so much to give, to share, to offer the poorer people of the world — and you get so much satisfaction out of helping others."

Lucky

Mike feels he is lucky to have reached middle age and be doing a job which satisfies him so much.

In many ways, materialism went out of the door in 1987 when he left the RAF to take up the post of director of short-term experience projects with the Evangelical Union of South America.

He was a staff officer at RAF in Stanmore, North London, in the early 70s. Mr Goodland was minister of the Baptist church there.

Contacts

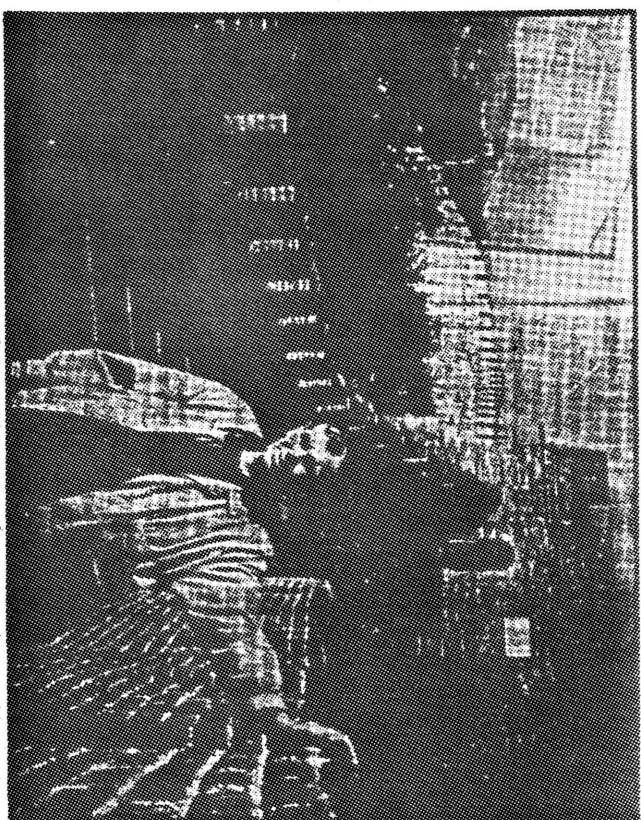
Through his missionary contacts, Mr. Goodland heard of the starving and thirsty in Ethiopia before they might hit the world's headlines. He went to Mike for help.

Always an adventurer — he has led dog team expeditions across the Norwegian glaciers — Mike agreed to go on a trip to drill for water for the poor people of the Wolq Province of Ethiopia.

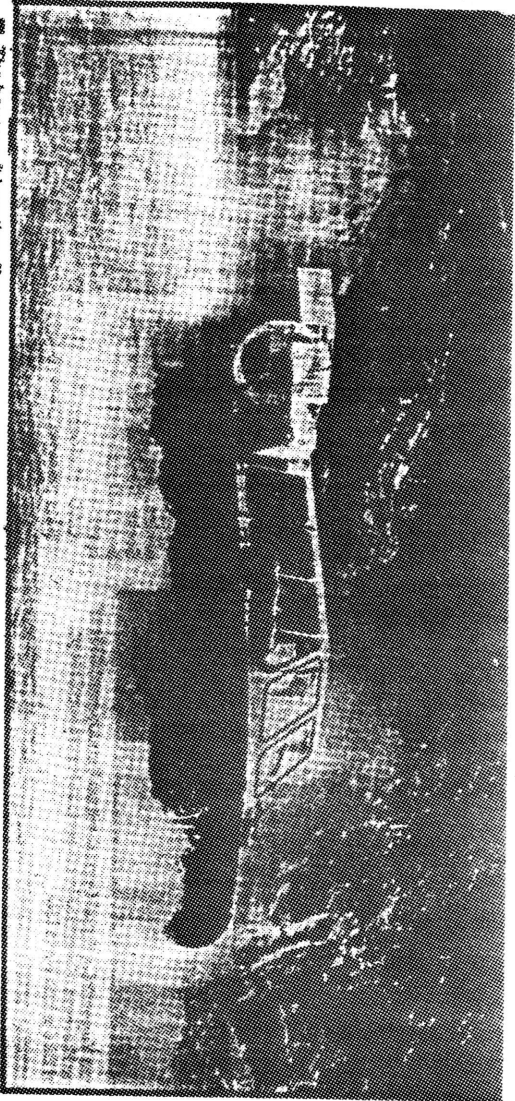
When he saw those people he was so moved he vowed that his future adventures would be "with a purpose". "I cannot change the world for anybody, but can help a few people," said Mike, who in 1983 was awarded the OBE for his work.



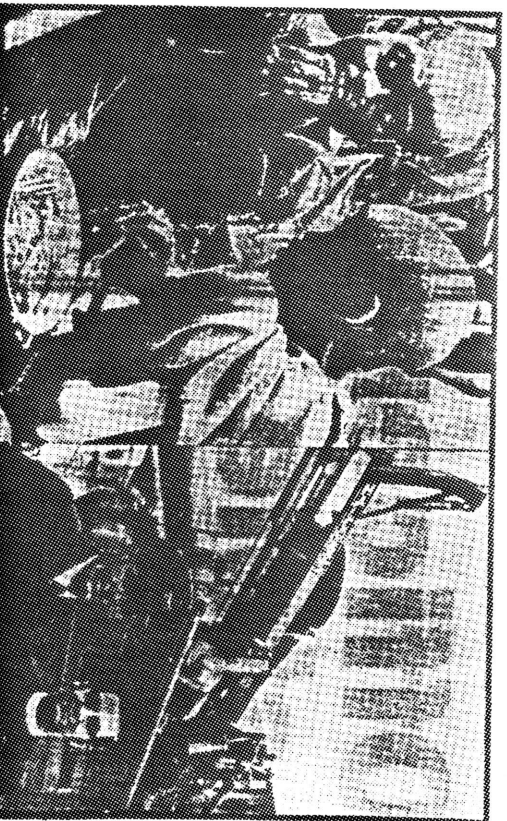
■ Camps Indian mother and baby from the high jungles of the Apurimac Valley in Peru along the upper regions of the Amazon



■ Mike Cole on the Great Wall of China, during a rescue for next year's expedition up the Yangtze.



■ The hovercraft in action. For mercy worker Mike Cole, of Goodley, it is an invaluable way of getting around in otherwise very difficult terrain.



■ The plight of the starving is depicted by these two hungry Ethiopian children pictured on the left. On the right, Mike Cole and the Rev. Patrick Goodland with the Tear Fund Christian Relief water drilling rig which they took out to Ethiopia in 1973.

He couldn't stand by while others suffered

Mike's worldwide campaign against poverty and disease

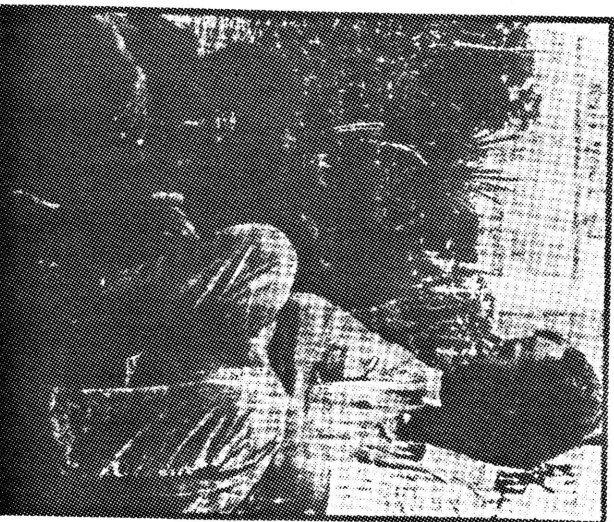


THE plight of the starving in Ethiopia in the early 1970's prompted Squadron Leader Mike Cole to go into missionary work, eventually resigning his commission in the RAF to dedicate his life to helping the poor and

by Beverly Belben

immunisation project designed to eradicate childhood diseases like polio, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus and TB. The ultimate aim of the expedition is to reach the source of the Yangtze, a venture which has never been undertaken before.

Despite the title of director, Mike is now on a quest of his previous income, without bottom, staff car and all the trappings. But he is tremendously happy. He is a member of Goodley Baptist Church, where his wife, Jackie, is assistant to the minister, Patrick Goodland, and it is through him that Mike's mission really began.



■ Warmth and friendship despite language difficulties — Mike Cole on the Amazon with some of the local children, he met during the setting up of the hover