



Andy and Carol Brooke; they don't scrub up too bad!

During our visit home over Christmas, I thought it might be a good idea to come back to Haiti with my whistle and flute. I mean, you never know when you're going to get invited to something posh, like a wedding and suchlike, and there's nothing worse than being under dressed when everyone around you has gone to so much trouble to look their very best. Little did we know that the first posh "do" we'd be attending would be a Nepali UN medal awards ceremony, and for a few hours one Wednesday we found ourselves seemingly whisked out of Haiti and into the little bit of Nepal that exists next door. Here we witnessed military parades, Nepali cultural dances and the awarding of medals to the UN service men and women who have been present in Haiti over the last 2 years. 2 of those receiving medals of honour were 2 of our new friends, Dr. Diba Sharma and Dr. Pawan, who have since returned to Nepal after completing their term of service.



Dr. Diba Sharma and Dr. Pawan, after receiving their medals

The UN have been "next door neighbours" to us at the Village for the last 10 years or so and as such have provided for us a certain sense of added security for all who reside there both for long and short term alike. Although they will be leaving Haiti

eventually they will remain with us for a little while yet and we look forward to continuing future good relationships with them.

31st March meant saying goodbye to our long term volunteer, Gemma who'd been with us for 2 months, and had become very much part of our Village family, leaving us on our own for a brief period before the arrival of our new visitors. We used this opportunity to take a couple of days out to visit the Dominican Republic and get our passports stamped; a necessary process every 90 days for foreign visitors.

The contrast of the 2 countries is dramatic! From the moment we passed to the other side of the border. Apart from the abrupt change of written signs from Creole to Spanish, the streets become notably cleaner and pothole free, there are "nice" shops and department stores, well stocked supermarkets, restaurants and fast food outlets; in fact, all the things that make up what we in the developed world call "civilisation".



It's posh 'ere, innit?

We stayed for one night in a very palatial Air B&B apartment with a very kind and friendly Dominican lady called Roselia, and had a brief experience of luxury in a mosquito-net free four poster bed, shopping for luxuries like vacuum packed smoked bacon and anchovy stuffed olives before returning to what we now call "real life" here in Haiti. Since that short break in the D.R. we have welcomed 5 new visitors to the Village; 2 old friends from Wakefield, who'll be with us until the 30th April, a married couple from the US who came to help with the material needs of the disabled kids in the Maison de Benediction as well as those in the community; and an Australian Occupational Therapist, (Kirsty) volunteering for 3 weeks with ur Spinal Rehab department before her return to Oz. We really do consider it a great privilege to be

working here and able to cross paths with such a variety of people from across the world. People who come from all walks of life, different backgrounds, professions, faiths and philosophies, but who all have one thing in common; a desire to help and do good things for people less fortunate than themselves coupled with a desire to see HCBH moving forward to become a shining example of the first class health care that could be available for all Haitian people.

We were pleased to welcome our friends from Wakefield, Dave and Lesley who'll be staying with us for 2 weeks. During their time so far, Dave, (a chocolatier by profession), has visited a coco plantation in Acul de Nord and a Bean to Bar chocolate company, (Askanya) in Ouanamenth on the Dominican Republic border. A tasty experience for all who were present!



Dave talking a load of coco to French organic bean producer, Aline. Also on their schedule during their visit, is a trip to Cap Haitien Prison to take gifts of toothpaste, soap and other toiletries to prisoners, who have no “luxuries” of this kind unless provided by family, friends or anyone else who cares. Without going into too much detail, conditions in Haitian prisons are extremely grim. Dave and Lesley both have prison backgrounds; Dave did time in Wakefield, (on the chaplaincy team I hasten to add,) and his wife Lesley currently works as prison chaplain at New hall women’s Prison near Wakefield. All in all it’s been a busy but extremely enjoyable last few weeks. Once everyone has left and we’re on our own, life will seem very quiet and a bit lonely at times. But the quiet times are necessary, they give us chance to relax a little, recharge the batteries and concentrate on the other areas of our work that often get put on hold while the visitors are here. But, whether hosting visitors, or dealing with hospital matters, life is always busy and there never seems to be enough hours in the days and time passes all too quickly. As I write this there remains

only about 9 weeks before we return home to see the family we miss so much, and more especially get to meet our beautiful granddaughter, Imogen, for the first time, as well as being able to attend our son Alex’s graduation ceremony at Swansea University. we have developed a real love and passion for this, our second home, and for now at least, this is where we definitely belong and we give all thanks to God for leading us here. It’s true that life here can be a struggle at times when things don’t work exactly to our plans; power failures, our ambulance getting stuck in a pool of mud down a dark lonely back street late at night in a thunder storm; and most recently getting a puncture whilst visiting Cap Haitien prison which meant us doing a 2 hour stretch while we waited for it to be repaired!



I guess we’re almost used to the fact that things in Haiti rarely work according to plan and accepting this is actually quite liberating! The Bible teaches that “all things work for the good of those that love him, (God)”. If we accept that as truth then we really don’t have anything to be stressed about, ever!

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Give thanks for the volunteer teams and individuals that have done amazing things for the hospital over the last few weeks, and have been a great encouragement to us both.
2. Give thanks for the provision of skilled locals who are able to carry out repairs to our old ambulance, (and other things), despite it’s age and condition
3. For the current financial situation of the hospital and difficult decisions that have to be made as a consequence.
4. Renewed enthusiasm for hospital staff as they continue to work in often difficult circumstances.
5. Please pray for the improvement of Haiti’s prisons where prisoners live in appalling and inhuman conditions.
6. For physical health and spiritual strength and protection so that our work will not be hindered.
7. Continued good relationships with Haitian colleagues, friends and staff as well as local police and the UN.

Facebook @BrookesInHaiti
 Email carol.brooke@outlook.com
 andybrooke56@gmail.com
 Skype :live:carol.brooke_2
 andrew.richard.brooke