



Mulanje Mission Hospital

Newsletter

October 2021

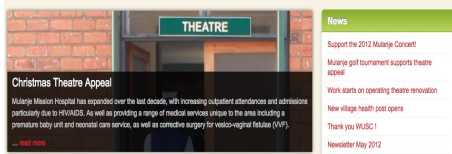
Mulanje Mission Hospital
CCAP Blantyre Synod
PO Box 45 Mulanje
Malawi

E-mail:
director@mmh.mw

National Bank of Malawi
P.O. Box 945 Blantyre
Hospital accounts:
407275 (\$)
286818 (£)
380873 (€)

SWIFT CODE:
NBMAMWWW

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Editorial comment

By Dr Arie Glas

Dear friends and partners,

It's been a busy period at the hospital since the last edition of the Newsletter was published. From July to September, the Covid-19 treatment unit was continuously occupied. The capacity was increased to seven beds; all full at times. We currently see no in-patient cases as the third Covid wave has passed Malawi. A lot of effort was put into increasing vaccination rates; and we learnt that bringing vaccines to the village where people live is what works. Once the PHC team started outreaches, up to 100 people per village could be vaccinated in a day. Time was also spent with partners from the Netherlands and the USA to work out a new palliative care project; smaller than the previous Chifundo project, but still enabling us to continue providing free palliative care to those with incurable conditions. The management team worked on a plan for an im-

proved solar system at the hospital, which will be implemented between October and December this year with volunteer solar technicians from the Netherlands. Also, an agreement was reached to build three staff houses, funded by the Verburg Charity Foundation. VCF also worked with MMH many years ago when they supported the construction of the HIV clinic. These new houses will be needed once we finalize a new Eye clinic with a physiotherapy/rehabilitation department. The construction plans for the clinic have been finalized and work is expected to start in October.

All staff have been involved in an eternal accreditation exercise led by the Ministry of Health. Existing policies and procedures will be streamlined and improved and some new ones will have to be developed.

Blessings and best wishes, Arie

MMH Accountant Richard Nyirenda graduates successfully

Richard Nyirenda, Senior Accountant in Edinburgh, Scotland, who supported MMH for this course.

Richard followed a Masters in Business Administration, track Finance and Sustainability. His new skills are a welcome addition to the organization. Increasingly complex accounting procedures and reporting mechanisms are required to attract funding and execute programmes.

Richard could not travel to the United Kingdom because of Covid-19, but nonetheless passed with merits. Congratulations! We would also like to thank the churches at St. Andrews and Georges West and Stockbridge



Richard Nyirenda, MBA ▲

Mulanje Mission with EMMS International runs a programme called "Teenage Pregnancy Prevention".

Through this program the hospital is, amongst others, improving life skills of adolescent girls and boys so that the teens can make informed decisions in their day to day lives. Adolescent girls and boys in the hospital catchment area face

many challenges as they grow up. In this training, they discuss the decisions they face that affect their day to day lives in society. It is our expectation that through this training adolescent girls and boys from the catchment area will face life with informed minds about their reproductive health and make wise decisions about their lives. To openly discuss relationships, sexu-

ality and choices about life is already new to most of the youth that are reached. These are not often discussed in families. The project will continue reaching out to many adolescent girls and boys to make sure they have access to information in sexual reproductive health and rights, whilst also addressing other drivers of teenage pregnancies.



▲ Adolescent boys and girls at the Youth Centre



▲ Work with youth underway



▲ Youth talent show earlier this year

Introduction

In September MMH organized a workshop about chaplaincy, the history of the church and the hospital, and collected input for a new strategic plan for the hospital. Here we share some of what we found when researching our history!

Early beginnings

The medical work of the Church started in the late 19th Century in Blantyre. However, very early, in 1890, a mission was also established in Mulanje. This was not at the place of the current Hospital, but higher up on the mountain along a crisp mountain stream, Linje.

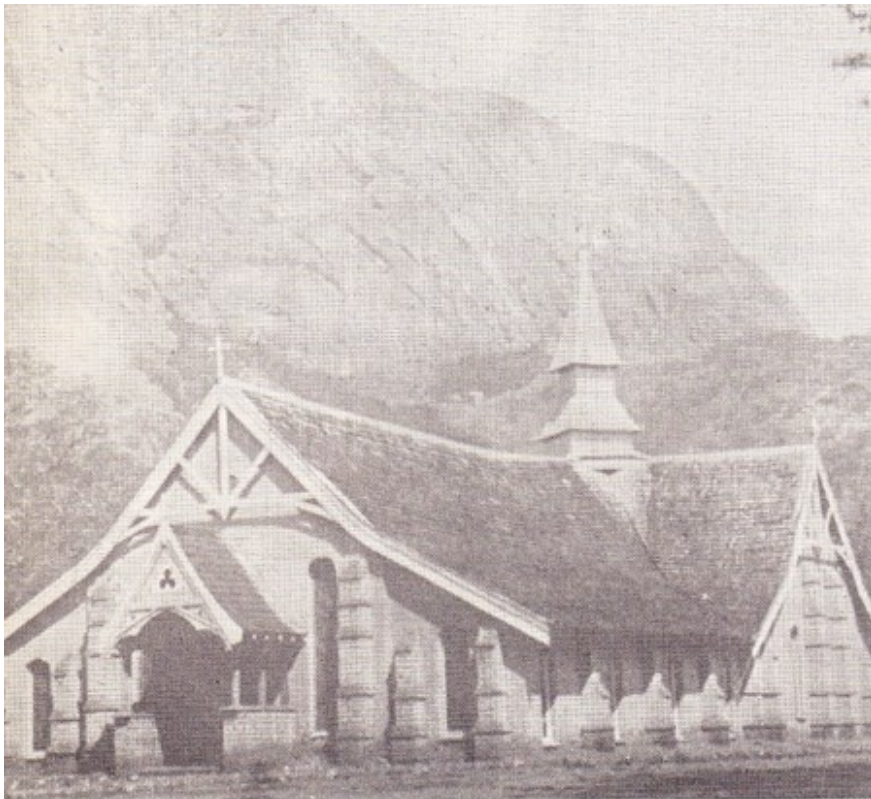
There was a big beer-drinking ceremony. Word came that there had been a fierce dispute in a village some distance off, and that two women had been shot...

There were two women, an older and a younger one. They were put into the Doctors rooms and the next day he began to extract the bullets. It was a difficult operation, as the wound contained sand and beads. Our two patients, however, got quite better and were able to walk back to their village before many days had passed...

This must have been around 1895. At that time a large Church was established at the Mission. It is now

demolished and only foundations can be found. However the first Mission at Linje still features early graves. *lent book on the history of the Mission, documented: Mission activities began in temporary buildings. The church, the school and the hospital used buildings like cattle pens, mud and grass thatched buildings on top of Ulongwe hill. It is said that when the people moved from the mountain to Ulongwe, they were not happy because there was nothing at the site except bush. They wanted to run away but Rev. Borrowman, then in charge, said: "No, you must have faith. God will do great things and build up a work here".*

In 1935, a basic hospital and



▲ *The old church at Linje, the first place of Mulanje Mission*



▲ *Grave at the old Mission*

The reason for this was that slave-raids still occurred frequently and it was not safe to live on the plains. From the start, a Doctor was present on the Mission. In a fascinating book – the Hill of Goodbye (1920) – by a wife to one of the first Reverends, reports from an early operation can be found:

demolished and only foundations can be found. However the first Mission at Linje still features early graves.

Moving to a new Mission site

In 1928, the decision was made to transfer Mulanje Mission to its present site at Ulongwe Hill. Armstrong Khoza, who wrote an excel-

School was ready for use. For the occasion, a large fig tree was planted in front of the Primary School by the governor of Nyasaland. The tree is still providing shade to hundreds of schoolchildren every day. In 1962, a new Church was built, mostly funded by the local Church.

History at Mulanje Mission *(continued)*



▲ *The site of the Old Mission today*



▲ *The figtree at the primary School, planted 1935*

The hospital was small in those years, as you see in this photo from 1970.

Gradually services were added and more nurses and clinicians started working at the hospital.

In 1958, an operating theatre was opened with two wards. In 1973, a large new maternity block was built. 1980 saw the erection of a new Childrens ward, currently being renovated, whilst MMH became a full hospi



▲ *Visiting the villages, 1968-70*

tal with the opening of Male ward in 1999.

Landmarks were the start of the Malaria vector control programme in 2012 and the opening of the antenatal ward and High Dependency unit in 2017 and 2018.

Over time, crises came, like the HIV epidemic in the 90's and now Covid-19, and always a way was found through difficult circumstances with help from many around the world.



▲ *Mulanje Mission Hospital in 1970*

MMH continues providing care and expanding to meet the changing needs of an expanding population. Future plans are to start providing physiotherapy and ophthalmic care; and improve orthopedic care. With gratitude we look back on a long history of service by many women and men who gave their energy for the people in Mulanje.

Sources:

- Memorial History of Mulanje Mission, Armstrong Khoza, 2002
- The Hill of Goodbye, J. Currie, 1920
- The Story of Medicine and Disease in Malawi, J+E King, 2007
- Various bookchapters from online sources, photographs kept at MMH

Volunteers on Mulanje Mission

During the past 1,5 years MMH received few visitors; whereas normally dozens of people come around every year to follow an internship, visit projects, or teach. But now, in a lucky turn, a family from the Netherlands has come to live on the campus. Gerwin and Tjana Habermehl volunteer for a period of one year. Gerwin is a qualified architect working within the maintenance department. He is especially overseeing renovations of staff houses and will help with the construction of an Eye clinic. Tjana is a teacher and teaches the children of Arie and Lisanne Glas, enabling them to concentrate on their hospital work. Apart from Tjana and Gerwin we've also restarted medical internships, first with Dutch students, and now also a group of five South African medical students coming in November. If you want to know more about studying or volunteering at MMH, let us know.



▲ *Gerwin and Tjana Habermehl with Zarah*

The Bed Sponsorship Fund

The Bed Sponsorship Fund is there to provide care for the most vulnerable patients coming to MMH.

Malawi is going through a difficult economic time, and we see more patients who cannot afford the necessary treatments. Due to the continuing high prices of transport worldwide, drugs and medical supplies are expensive, especially wound dressing materials, sutures, and intravenous fluids.

Please consider a donation to the Fund so that more patients can be assisted and no one has to be sent home without the treatment they deserve and we can offer together.

US\$ 850, €700 or £600 provides one bed at MMH for one year. These funds are used for **drugs, medical supplies and other expenses** to provide free care to the most needy.



Write us an email or a text if you would like to learn more. Thank you for your support!