



The Catherine Bullen Foundation

Making a difference in rural Namibia

NEWSLETTER

No: 54

Spring 2025

For a change, I am beginning this newsletter while in Namibia and we are at Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic. Prior to us coming to the Clinic, we spent a few days in Windhoek, the capital, where we met with our Namibian ngo partner, Komeho Namibia Development Agency who assists the Foundation with various operational tasks when we are in the UK. We also had dinner with the British High Commissioner, His Excellency, Mr Charles Moore where we picked up the electric organ that had been donated to the Foundation by Sue and Martin Lay and had arrived through Namibian diplomatic channels from London. (More of this organ later). The High Commissioner is coming to the end of his posting and through the years we have enjoyed our time with him swapping experiences and appreciating his advice.

From Windhoek we travelled to Gobabis, the regional capital of the Omaheke region, which is about the size of Maldon. It is here that we stock up for the week ahead with food and water and relax for a couple of days in a local Lodge before venturing into the bush. The two hour journey starts with one hour on tar roads before joining the gravel road to Otjimanangombe which can be of varying quality depending on the amount a traffic and the weather conditions. When we first travelled to the clinic this time, we encountered heavy rain which was coming down in sheets making driving extremely difficult.

This year the rains have come to most of the country helping to relieve the effects of the long-term drought. It is a joy to see everywhere so green and the grass so high. Rivers that have been dry for a number of years are seeing flows of water. However, there has been a downside that roads have been made impassable with two people drowning in the capital trying to drive through fast flowing water on the road and being swept away.

Whilst at the clinic Linda occupied one of the consulting rooms and regularly sees twenty to thirty patients a day assisting the permanent staff of one registered nurse and one enrolled nurse which could be reduced to one, if one of the nurses has to accompany the ambulance to Gobabis. (Since our visit a third nurse has been appointed, we are pleased to welcome Penny to the clinic). The patients present with routine needs such as family planning, repeat prescriptions, immunisation of children and also anti-natal and births. Sometimes, something more serious arrives and during our time at the clinic has seen just under twenty cases of malaria, all from this area which is worrying.

My role is administrative and involves taking a small fee of N\$4.00 (about 17p) per patient and issuing a voucher receipt. Family planning, chronic conditions, immunisation and pensioners are free. Those who are too poor to pay are given free treatment. The N\$4.00 covers any amount of medication. The 'office' is at the front of the clinic looking towards the track that leads to the main gravel road. To the left is the

school hostel and to the right is the 'Bullen Park' a small, fenced area created by the community when we opened the clinic shaded by two trees. I see the patients arriving on foot having hitched a lift or in crowded pick-up trucks (bakkis) some of questionable condition. From time to time, animals stroll past such a cows, goats and donkeys making their way through the bush.



Office with a view



Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic

Stretching along the length of the village is a large hill named Omuhaturua, from which the school next door takes its name. In 1904, during the conflict between the Hereos and the German army, a skirmish took place on the hill and it is believed that the spirits of the dead remain there, so no building takes place on it. There is a story that in 1991, a telecom company tried to install some equipment on it which resulted in all the local water sources drying up. It was only after a traditional leader talked to the spirits that the water returned.

An organ for Omuhaturua Primary School



The organ being played for the first time in the school hall.

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, we picked up an electric organ that had been donated by Sue and Martin Lay from the British High Commissioners residence in Windhoek. A week later after arriving at Otjimanangombe, the school choir came over to the clinic with Edward the choir master and escorted the parcelled organ to the school hall where it was enthusiastically unwrapped. Once it was on its stand, one of the teachers played the school song accompanied by the school choir, a truly wonderful day..

Eiseb Primary School and Hostel

On Wednesday 5 March, we visited Eiseb Primary School and hostel and after the recent rains we were apprehensive regarding what the road conditions would be like on our two-hour drive through the bush. On the first part of our journey we had to drive carefully as the road was wet and slippery, but the rest was okay. On arriving at the school, we were greeted by the Head of Department, Berlin, who told us that the painting of the exterior of the school and hostel was complete. This had been partly funded by the Foundation and looked very smart. We noticed a drilling rig in the school grounds, drilling a new borehole for the school as their old one had silted up. This will allow the school to re-instate the irrigation system on their large school garden that the Foundation funded.

Before we moved over to the hostel, we met Angel and her brother who are being sponsored by Yvonne one of our supporters who now wishes to sponsor two more children. The school has put forward two brothers from out of a family of ten children and a mother who does not work and whose father died and is buried in Botswana.

We then moved on to the hostel and inspected the dormitory that the Foundation had built, and we were pleased to see that the toilet and showers were working. It was then onwards to the kitchen and large covered dining area, again constructed by the Foundation. The Foundation recently provided funding to paint and tile the kitchen which is still to be done. On our last visit, the cool room mechanism had broken down and thanks to the Foundation, this has now been repaired. We can testify to this as when we entered the room, the cold hit us.



On the left, Angel and her brother. On the right the two brothers, all sponsored by Yvonne.



Left: a typical classroom and Eiseb

Right: Happy children outside the dormitory that the Foundation built

Before we left to return to Otjimanangombe we watched the children have their lunch which consisted of rice, gravy and a chicken stew with onions. We noticed that some of the children did not have school uniforms, Berlin explained to us that a lot of San children joined the school at the beginning of term and their parents could not afford a uniform. We asked Berlin to supply us with details and the Foundation may be able to help with purchasing uniforms for them.

Donkerbos Primary School and Hostel

We visited this school on Thursday 13 March, and again this was a two hour journey on gravel and sand roads, the last 20 mins was particularly challenging on a single track sandy road. This school is always a joy to visit and this time it was no exception. The Principal, Patience was at a seminar in Gobabis, so we were ably hosted by Ms Kamakuere. There was great excitement at the school, as MTC a major mobile phone and network provider had agreed to build classrooms and an administration block. We were told that the Foundations involvement was one of the factors that MTC had chosen this school. We were then shown the five laptops, a PC and a printer that the Foundation had funded for computer studies. It was then onto the hostel dormitories where the mattresses that the Foundation purchased last year were in good condition and well looked after.

We met the two children, Franz and Rejoice who are being sponsored by Pat and also the two girls that Yvonne also wishes to sponsor. As at Eiseb we stayed to see the children eat lunch which was maize porridge and cabbage soup using the spoons that the Foundation had provided.

Again it was explained to us that a lot of San children joined the school at the beginning of term and their parents could not afford a uniform. We asked Ms Kamakuere to supply us with details and the Foundation may be able to help with purchasing uniforms for them.



Some of the teachers with the children, two sponsored by Pat Findlay and two sponsored by Yvonne.

Following our visit, we received the following message from the Principal Patience, *'your presence has brought Donkerbos Primary School on to the map. For the world it did not exist, but you literally have done wonders for the school. We are forever talking about you and the Foundations donations and the pure hearts you have I regard myself lucky to have met you and to know that such people exist in the universe. I can't stop talking about how much we appreciate you.'*

Good Hope Primary School

On Tuesday 18 March, we visited Good Hope Primary School and Hostel which is about 45 mins from the clinic to check up on the projects funded by St Mary's Senior School for Girls in Colchester. They were still waiting for the pipe connectors to complete the installation of the garden irrigation system, but this should be complete in the next few weeks

Gobabis Hospital

On each trip we visit Gobabis hospital to distribute knitted blankets, hats and cardigans in the Premature Baby Unit and the Paediatric ward. In the former we saw twins who weighted 700 grams each at birth, but are now over a kilo and in the latter we saw a one year old girl suffering from extreme malnutrition which we did not expect to see. The most needy were chosen by the nurses and they were pleased to receive their blankets etc.



Some of the happy recipients of blankets and hats at Gobabis Hospital

Otjinene 95 Project

Veri, who works for COHENA which deals with TB patients is based at Otjimanangombe clinic. She was born at Otjinene in 1995. She and her friends who were born in the same year have formed a club which from time to time distributes basic items to disabled people and the disadvantaged. She asked if the Foundation could support them, so we bought some toiletries etc for their next distribution event at Epikuro Post 3 in April.



Some of the items purchased by the Foundation for the Otjinene 95 project.

Blankets for the San families

During our stay at Otjimanangombe we visited a nearby San bushman settlement. Where we donated blankets and hats. While we were there we noticed a mother and baby, who had been born the previous day at the settlement. She was reluctant to come to the clinic. Later when we returned to the clinic we told Sister Linea and she was very concerned for the health of the baby, so we drove back to the settlement and the Sister persuaded the mother and her baby to come to the clinic and we brought them back with us.



The San Bushman families and their blankets

The Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic

After spending four weeks in the Omaheke Region, we moved north to Catherine's Clinic which is a much busier clinic than Otjimanangombe with 100 to 150 patients a day including prisoners from the local prison. By the end of the day at 17.00 all the patients will have been seen by the dedicated nursing staff of eight and their colleagues.

Last November, the Foundation presented a refurbished ambulance to the clinic, for it to be based there with the proviso that in an emergency it could be used to transport patients from the hospital in Tsumeb to referral hospitals in the north. However, due to there being no serviceable ambulances available at the hospital, and seemingly no money to repair them, trips to the north with our ambulance have become the norm. We have expressed our concern at the number of kms the ambulance is now doing, but it was so wonderful to see it in action, a life long dream for us to have an ambulance at both clinics



Left: The front of the clinic



Right: The nurses accommodation



Left: Linda with the 'Jump and Go' pack and spinal board donated by the Foundation to be used by the ambulance when called to road traffic accidents etc. Right: Some of the staff of the Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic with the ambulance in the background.



News from Namibia

Change of British High Commissioner to Namibia

After serving in Namibia for the last four years, the current High Commissioner, Mr Charles Moore is leaving for London and transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment and will be succeeded by Mr Neil Bradley. We thank the former for his friendship and guidance and look forward to meeting the new High Commissioner when we return to Namibia.

The death of the Founding President

Dr Sam Nujoma died on 8 February 2025 at the age of 96. He headed the liberation movement to gain Namibia's independence from South Africa and served as President from 1990 to 2005.

Friends of Namibia member, Marion Wallace read the following speech at a memorial service in London.

'Your excellencies, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen I am honoured to represent the Friends of Namibia Society on this sad occasion. We, together with the Namibian nation and all their friends abroad, mourn the passing of His Excellency Dr Sam Nujoma, who led the fight against the racist apartheid system in Namibia from the 1950s right up to independence in 1990, becoming the first president of independent Namibia. For those of us in the solidarity movement in the UK, it was a huge privilege to work alongside those brave Namibians standing up for justice and taking on the apartheid government in this David and Goliath contest. Dr Nujoma was, of course, the leader and inspirational force behind this movement, having led SWAPO continuously since its beginnings as the Ovamboland People's Organisation in 1959. The struggle often brought him to London. Randolph Vigne, an early supporter, described him as 'ceaselessly travelling' and visiting frequently. In his autobiography, Dr Nujoma describes speaking in 1966 at the Royal Institute for International Affairs at Chatham House. Here he declared (despite Randolph's urging caution!) 'our determination to end South Africa's occupation of our country, by all...means, including armed struggle'. Such was the success of the speech that the meeting organiser later compared him to De Gaulle, leader of the Free French during the Second World War. It was in fact the friendship between Randolph and H.E. Sam Nujoma that inspired the creation in 1969 of the original Friends of Namibia, which later became a fully-fledged solidarity movement in the form of the Namibia Support Committee. After independence, the Namibian government (and I believe Dr Nujoma in person) asked Randolph to set up a Friends of Namibia 2.0, thus creating the friendship society that is still supporting Namibians today. While mistakes have been made, the achievements of SWAPO under Nujoma's leadership are manifold. The Namibian people successfully defeated the seemingly indestructible might of South Africa and established a peaceful post-independent state. For his leadership of the struggle, we in Friends of Namibia salute Dr Nujoma and express our profound gratitude for his perseverance through hard and dangerous times. The struggle he led us all in not only ended the crime of apartheid in Namibia – it also gave hope to the world that injustice may be conquered, hope needed now as ever.'

Namibia's first woman President

Following national elections last November, Namibians elected their first woman President, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and she was inaugurated on Independence Day, 21 March. She has already made her mark by merging ministries, cutting down on the number of Ministers and appointing more women to the cabinet.

The Foundations Projects identified for 2025 – progress so far.

Omuhaturaa Primary School and hostel

A possible contribution toward the repair of the solar powered school borehole which was recently struck by lightning. It serves the school, the hostel and the clinic – *Contribution made and the borehole has been repaired*

Donkerbos Primary School and Hostel

The purchase of an industrial electrical cooking pot – *the order has been placed, and delivery is awaited*

The purchase of four tables and benches for the dining hall – *being constructed*

The provision of computers, a printer and wifi to teach pupils computer skills - *delivered*

School uniforms for the San children who have joined the school for the first time – *awaiting quotation*

Donkerbos San Community Office

The purchase of paint for internal decoration. – *Work in hand*

The purchase of a table and chairs to accommodate the ladies making jewellery. – *Work in hand*

Eiseb Primary School and Hostel

The purchase of 350 spoons and 130 plates for the dining hall – *still to be purchased*

The purchase of washable paint, to paint the interior of the kitchen – *still to be purchased*

The purchase of tiles for the kitchen behind the gas ranges – *still to be purchased*

Funding the repair of the Cold room subject to price. – *Repair is complete*

School uniforms for the San children who have joined the school for the first time – *awaiting quotation*

Otjimanangombe Primary Healthcare Clinic

The provision of a specialist bed and mattress for the Delivery room for the ladies to give birth on.

Awaiting quotation

The Catherine Bullen Primary Healthcare Clinic

Nurses' accommodation: Resolving maintenance issues – *in hand.*

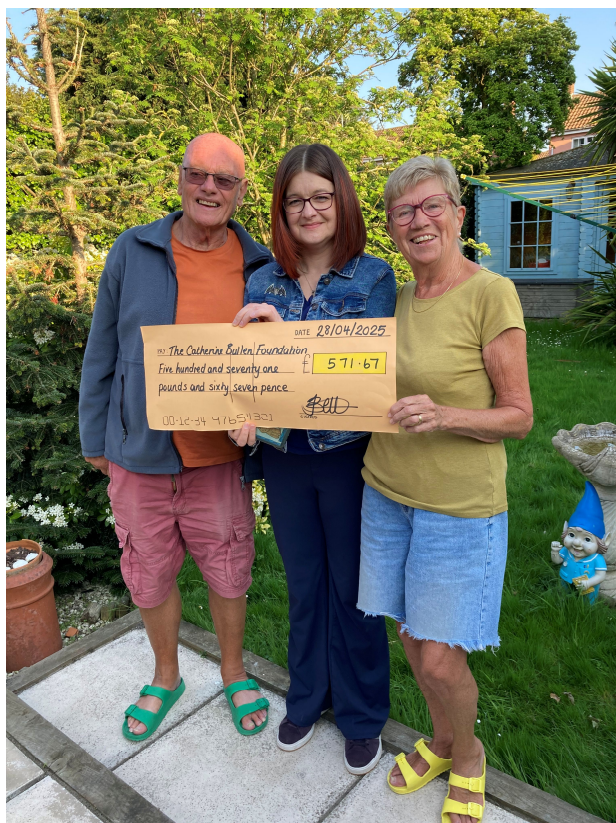
Fund Raisers

Jo Bell Fundraiser

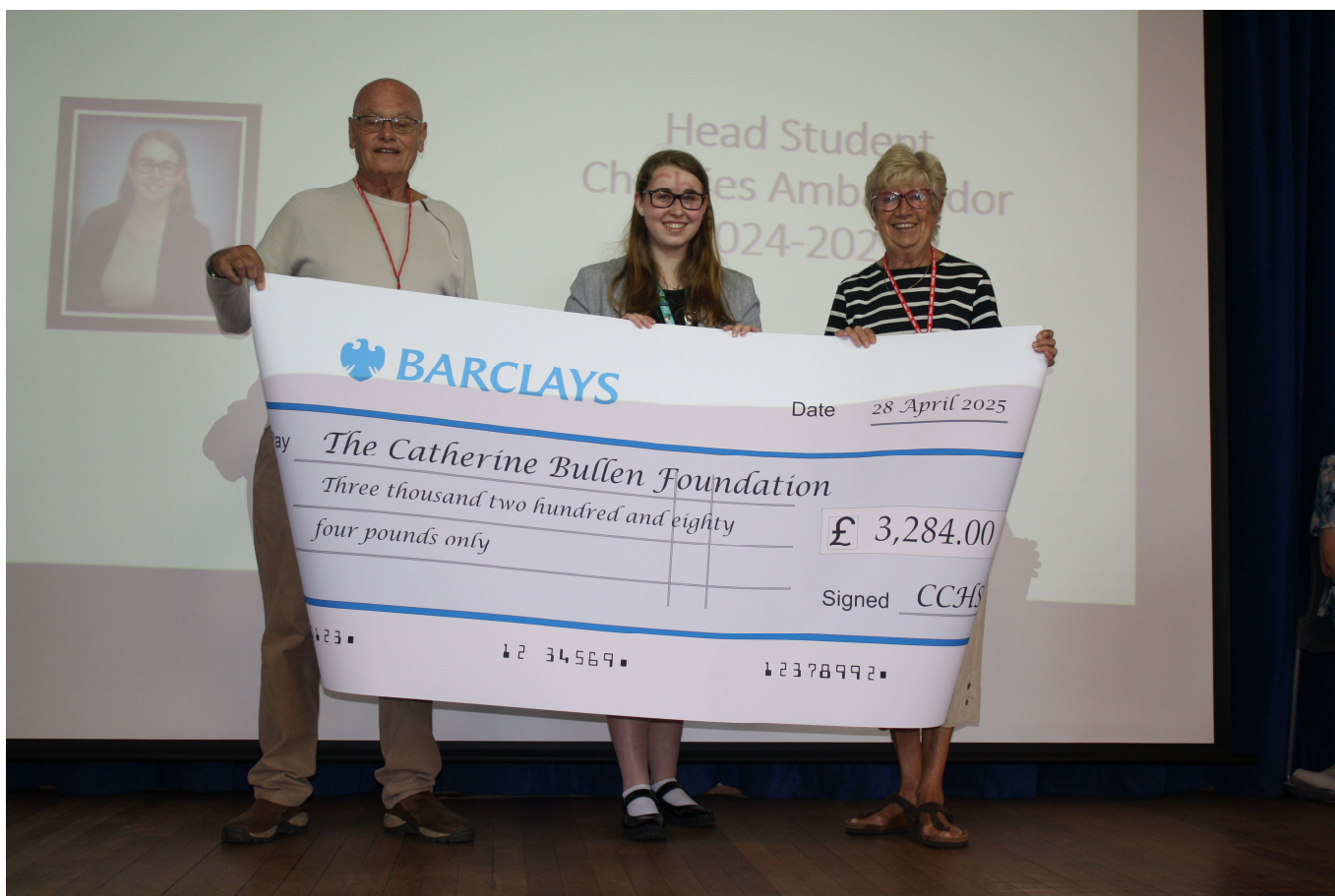
Jo Bell was one of Catherine's classmates at the Colchester County High School for Girls and she has written a song for Christmas which has been released as a CD single. Sales of the single up to 1st March 2025, are going to YES Colchester and Tendring, Dungarvan Community First Responders, and The Catherine Bullen Foundation. Jo visited us on 28 April with her dad and presented us with a cheque for £571.67 for which we are very grateful. (See photo on next page)

Colchester County High School for Girls

This was Catherine's former senior school, and they announced that they would make the Foundation, their charity of the year commencing in September 2024. On 28 April, Linda and I attended the leavers assembly where we received a cheque for £3,284, a magnificent result from their non-uniform days. Linda and Roger also presented the Catherine Bullen Memorial Prize to Emily Wong who is going on to Cambridge University to study medicine.



Jo Bell presenting her cheque to the Foundation.



Roger and Linda receiving the cheque from the Colchester High School for Girls on behalf of the Foundation

Indian Fundraising Lunch

Titash Indian Restaurant, West Mersea

Sunday 6 July 2025

Tickets: £25

Get you tickets now – ring 07733 140748

Forthcoming Events

We have the following events scheduled for next year which are confirmed. We welcome volunteers to help at these events, so if you can be of assistance, please get in touch.

Saturday 24 May

Morrisons Maldon

Monday 26 May

Hospital Fete, Castle Park – Sales and Publicity stall

Saturday 31 May

Morrisons Clacton

Saturday 14 June

Morrisons Maldon

Saturday 28 June/Sunday 29 June

Colchester Food and Drink Festival, Castle Park – Homemade cakes stall

Saturday 5 July

Stanway Co-op Supermarket (Pear Tree Business Park)

Saturday 26 July

Manningtree Co-op Supermarket

Sunday 3 August

Five Parishes Show – Sales and publicity stall

Saturday 9 August

West Mersea - Tesco

Sunday 10 August

Waldegraves car boot sale – car parking and sales stall

Saturday 16 August

Lions Summer Fete and Car show - Sales and Publicity stall

Saturday 23 August
Morrisons Clacton Town

Sunday 24 August
Clacton Car Show – Publicity and sales stall

Saturday 30 August
Woodbridge Co-op Supermarket

Saturday 6 December
West Mersea Lights up – Homemade cake stall

Saturday 13 December
West Mersea Co-op Supermarket.

Saturday 20 December
West Mersea Tesco

Donations

It would be very much appreciated, if you feel you could support us with a donation for our projects in Namibia. As we are a UK charity working overseas, we are not eligible for any British Government grants.

It can be made online on our website www.namibia-aid.org.uk through 'justgiving' or 'Paypal'.

By sending a cheque made out to the Foundation to 15 Colchester Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex, CO5 8RS

Or you can donate by bank transfer to:
Account Name: The Catherine Bullen Foundation
Sort Code: 20-22-67
Account No: 53717690

Regular giving

Some of our donors have made a more formal arrangement by setting up a standing order to donate a regular monthly or yearly sum. For which we are extremely grateful. If you would like to support us in this way, please use the above banking details so that you can set it up.

Presentations

The Foundation is pleased to give presentations to groups and clubs on its work during the day or evenings.

Make a difference!

The Catherine Bullen Foundation is working with local communities to help build and nurture a new life for the people in rural Namibia. Because we are a small charity, our overheads are small and are personally covered by the trustees, so that every single penny donated to us goes to the intended project, with spending strictly monitored by the UK trustees and their ngo partner in Namibia. All visits to Namibia are self-financed and no charitable funds are used for this purpose. Please help us make a difference by making a donation, either online at www.namibia-aid.org.uk or sending it to the address on the next page.

How to contact us

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Donation/Gift Aid Declaration

(The Catherine Bullen Foundation – Registered Charity No. 1110516)

Details of donor

Title..... Forename(s).....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code.....

Signature.....

Date.....

I want the charity to treat

*the enclosed donation of £..... as a Gift Aid donation

*the donation(s) of £..... which I made on / / as (a) Gift Aid donation(s)

**delete as appropriate*

**You must pay an amount of Income and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year.
(currently 25p for each £1 you give).**