

## RETURN TO JENDA

Having arrived in Jenda on the Thursday, we met up with the Link Ethiopian contingent on Friday and planned our week. Belayheh, who has a wealth of knowledge about the schools and the area, was our surrogate grandfather, helping us with our plans, trips and general well being.

Fasilidās Castle



Friday afternoon was spent showing Miss Jackson the historical sights of Gonder, of which most are within walking distance of the town centre. Fasilidas made Gonder the capital in 1636 and there are many castles built

Fasilidās Bath



by him and his descendants in the Royal enclosure. Further away is Fasilidas bath, built for Royal bathing and religious celebrations. As the clouds gathered overhead we made our way to Debre Berhan Selassie Church, by bajaj, a three wheeled taxi. The ceiling of the church is covered with 104 winged cherubs and the walls by paintings of Ethiopian saints and biblical scenes. By the time we were ready to go it was pouring with rain and it was a bajaj back to town.



As the children wouldn't be at school over the weekend, we decided to accompany one of the Link Ethiopian staff, called Matt and his sister, on a one day trip to the Simien Mountains. We started at 6.30am picking up a guide and a scout; with his rifle, at the ticket office to the National Park. The views were incredible, a bit like a smaller version of the Grand Canyon. There are masses of Gelada baboons in certain areas, which

were a constant source of amusement. It was a three hour journey home and an early night ready for another early start on Sunday. The last time I was in Ethiopia I'd wanted to see the rock churches of Lalibela but the timing had not been right. Determined to try again, we had managed to get a flight on the Sunday and to come back on the Monday. It was well worth the effort as the churches are awe inspiring. Some of them are cut straight down into the sandstone as you can see in St George's church.



While we were there we met the architect involved with the building of the Lalibela football pitch sponsored by Proctor and Gamble. We even saw a game being played, which unfortunately Lalibela lost on penalties. Ethiopians are fanatical about their football and follow the Premier League avidly. Health and safety would have had a field day as spectators hung over a 20m sheer drop for a good view of the game.



Tuesday was the big day when Miss Jackson, myself, Chris Grant,

who started the charity, Mulageta, who works for Link and is a former pupil of Jenda, Belayneh and Ben, a volunteer working in one of the local schools, piled into our mini bus. The journey out to the school is initially on tarmac roads but they soon deteriorate into dirt, some of which were still under construction! We left the main road and followed a bumpy track, not really suitable for the mini bus and often grounding on rocks. However, eventually we came over a rise and looked down on to the school.

As we pulled up in front of the gate all the pupils being taught in the morning session, lined the path into the school compound. We exited the bus and were taken aback as we walked down a human corridor, with all the children clapping and chanting "welcome", which was very humbling. Next we were introduced to the new director of the school and ushered to sit down in front of local dignitaries,



parents, teachers and of course the children.

Whenever guests or family visit an Ethiopian house they are welcomed with a coffee ceremony and so it was at Jenda. A staff member first roasted coffee beans in a pan, then ground them in a wooden mortar using a metal stake, added the grounds to a pot of boiling water and poured the coffee in to small cups, meanwhile various people gave speeches. The theme of the speeches was to thank us for coming and for the support of Gayhurst in providing valued resources to the school. We were given presents, a carved wooden representation of Fasilidas Castle for the school, Miss

Jackson was presented with an Ethiopian headscarf and I was given full formal dress which Ethiopian men would wear. Needless to say I was encouraged to go and change into my new clothes for the rest of the speeches. We listened to them all and then I was asked to extol the virtues of a good education, whilst Belayneh translated. After that I presented the cheque for £3000 to the director.



They want to use the money to buy more desks and tables but also to fill in some of the walls of the classrooms so they will be weather proof.

When all the formalities were over we took a look at the loos Gayhurst had paid for, two for the girls and two for the boys. Some of the children are paid to keep them clean, which they certainly were. Then it was along to the library, which



was totally transformed since my last visit. The floor wasn't mud, it was concrete and there were, new tables, benches. Outside the building were some



new books, which the school had asked for, and we duly placed them on the brand new shelving. We had bought some posters to liven up the walls, including a compilation of Gayhurst photos as well as the educational type.

It was time for a spot of lunch, which was lamb wot (a kind of stew) and injera, (a sort of pancake) which looks as un appetising as it tastes! That was fortunately washed down with some coca cola and then we brought in the well travelled suitcases.



Inside one was lots of sports equipment and in the other teaching resources, (see list at the





end) all paid for from the fun run. The eyes of the staff lit up as we unpacked the goodies.

It felt as though we should have been dressed in red and come on a sleigh! There wasn't enough time to go through everything but the director did take me on in a quick game of table tennis!

We were returning the following day to show the staff how to use the resources but before we went we were invited to one of the old staff's home, just outside the school gates. We were given some tella, which is home-made beer mixed with honey. The honey comes from hives behind the hut, which the couple share with a calf and a chicken.

It was time to go and we got an amazing send off, with children chasing the bus, waving and shouting their goodbyes.

The following day we had to make our own way to the school so had to get up early and take a taxi to the bus station. Having waited an hour for a bus we finally got on our way, we had to change buses and then get off at the nearest village to the school, which was Kola Diba, There to meet us was the new link coordinator and we started the long walk to the school.

Fortunately we hitched a lift on a passing truck, which although bumpy, made the journey a lot quicker.

We spent the day working with the staff and showing them how to use the resources we had brought with us. Then it was a walk back along the track to the main road accompanied by the director of the school.



We went back the following day to pick up where we left off and as always were the centre of attention as far as the children were concerned. It is hard to work with some of the staff as their English isn't that good. However, we seemed to make further progress and left with the hope to return in a couple of years and see the improvements Gayhurst is making and renew the close personal link we have with the school.

A huge thank you, on behalf of all the pupils and staff of Jenda.



### Resources bought

1000 pencils, crayons, rubbers, sharpeners, 30 calculators, protractors, rulers, dice, playing cards, inflatable globes and solar powered/dynamo radio

Footballs, volleyballs, volleyball nets, cones, basketballs, table tennis equipment, skipping ropes, pumps, frisbees and a stop watch.

*DH*