



*Saving and Enriching Lives in Ethiopia*

**Ross' Piece**

I said in the last Newsletter I would provide feedback on visiting Ethiopia, which we did in November, but I think the wonderful story over the page from Fionna [our daughter] recounting her emotional experiences from her first visit, will cover that trip much better than I could. There are several comments from me throughout the Newsletter which relate to talks with REST.

Final donations in December from The Australian International School in Singapore, brought their total support over the past 3 years, to 4 wells. We would love to receive more support from schools. Would you talk with your children's teachers?

The end of 2012, signified 10 years of involvement and support of the water wells programme for the Allan family/WellWishers. A remarkable achievement for all of us with up to 220,000 people benefitting.

A quick thank you to all of our supporters in all capacities. Every day as I turn on the tap, I think of all the people that help to make WellWishers so special and who help to change the lives of so many people. Having our daughter and granddaughter with us in Ethiopia in November, gave my wife Marianne and I a fresh perspective. Having the Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia visit Tigray with us to see your donations at work was icing on the cake.

<p><b>Annual Report</b></p> <p>The Annual Report for Financial Year 2011/12, is now available on line.</p>	<p><b>Bequests</b></p> <p>We are privileged that some supporters have made WellWishers a beneficiary of their estate. If you would like to consider this, please contact Ross for further details.</p> 	<p><b>Newsletter Name</b></p> <p>We have received a few suggestions. Any more before we draw the line? Email us, or post your ideas</p> <p>PLEASE</p>	<p><b>Wells' Audit</b></p>  <p>Late last year, NCA (our Monitoring and Evaluation partner), conducted a very comprehensive audit of the work being done by REST. I am pleased to say that REST performed well in all financial and construction aspects.</p>	<p><b>Credit Card Donations</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.givenow.com.au/wellwishers">www.givenow.com.au/wellwishers</a></p> <p>WellWishers pay a small fee for donations received this way, but it is an easy way for you to donate. Be assured that it's a secure site.</p>
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**"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children"**

**Please come to the MELBOURNE DINNER**

This popular dinner and great fundraiser, will be returning on 11 April 2013. Keep the night free & organise a table of friends. Vicorian supporters will receive more information in the next few weeks. If you happen to be in Melbourne then, it is a great night with terrific Ethiopian food. Contact us through the website.

**Well Numbers**

It's pleasing to announce that we'll be building a total of **80** wells and bores this year, resulting in about 26,000 more people benefitting from clean water.

Whilst the number is well down on last year, we are pleased with the result. As reported last year, the numbers were then abnormally high because of the high exchange rate, the benefits of which have now been used up.

When these wells are completed, in the past 10 years we will have built about **510 wells** to benefit over **220,000 people**. All thanks to you, our wonderful WellWishers supporters. Keep telling your family, friends, work colleagues, acquaintances and strangers about WellWishers every opportunity you get. It is to be hoped that we will more than double that number in the next 10 years, or less!!!!



**The British School, Al Khubairat in Abu Dhabi**

Ever addressed a group of 3 year olds? Yes; 3 year olds! Ross did this in January. At the behest of friends whose daughters go the above school, Ross travelled to Abu Dhabi to address 1,000 children of the Junior School. Their new extensions with great IT and library facilities, made the contrast with Ethiopia even stronger.

Jasmine, Marina and mum Philippa, visited Tigray with us in 2008 (aged 7 & 11).. Jasmine, remembering her visit, recently did a school project on social justice in relation to water. Through that, WellWishers came to the school's attention (with much entreaty from Philippa). This year, the Juniors chose WellWishers as their major charity for the year.

On the first day, Ross addressed two school assemblies; 3-7 year olds, then 8-12 year olds. He presented a simple slideshow with some brief stories. In 8 separate small classroom groups, he made slide presentations and did Q & A sessions. Not surprisingly, the question "What does the man do?" came up a lot. The students particularly related to the photos of the children at school and at village welcomes. They were very keen to try lifting the 20 litre container of water!

We've had excellent support from a school in Singapore as well as this school in the UAE (which looks like raising enough to build 4 wells). Do your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews attend a school where social justice is a strong part of their philosophy, where the children are encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of others? Would the school consider adopting WellWishers as their charity of choice for a year? As Ross mentioned in his piece above, please talk to the teachers.



**'Before sitting down to write about the incredible experiences I had in Ethiopia last November,** I took a quick shower, used the loo, and put a small load of washing on. Now, being an Australian used to tight water restrictions, I do not waste water. but even economically, these three simple actions used up close to 100 litres of water. In Tigray, those without a well close-by, use an average of 4 litres a day! After the well, that increases to 15 litres a day. I wonder if those of us lucky enough to have water on tap, could even survive a morning on so little?

Growing up, my thoughts of Ethiopia were of desert, famine and children with distended tummies, Bob Geldof and Live-Aid. As my parents became involved firstly with Oxfam, and now *WellWishers*, the impressions that they gave me of the country morphed into something else, a surprising place, filled with energy, occasional greenery and wonderful people. Despite hearing all their stories, and seeing photos, nothing could prepare me for the small part of Ethiopia that I experienced.

I travelled to Ethiopia with my parents, and my 19 mth old daughter Elin. Everywhere we went, we were treated with kindness, respect and courtesy - and my little blonde-haired, blue-eyed daughter was an endless source of fascination. I am so proud of the way she embraced her adventure. She didn't bat an eyelid at the contrasting experiences we had.

We flew to Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray. The views as we came into land were just breathtaking - plateaus above the city, winding roads into canyons, wide open spaces that tugged at my heart in reminders of the Australian outback. The city itself is small, and so different from my experiences of Australian or British cities. But still, I had not yet experienced the great challenges that the Tigrinian people face when it comes to water. I was feeling guilty taking a 2 minute shower, or bathing Elin at bedtime.



In Mekelle I attended a meeting at REST, the incredible organisation which supports the Tigrayan people in every aspect of their life, and builds the wells on behalf of *WellWishers*. Never have I met such dedicated, committed and friendly people. Building wells and providing water to their fellow Tigrayans is not just a job to this dedicated team - it is their whole life. and once we drove up into the mountains and visited the villages, I could see why. Tigray is stunning, incredible mountains rising from the plains like the Arizona desert. layers cut into the mountainside like Tuscany. mind-blowing sunsets and vistas like you've never seen (unless of course you've been!). and the people. such beauty - on their faces, in their hearts. Talking to the villagers who have been lucky enough to have access to a hand-dug well was so life-affirming. Such simple things have freed them - have given them a new life to lead. No more very long walks to the health clinic because of infested water. No more spending three hours a day just to collect that infested water. As they talked of their great happiness that their girls can now go to school, I thought guiltily of all the times I lamented the fact that I had to go to school. I see now it is a great privilege.

We visited a village that had had a well built the year before, and we were greeted with singing, dancing and placards. I could barely see through the veil of my tears, the 200-300 villagers who came to welcome us. It was so overwhelming I had to stop and look away. The tears stung, and I felt joyful yet so sad - sad that such a small thing as clean water is so taken for granted by us, sad that we cannot give every village, such a gift of life. The same day I visited a 'needy' village - one without a clean water source. The school children met us with a parade and song. They were honoured by our visit. However, you could see by the skin and in the eyes of the children how unhealthy they were, and how challenging life is for them all.

I could write for days about the life-altering experience I had in Tigray. About the way the villagers welcomed and honoured us. And how humble it made me feel. About how I have the utmost respect for the women who live there and what they endure to give their family the best they can. About how despite all the hardship the needy villages experience they still have a smile and a joke and a song in their hearts. About the beautiful children who may never live a healthy or long life unless they get clean water. About how wonderful it was watching Elin engage with the village children. I will never however, be able to get onto the page the way Tigray and Ethiopia is now in my heart, and it will only grow stronger inside me.

And I can never impress upon anyone enough, how water is indeed life.

Fionna Allan



A full version of this article will be posted on the Website shortly

**Please note** that Donations are to be in favour of "*WellWishers*" and posted to the address at the bottom of this Newsletter. Over 95% of funds raised go to the actual Wells projects. There are no pastoral activities related to this project.

**DONATIONS:** \$6,000 provides 1 Well which helps up to 400 people

Please tick Square if you're happy for your donation to be made public

Enclosed is my Donation of \$ ..... **Postal or Email Address** (incl postcode).....

**OR:** Debit my Visa : MasterCard - **Please CIRCLE** your card type (automatic periodical donations can be arranged)

Name on Card: ..... Signature: .....

Card Number: ..... Expiry Date: ...../..... CCV .....(last 3 numbers on back of Card)

**OR:** Donate Online (Secure Site): [www.givenow.com.au/wellwishers](http://www.givenow.com.au/wellwishers)

Name for Receipt Purposes **if different** to bank account or card name: .....

Please send me information about making a bequest to *WellWishers*