

VineTrust Connections

Issue 37 - Autumn 2020



Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

Connecting People to Change Lives

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Welcome to Connections 37!

For a time such as this...

It is by far the most unsettling of times that I can remember in all of my working life and a time of incredible negative impact across the local, national and international landscape, all due to Covid-19.

Colleagues and friends have been impacted, with some quite seriously ill during the first wave of infection, particularly amongst our team in the Amazon City of Iquitos. For many, the very idea of international travel is now well off the table for the foreseeable future with airlines, amongst others, suggesting it may take until 2024 before they see a full return of their core business back to 2019 levels.

We are very much hoping it won't be that long, but can clearly see the impacts reaching far into 2021 and the likelihood that short-term international volunteering may well not return in any real number before a working vaccine is widely available. The all too obvious result has meant a reduction of our core UK team back to levels last seen in 2008 and the loss of key colleagues through redundancy. Our medical ships were also restricted to port for a number of months during the height of the crisis and yet, despite these setbacks, progress is still being made in Peru and Tanzania.

I hope the enclosed articles on Forth Hope resuming service, the incredible pace of construction now taking place at Kazunzu Village of Hope in Tanzania and our wider plans will encourage and inspire you in the midst of what can only really be described as a very challenging year for so many of us and particularly the work of Vine Trust.

This year was looking like a record year for volunteering but will end with a total of 49, not the 400 plus we were planning for. Financially our income will have more than halved, but thankfully we are able to maintain our core overseas projects into 2021 thanks to generous support in previous years and the provision of two legacies in the last twelve months.

"Connecting people to change lives" remains our strap line. We don't know what the future holds in anything like the way we thought we did this time last year, but what we do know is our ambition to partner in support of some of the least advantaged communities in the world today has not diminished. Rather, if anything this crisis reminds us of their needs and how the brunt of so many economic and health tragedies are borne disproportionately by them.

With best wishes to you and yours at this time of uncertainty and thank you for your continued support, interest and kindness. It really does make all the difference and is a wonderful response for a time such as this.

Kind regards,

Willie McPherson
Chief Executive



UK Staff News

As part of our response to the curtailment of our overseas volunteering programmes and barge bookings we have unfortunately had to reduce our UK staff team to reflect our current activities.

We are immensely grateful to Louise Campbell, Emily Adams, Sinéad Conway and Joanna MacQueen for all their endeavours in support of our programmes and the outstanding effort they have given in developing the Trust over the last four years. As a Trust we wish each one of them well for their future and thank them for their work and commitment.

Going forward we will be working remotely three days per week and aboard the Barge for one, assuming public health regulations allow.

All telephone, mail and email enquiries will continue to be answered as normal with admin@vinetrust.org as the default email for any new enquiries.

Our new office hours are Monday to Thursday 9am – 5pm



Willie McPherson

Chief Executive



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UK Admin Lead



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Lead*



A Royal 'Zoom' Call

As part of International Nurses Day on Tuesday 12th May, members of the Royal Family interviewed various charities in celebration of the day in recognition of the vitally important role that nurses have in delivering health care around the world.

Vine Trust was honoured when our Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, had a Zoom conversation with Ronald Kebaso (Jubilee Hope Medical Programme Manager and a trained nurse / midwife).



During the 30-minute interview, Her Royal Highness spoke to Ronald about his experience on Jubilee Hope, plans for the future and the benefits the programme brings to the Islands. Ronald was delighted to be interviewed and was very positive and thankful to our Patron for her continued support.

Our Patron had met Ronald before, when she visited Mwanza in October 2014 to launch the Jubilee Hope medical ship, the first of its kind on Lake Victoria. Ronald has served with the Jubilee Hope Medical Programme since its initiation, playing a key role in the shaping and development of its activities in collaboration with the island communities. Amongst its achievements, the Programme has made 60 expeditions to the islands, providing over 300,000 consultations and establishing support groups for over 350 women living with HIV/AIDS.



Kazunzu Village of Hope - Latest Developments

It was with great excitement that the first two families arrived at Kazunzu Village of Hope on the 3rd of August and during September a further two families moved in to their new homes, which means the first cluster of four homes is now fully occupied. We are immensely grateful to our partners, volunteers and supporters who have made Kazunzu a reality.



The second cluster of four homes is in the final stage of internal decoration and fit out and will begin receiving families in October and November, the plan being to have all 8 homes fully occupied in time for Christmas. A fantastic achievement considering that the project only broke ground in the summer of 2018.



It's great to see this 53-acre project live and happening! The development of the Kazunzu Village of Hope is a place-based approach, with local partners working alongside communities, focussing energies on providing a sustainable and replicable model that will provide an inspirational place to live, work, school and grow whilst benefitting some of the least advantaged children in the region. Community engagement, caring families, self-sufficiency, capacity building, agricultural production and high quality education are all key elements at the heart of the work.

Progress has also been made with the foundations underway for the multipurpose village community centre which will be a focal point for village life, whilst also providing small chalet-type accommodation for the vocational training centre that will be built in the future. These chalets will also provide temporary accommodation for builders and work teams during the construction phase.



The first cluster of homes at Kazunzu

Fish farm cages are also under construction to establish the Kazunzu Fisheries Project which will be a key component in making the village self-sustaining. A drilling rig is about to resume drilling to provide water for the site. Failing that, a pump storage and water treatment system will be installed using lake water.

Planning for the construction of a primary school is being advanced and future plans include a nursery school, medical post, irrigated rice fields and various revenue producing initiatives.

A 7-tonne tipper truck (similar to the one in the photo) is also on the shopping list, which would reduce total construction costs by over 20% whilst also providing transport for the fish farm food and income from external hires. Do please get in touch if you have a spare one!



We wish Kazunzu Village of Hope every success as it builds its way through 2020 and into 2021 and look forward to sharing more in the coming months on our social media channels and website.

If you would like to register your interest in supporting the project financially or being kept informed of volunteering opportunities when our programmes resume, please email admin@vinetrust.org with Kazunzu in your email title. Thank you



Peru COVID-19 update

Elena Pila, National Director for the Amazon Hope Medical Programme (PMEAP), writes to provide us with an update on the impact of COVID-19 on Peru...

“Despite having been one of the earliest adopters of preventive measures worldwide against the pandemic COVID-19, Peru has also been one of the countries that has endured and is still enduring one of the strongest and most painful situations.

It is not easy to explain how, of the three types of devastating crises that could come with a pandemic, Peru is going through them all: we have a social crisis, an enormous economic predicament and even a very destabilising political situation.

One of the roots of the problem lies in the fact that 71% of the Peruvian labour force works in the informal economy, in a day to day system: the majority have no savings, no access to banking and only have access to food and other essentials by shopping in produce markets on a daily basis. In other words, a huge amount of people need to go out every day in order to make a living, using crowded public transport and markets - an excellent breeding ground for any lethal virus to spread swiftly.

Add to this a national health system that had underinvested in infrastructure, laboratories and medical personnel for years. At the beginning of the outbreak, nationwide there were just 3,000 hospital beds and 100 in ICUs.

Well aware of these deficiencies, the Peruvian Government dedicated one of the largest shares of any national GDP in the world to contain the forecasted health and economic devastation of coronavirus, between 9% to 11% of the Peruvian GDP, which was aimed at

increasing hospital beds to 18,000 and 1,600 in ICUs, protecting 2 million people worst hit economically by distributing a monthly bonus equivalent to £85 and introducing a number of economic measures to support the wider economy.

Notwithstanding, all these measures to reduce the social hardship related to the coronavirus, the government's effort struggled to slow infection rates and death levels related to COVID-19. At the end of September, according to the Johns Hopkins University, Peru was recorded as the most impacted country in the world in regards to deaths per 100,000 of population and fifth worst in number of deaths per every 100 of confirmed cases."

Despite these incredibly challenging times for Peru, the country is starting to see improvements in the national situation and this has allowed certain aspects of daily life to return, including the expeditions of the Amazon Hope medical programme to the river communities.

Forth Hope Expeditions Recommence

On the 17th of September 2020, the MV Forth Hope celebrated its third year of service since it was inaugurated by HRH The Princess Royal on the banks of the Amazon River in the small village of Oran. So it was somewhat fitting that this anniversary was, although coincidental, the date when the Forth Hope set sail once again



from Iquitos, en route to the river communities after many months being confined to harbour due to the COVID-related working and travel restrictions.

Since the implementation of the national lockdown in Peru in late March, only vessels dedicated to the transport of food or essentials were permitted along the rivers. During the following months, the gap in access to basic health services in the Amazon region translated into very high numbers of infections and deaths in the city of Iquitos and the riverine communities where indigenous populations live.

Continued —>

In fact, the Loreto region in particular was hit by the coronavirus very early in the process when the disease was hardly known (treatments were tentative) and the national and regional health authorities were ill prepared for the emergency.

More recently, the region has seen significant improvement in the local setting with regards to COVID-related infections and deaths. Restrictions on movement and gatherings have been subsequently relaxed to a degree and, after much dialogue and discussion with the regional government and health authorities, it was agreed that PMEAP should now return to providing healthcare services to the river communities.



So, early morning on the 17th of September, the Forth Hope departed with its crew and core medical staff with its destination the Marañón river. Strict protocols, approved by the Ministry of Health, are in place as well as ample supplies of medicines and PPE, with consultations provided in community buildings at each village rather than on board the ship for the time being.

Although there is still great uncertainty about what the coming weeks and months hold for the medical programme in Peru, there remains a passion and commitment from all to work alongside the numerous remote communities in ensuring access to vital medical services for all residents.



The Amazon Hope Medical Team, ready to receive their first patients upon recommencing expeditions to the communities

Video Conferencing - now a part of daily life!

Video conferencing facilities have been around for many years, but COVID-19 has made “Zoom” (and other similar products) part of our everyday vocabulary.

Before lockdown, as a Trust we had made some use of this technology, mainly to save travelling to a single location for face-to-face meetings. However, with the Barge closed and people unable to meet together, video conferencing and Zoom in particular has taken on new importance. Vine Trust Trustees and our committees have been meeting over Zoom since March and while such meetings can never replace everyone sitting around a table, they do enable discussion to take place and decisions to be made.

Zoom Information Sessions

In order to keep our volunteers and supporters up to date with progress of our work in Peru and Tanzania, a number of Zoom sessions are being held. The first session was hosted by Willie McPherson on Thursday 17th September and gave an update on developments at Kazunzu – Village of Hope.

Willie was joined by Programme Director, Samuel Limbe and 22 volunteers who had all been to Kazunzu. Volunteers from Falkirk Trinity, Babcock International and a General October trip from last year, as well as the 2018 and 2019 Vision Trips were present.



The 90-minute session started with Willie welcoming one and all before Samuel gave an update on progress. This was followed by a very interesting and informative question and answer opportunity.

The session was considered a good success and a great way to keep the ‘Vine Trust Community’ up to date with progress at a time when no volunteers will be travelling to Kazunzu in the near future.

Further Zoom Information Sessions are being planned so volunteers and supporters can hear about all the different activities taking place in cooperation with our partners in Peru and Tanzania.

A Life-Changing Voyage

Captain Peter Hall, VT Board Member and our longest serving volunteer, shares some memories of the delivery of the very first Amazon Hope medical ship, 19 years on from its arrival in Peru...

“A friend once told me “keep telling the story, people want to hear about adventures” and the reality is we all have adventures and we all play a part in changing someone’s outlook through them.

The sea has been part of my life for nearly 50 years, and during that time I have seen and experienced a lot. But in 2001, I took



part in a voyage which was very different. It was the starting chapter of something that has grown and captured the hearts and minds of hundreds if not thousands and impacted millions of lives. It took place on Sunday 2nd September 2001 when a small fleet tender slipped its lines and headed down the Clyde, passed the deep sea ships moored at Greenock around Cloch Point and into the Irish Sea.

The crew of seven came from all walks of life - John Biss, a mariner with a c'est la vie attitude; Martin Curtis, a marine engineer who had spent his life working for the MOD (Martin would go on to have a hand in all the subsequent Vine Trust vessels and continues to support as a valuable member of VT’s Marine Committee); Dougie Dale, a farmer from North Berwick who could turn his hand to fix anything. (Sadly, Dougie died in August 2020); Charlie Gothard, an engineer from Campbeltown; Eddie McKenna, the ‘singing Chef’, who was a minister with a parish in North Berwick and, Willie McPherson, who needs no introduction other than having the biggest vision and energy to match in any person I have ever met. Cameraman, Andy Humphreys, also joined us for the making of a BBC documentary.

But my story starts nearly 12 months earlier, in the village of Puerto Algeria, on the banks of the Itaya river in the Peruvian Amazon during a visit to a street children’s project. I had been impacted by what I had seen and experienced during my visit. But I was a mariner and ships were my expertise, what could I do?

Fast forward 4 months to the 26th March and a phone call from Willie McPherson. His opening words were, “I hear you are a man that knows about ships. I have an idea...Come up to Scotland and see a ship I have in mind that might just make a difference in Iquitos”.

Between March and September was a blur of organisation planning a voyage, looking at the route, making a possible documentary, getting sponsorship, support and donations. The preparations were punctuated with extraordinary situations. I remember thinking this is no ordinary voyage, that it had taken on a momentum of its own.

Every now and then you get a reality check, mine was day 4 we had cleared Land's End you can feel the low swell running in from the Atlantic. This was a 24m long ship, which is fine for going along the coast of the UK but it's another when you are approaching the notorious Bay of Biscay, with a deep Atlantic depression rolling in. The weather forecast was not good increasing wind and rough sea, heavy swell. Quite remarkably, the wind increased and the sea got rougher, but it stayed on the stern quarter, pushing us across Biscay, past Cape Trafalgar and down the Portuguese coast.

First stop was the port of Santa Cruz, Tenerife to restock supplies, water and refuel and then on to the Cape Verde Islands before the longest leg across the Atlantic to the mouth of the Amazon.

The environment of the Amazon is very different to large oceans. Gone are the concerns of weather to be replaced by constantly changing depths and fast flowing rip currents and unwieldy tugs and tows. We spent several days of navigating with caution, depths constantly changing and the charts we had were only an indicator, the satellite navigation often put us several miles in land.

The journey along the Amazon, with stops in Manaus and Tabatinga, was full of challenges, beyond the changing river depths. But difficulties in dealing with fuel suppliers and the river police were balanced by the amazing provision of support and help from unexpected sources.

Our last day was a mixture of excitement, emotion, frustration, peace and smiles - we had arrived! Our journey had come to its end but it was the beginning of an incredible new chapter in the life of this little ship."



For A Time Such As This - 2020 Appeal

2020 was meant to be a record year for volunteering and programme delivery.

We started the year ready to build upon the 2,000,000 plus medical consultations delivered by our medical ships, alongside the 10 orphanages and 144 individual family homes built in Peru and Tanzania by our partners and volunteers.



Instead, through no fault of anyone, the global pandemic closed international borders and put countries in 'lock down' resulting in our 2020 volunteering programme being decimated. Our medical ships were laid up for several months due to in country COVID-19 restrictions and wider community health issues, especially on the Peruvian Amazon.

We are especially keen to do all we can to maintain our projects throughout the COVID crisis and ensure that the medical ships are used fully in serving the communities in partnership with local health authorities and in country regulations. Across all our volunteering activities the reduction in our volunteer numbers by nearly 90% has reduced the funding for our projects by around £220,000 this year.

In order however to keep things moving ahead we are now seeking to replace the funding that our missing volunteers would otherwise have provided.

As a Trust we are well aware of the challenges many of us are facing with reduced salaries or workplace uncertainty. Any assistance however, in helping us to bridge the gap at this time, will be most helpful and of great assistance.

Please consider supporting our 2020 Appeal in whatever way you can or organising an online or socially distanced event to help our work at this time. Please give using the attached form or by donating to the 2020 Appeal fundraising page (go to www.vinetrust.org select 'Give' and 'Fundraising Pages' then enter '2020 Appeal' in the search box).

With thanks in anticipation of any help you may be able to give.

Donation / Standing Order Form

If you would like to support Vine Trust by giving regularly, please complete the standing order details.

Your Details	
Title:	First name(s):
Surname:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone No.:	
Email:	

I would like my Donation/Standing Order to support (please tick one):

- General Operations
- Peru Medical Programme
- Tanzania Medical Programme
- Kazunzu – Village of Hope
- Where the Need is Greatest

Standing Order	
Bank:	
Bank Address:	
Sort Code:	Account No.:
Please pay Vine Trust the sum of £ _____ on the date of _____	
And (please circle) monthly / quarterly / annually thereafter until _____	

ONE-Off Donation

Amount £ _____

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate!

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. In order to Gift Aid your donations you must tick the box(es) below:

- I want to Gift Aid all of my Standing Order /Donations and/or
- any donations I have made in the past 4 years

'I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.'

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you!

We couldn't operate our programmes without you.

Please send this form to The Vine Trust Barge, Prince of Wales Dock, Edinburgh, EH6 7DX. We will register the standing order in our records and then forward the form to your bank

Please notify the charity if you:

- want to cancel this declaration - change your name or home address - no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains
If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Patron: HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL

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