

Have We Got News for You!

Our news is about our news... and exciting news at that!

We regularly share Health Help International news on our website:

<https://hhi.org.uk>



At the moment we are busy behind the scenes considering a massive website makeover. A generous donation by one of our committee members has enabled us to explore new and exciting ways to share **newsworthy** developments in India and Zambia as well as 'What's on?' at home.

Simple to use, the new website will be easy to navigate, with clear links to allow for a more interactive experience for our site users.

We are always eager to share our news and hope you will be bowled over when the new website is up and running. **Spread the news!**



Margaret Prosser

Ron Prosser writes: Friday, 4th February 2022 was a day I shall always remember, as it was the morning when my beloved wife of over 60 years, Margaret, passed to glory. My two sons and I were at her hospital bedside and watched her take her last breath. I know God was in that passing and held things back until we were present.



A wonderful Thanksgiving Service was held on the 3rd March, when around 100 people were present to honour her and afterwards share food and fellowship, which made the day happy and memorable, and not a tragedy. My thanks to all who sent cards, attended in person and watched online.

I wrote the following little poem in Margaret's memory and I have been asked to include it here:

SURE AND STEADFAST

Walking sure and steadfast, the pain so real and true,
but no complaint or moaning was ever heard from you.
Your legs all whole again, your spirit now can sleep.
No limping now in agony, no tears for you to weep.
Love and prayers are said for you. The long life that you led
will never be forgotten, Mum, so rest your darling head.
I know God will look after you, in Him you're still alive.
Your soul lives on in heaven above, but here your love survives.
Your beautiful, you're endless, so stretch your legs - run - fly.
You're loved by O so many friends, we'll never say 'Goodbye'.
So close your eyes, no pain now Mum, let your soul be at rest,
you're love to us has always been the very, very best.

So, I begin a new life myself, new for me but one which so many of you have also trod and I know your love and friendship will make it easier to bear. Thank you all. It looks as if something like £2,000, including Gift Aid, will have been raised for HHI in lieu of flowers, which is excellent - so another big thank you from me on behalf of Margaret.

Health Help Zambia is getting noticed!

We have always known that the dedicated staff in Monze, under the leadership of the trustees and their hard-working chairperson Mr Gondwe, are doing a wonderful job in supporting the disabled. The monthly reports and pictures they send to us are evidence that your funds are having a huge impact. The good news is that, for the first time in its history, **Health Help Zambia (HHZ)** has been recognised for its charitable work by other organisations in Zambia.

Last November, HHZ received a donation of just over £2000 worth of mobility aids from the Bank of Zambia, including 12 good wheelchairs, Zimmer frames and arm crutches.



These were freely distributed on a special donation day to specific families, some of whom travelled many miles to receive these much-needed items. They arrived hungry and thirsty with some of the disabled children in tears, and HHZ responded graciously with food, drink, and transport money, where necessary, so they could travel home with their new aids.



Within a month, another donation was received by HHZ which unexpectedly surpassed the gifts received in November. IK International, a charity working specifically with the physically disabled, donated 30 wheelchairs for distribution, together with bags of mealie meal and the funding for 10 boreholes! HHZ will ensure that the boreholes are installed in schools and rural villages where the needs are greatest. Another colourful donation day was hosted with music provided by our own disabled musician Lazarus, and refreshments provided for the

visitors. The Zambian Minister for Home Affairs was in attendance as well as the District Commissioner and the directors of IK International. The media presence made sure that HHZ was certainly put on the map as an honest, effective Christian organisation working to help those in greatest need.

Feeding Programme



HHZ continues with its everyday work of ensuring that 100 vulnerable families with disabled children receive their bags of mealie meal and hand sanitization each month. Records are meticulously kept by the newly appointed HHZ administrator, Brenda Chileshe.

Menstrual Hygiene Programme

This has also been expanded to include health clinics as well as schools. Manungu, Sibbusu and Kaumuzya clinics were visited recently by Alistair and Primeldah, the two HHZ seamstresses. They prepare the packs of washable pads with new underwear and deliver the message to young girls' mothers on how to use the packs to save money, reduce waste, and maintain good personal hygiene. Over 100 packs were distributed amongst the three clinics and the Board of Health was extremely grateful to HHZ and to you as supporters.



Ladies at a clinic gather to receive their menstrual hygiene packs and to hear the message from the HHZ seamstresses.

Regular work, caring for the individuals



Last, but by no means least, HHZ continues to support its long-standing relationship with many disabled and vulnerable individuals.

Grace, pictured left, a young lady who has sadly become a double amputee, has not attended school and shows little confidence. She is now attending daily sewing lessons with Alistair in the **HHZ** compound and making good progress.

Bibian is becoming more confident with her new prosthesis, which was funded by HHIUK, and, thanks to the efforts of HHZ, she has been allocated a place in Choongo Special School. Bibian is delighted to return to school after years of immobility, hospitalization, pain and discomfort. She is just one of many individuals who receives monthly support from HHIUK, and we hope that, with a new opportunity to learn, she, too, will gain confidence and reach her potential.





Those of you who follow our regular *Tidings* articles will be pleased to know that Mrs Mwiinga is doing well. She sells small quantities of essential food items from a stall outside her home. This enables her to support her many children including baby triplets.

HHZ regularly visit and monitor how Mrs Mwiinga is coping. Brenda reports '*There is great change in their livelihood and as a result the family is now able to have three meals a day, unlike in the past when they could only afford one*'.

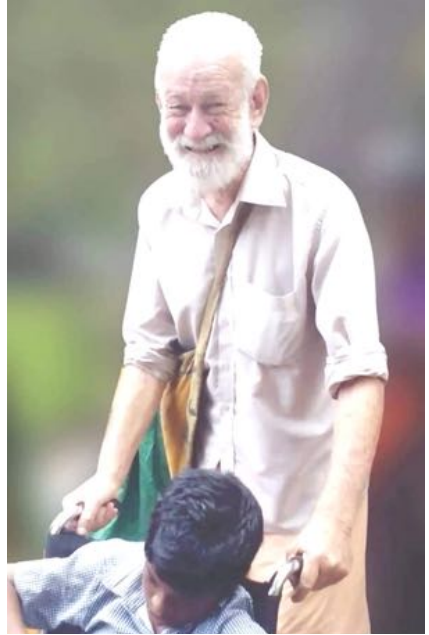
We congratulate **HHZ** on their wonderful work and we thank God for leading them through difficult times with Covid problems and the death of their valuable friend and colleague, Mrs Carole Nzila. We give thanks to God for the international recognition they have received, and for their determination and hard won progress.

Tom Sutherland

For many years, Tom Sutherland was HHI's primary contact in India. Without him HHI in India would be nowhere near what it is today. After a remarkable life of self-denying sacrificial service he has now retired back to Australia. Joy Mulayara Joy posted this appreciation of his life and work on Facebook in Malayalam on Christmas Eve (translated by Google, and edited).

Eighty-three-year-old Tom Sutherland lives in an old house in the beautiful coastal village of Portfair, Victoria, on the south coast of Australia. He is not bothered by his own old age, illness or fear of death. On the contrary, the grief of that man is only for the helpless children, the orphans, the sick and the helpless old people who live in the southernmost Malayalam country of India. Forty years ago, Tom Sutherland, an Australian, dedicated himself to alleviating the suffering and hunger of the poor in the hilly region of south Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Finally last year, this philanthropist returned to his homeland. Sadly he was unable to untie the knot of the changed visa rules and old age was taking its toll.

Tom's Brother, recalls some memories:



"We grew up hearing a lot of stories about India as children. My father William Sutherland had served in Bombay for some time as the Secretary of the MCA. My father recalled the experience of meeting and interacting with Mahatma Gandhi at a time when the Indian National Freedom Movement was gaining strength."

Tom, the second of four children, joined the University of Melbourne Technical College as a teacher after graduation. Prior to that, he was a teacher at the Junior Technical School for four years.

Tom's heart was full of desire to serve in India. With the help of the Melbourne Jesuit Seminary, he came to know about the activities of Mother Teresa and the Missionary of Charity Brothers. He left his teaching job and came to Kolkata in 1975. During his nine months in Kolkata, he gained a deeper understanding of the India of the poor and took part in activities to help orphaned street children in Kolkata.

It was during his short stay in Kolkata that he came to know about Buddhism which taught that everyone has an inner light, For Tom that inner light was the spirit of Christ.

It was his acquaintance with Augustine and Michael, the Malayalees who worked for the Charity Brothers in Kolkata, that helped him to hear about Kerala. With his arrival in Nedumangad in Thiruvananthapuram in August 1976, along with Augustine and Michael, another era began.



Nedumangad, a hilly region surrounded by rivers and hills, looked as beautiful to Tom Sutherland as Victoria. But it was a time when people were suffering from poverty and disease. The 'People's Fraternity Service' in Thiruvananthapuram district was run by Father Gabriel.

Tom Sutherland arrived with Augustine and Michael on a mission to help. Tom's arrival made a big difference to the group, which made spinning equipment and worked on a meagre income from spinning looms. It marked the beginning of the charity society 'Thripada Ashram' (Trppadam).

Tom really understood the plight of the people in the hills who had no money to buy medicine or food and who queued up every day for small financial aid. He rode his bicycle through the villages seeing people who were hungry and suffering from untreated leprosy, tuberculosis and cancer.

Tom opened his Bible and read:

'I lift up my eyes to the mountains; Where can I get help? That help will come from the One who created the heavens and the earth.'

He approached people overseas, telling relatives and friends about the plight of poor people in this hilly region in another great country overseas.

Relatives and friends helped and small buildings were erected at the Thripada Ashram. The work was also supported by local residents.

He bought land nearby and started a home for the elderly and orphans.

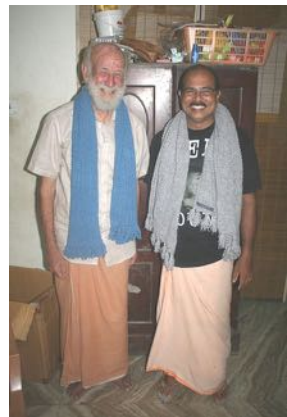
Those released from the ninth ward of the Thiruvananthapuram General Hospital, which admits orphans, were also brought to this house and started being accommodated. He started a sewing school for poor women and a nursery school for young children. He also organized workers who made products from bamboo and reeds and assisted in production and distribution. He began to provide assistance to the chronically ill living in rural areas helping them to buy medicine and food. Small houses were built for the landless and homeless. Toilets and wells were made available to the most needy. He established **Satisfaction Home** for the homeless and for orphans.

In the 1980s, the hill villages were plagued by famine and drought and families were plunged into abject poverty. Tom Sutherland believed that providing women with a source of extra income would bring relief to whole families.

He saw a handicraft show in Bangalore when he went to see Jodi Sahi at the Charity Brothers in Kolkata. It was there that he realized that women could make hand-woven cotton bracelets with Banyan tree leaf paintings and greeting cards and that there would be a market for their products.

Tom stayed in Bangalore and mastered the techniques involved. Back in Thripada, he started training children and women paying them a small amount during the training period. He also worked to find markets both locally and overseas for their craft products.

With the additional income made by the women, hunger in households decreased. Children who had previously gone to work and dropped out of school were now able to be educated. Since 2000, education and medical treatment have been on the agenda under the label '**Banyan Tree**' and the work has continued with unprecedented vigour.



Tom and Philip



Philip Mathew, Tom's successor and director of the **Banyan Tree** for two decades, explains: "Since 1997, under the shadow of the Banyan Tree, Brother Tom continued to help families with children who could not continue their education and families with terminally

ill members." A few of his acquaintances formed a charity called 'Friends of the Banyan Tree' in Britain and funded free tuition centres for poor children and mobile clinics for the sick.

Tom's bicycle was constantly moving to provide support for the disabled. His day was not complete without visiting the orphans in the ninth ward of the city's General Hospital. Later, with the help of the Newport (South Wales UK)-based charitable organization **Health Help International**, it was able to provide for the further treatment and diagnosis of the poor suffering from cancer, heart or kidney disease. The Banyan Tree protects orphans whose parents have met accidents, and provides work for people who have none. Families in Kulachal affected by the 2006 tsunami were also given land and provided with housing.

In 2013, Tom's Brother and Philip Mathew started **Happy Valley Special School**, which provides treatment and education for children with disabilities. Fifty children between the ages of three and 24 are currently receiving training and treatment here.

After volunteering in the orphanages in the ninth ward of the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College and General Hospital and cycling about fifty kilometres daily, Tom became exhausted and ill and had to abandon his treasured bicycle. As the years passed and, after a change in visa rules in 2014, Tom decided to return home but is still sending the lion's share of his old-age pension to some of the needy families he used to help.

His prayer is that, one day, he should return to Kerala and merge into this very soil.

An update from India

The lockdown has been lifted, allowing our two special needs centres, **Asha Kiran Ashram** and **Happy Valley**, to welcome the children back once more. During the lockdown, the centres had done what they could using video conferencing on mobile phones and, where allowed, home visits, but it is much better now that the children can receive the “hands on” care and attention that they so desperately need. And their families are feeling the benefit too – the centres not only benefit the children, but also provide a respite for hard pressed families. **Happy Valley** has settled well into its new home, and the children are benefiting from some new equipment that has been bought recently.





The work on the new physiotherapy building at Asha Kiran is progressing well. A contractor was appointed, and the building is now structurally complete. The work is being done to a high standard, and we are very pleased with the result. We are looking forward to its completion, as it will enable all the physiotherapy equipment to be stored in one place, and will provide a safe and private area for the children to be treated. Longer term, the vision is to open it up to local villagers who need physiotherapy but who cannot afford it or who are unable to travel to where it is available, which will enable them to reach out to so many more needy people.



Many of you will remember **Beulah**, a girl born without legs. We provided prosthetic legs for her several years ago, and she quickly learned to walk on them and run around like any other youngster. We recently heard that she has grown so much that she needs new legs. These will cost about £1,500 for a good quality product which should last her for about 5 years until she is fully grown.

The rest of our work is continuing – feeding the hungry who are destitute as a result of Covid or the lockdowns, enabling them to become self-sufficient through credit unions or the gift of a goat, chickens or a sewing machine, teaching marketable tailoring skills, and providing medical help for those who need it urgently or who need long term help. One recent case of urgent help was Mani, a 42-year-old married

man with two small children. Liver disease meant a two month stay in hospital, and he could no longer go out to work as a daily labourer. Then fibroids were found in one of his lungs, requiring an immediate operation which would cost Rs. 100,000 (£1,000). The family were able to raise only half of this; your generosity enabled us to provide the other half. An example of someone needing long term help is Nirmala Rosbery, who suffers from diabetic nephropathy – kidney damage, a common consequence of diabetes. Again, your generosity has enabled us to contribute Rs. 2,000 (£20) a month towards the cost of medicines, drip and so on.

So, despite everything, HHI's life-saving and life-transforming work in India is continuing – and even growing, thanks to your sacrificial giving. On behalf of all of them, thank you!



Sindhu – another long-term invalid whom HHI supports with a monthly contribution to her medical bills.



You can read the full story of Tom Sutherland's amazing life and work in his biography published last year, entitled '**In the Shade of the Banyan Tree**'.

This was written by Iain Park, a Trustee of Health Help International and a member of its Management Committee. He has just published his fourth book entitled '**Love Letters Down Under**'.

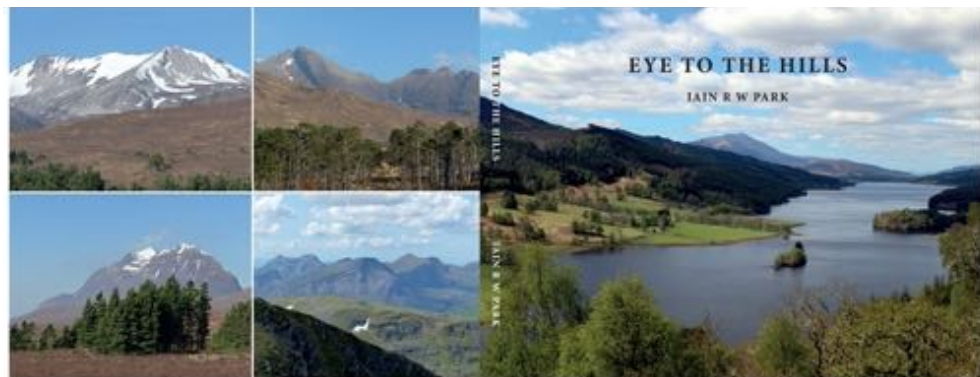
All proceeds from both of these books are being donated to Health Help International.

'Love Letters Down Under' is based around the letters of Barbara Hamilton, a distant cousin of Iain, to her future husband Andrew Dykes. He had emigrated to New Zealand in 1909 to establish himself as a farmer and Barbara had been due to follow him. However, the war years intervened and she was not able to join him until after the war in 1919. She wrote faithfully to him throughout the war years. Her letters give a fascinating insight into her busy life as a farmer's daughter combining her duties as a Primary School teacher at Strathaven Academy some three miles away with her hard manual work at home on the farm.

Her unique correspondence portrays vividly the effects of the war on the town and the surrounding farming community as she recounts the growing number of friends and family members injured or killed during the festivities.

The book is available for a minimum donation to HHI of £15.

Both books can be ordered from the HHI or SFHHI websites or by contacting Iain at ian@rhonadale.co.uk



Remaining copies of Iain's book 'Eye to the Hills', an illustrated record of his 60 years climbing in Scotland and further afield, are also being sold on the SFHHI website on behalf of Health Help International.



Need a mid-week speaker or someone to lead a Sunday service?

If you would like one of our team to speak about the work of HHI at a meeting of a church group or of an organisation to which you belong, or to lead worship at a Sunday Service, please contact us using the 'phone number or the email address given at the bottom of this page, and we'll do our best to accept your invitation.

Feel like volunteering?

Would you consider becoming a member of our management committee and/or the trustees of the Charity?

Members of both groups give of their time and energy completely voluntarily and are committed to supporting the principles of HHI and its activities in India, Zambia and at home in the UK.

Or could you, perhaps, become a local rep for HHI? If you would like to find out more about joining the organisation, please contact us using the telephone number or the email address given at the bottom of this page.



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