

Blog 112

The first instalment of this blog was written in late March, before I left Chitokoloki on 12 April: the final portion was completed after I arrived home. Apologies for delay as usual.

'Having started late with blog writing during this visit, I must now seek to make amends and send off a second posting quickly. There is certainly enough to write about.

Last night my neighbours had an invasion in the early hours of the morning – and I narrowly avoided one. Tim got up at around 02.00 to go to the bathroom and suddenly wondered whatever were all the black things around his feet. Army ants, and millions of them! They were entering through the bathroom window and marching along the grout lines of the floor tiles through the lounge/dining - room and kitchen onto the shared verandah at the back. My kitchen door was firmly closed, but they were just starting to think about coming in when Tim found them. First reaction was to run for the Doom spray which did at least confine them to the area they already occupied, and then he and Mary, his wife, spent an hour brushing the house out. There were literally piles of black ants, some still wriggling, on the verandah this morning and the broom was put to good use again. These ants eat everything in their path – plants, spiders, bats.... There are even stories of human beings getting covered in them and suffocating to death. Apparently, if they decide to visit you, the best plan is to move out till they go. They will leave the place very clean, for sure.

Last week I went to Kabompo for neurodisability clinics. I left early on Tuesday morning along with Tom Somili, one of our nurses who had cadged a lift in order to collect his car engine which had been under repair. The poor rains mean that the road is much more easily negotiable than last year; in fact it posed no challenge at all, even though we had had a good rain 24 hours prior to our trip. The Lord is good; there are times when it is like soup and mega-slippery. I stayed over Tuesday night with Paul and Eunice Poidevin, Canadian missionaries whose base is Kabompo and who are heavily involved with the new translation of the Luvala Bible. The version in use presently was translated by missionaries in Angola in the last century and, while it is overall a good translation, there are some inaccuracies. In the new translation each word/concept is carefully considered to maximise its accuracy and meaningfulness to a Luvala reader. The New Testament has recently been published and the team are now working on the Old Testament where they have reached Leviticus. Can you imagine how difficult it is to translate the chapters relating to the offerings meaningfully for someone who has little previous concept of this? They would value your prayers as they meet regularly several times a year to progress the work. I greatly enjoyed the warm fellowship in the home with Paul and Eunice.

My clinics were held in one of the local houses where a believer in fellowship in the Kabompo assembly lives. He is involved in the support of children with disability in the area – and there seem to be a considerable number of them, with more emerging every time I visit. This time my clinic was held jointly with the Wukwashi wa nZambi group from Kitwe. This is a Christian charity set up by a couple in UK and run by Zambians to support families with a disabled child and to promote achievement of the child's optimal potential. Joyce and Henry held a number of seminars with the families during their two day visit while I saw each child individually and advised on medical issues. I counted almost 40 consultations. Thankfully not all were complex, and some could be dealt with quickly. They were mainly children but a few adults sneaked their way in and were seen. On Tuesday we had a visit from the regional broadcasting team with interviews and videos and on

Wednesday we had the Zambian equivalent of the BBC visit with further videos and interviews. So I have a new claim to fame - Zambian TV star.

I have been involved with two boys with cerebral palsy in Kabompo since my first visit to Zambia back in 2007. Of course, they were at the clinic and their mother specially requested that we visit her husband who was unwell in their village home. We went on Wednesday morning after we had finished clinic, the brother from Kabompo, Mr Tom from Chit and myself. It was obvious that the dear man was really very sick. We sat on little stools under the trees and talked. It was a joy to speak a word in the Gospel (in English) to this man – and an even greater joy to hear his comment at the end – that just hearing and acknowledging the message isn't enough, but it's true saving faith that matters. The two are sometimes confused over here. The brother from Kabompo closed the visit with a word of prayer. Perhaps we shall not meet again down here; the next meeting may be in heaven. Please remember Paul and Eunice in prayer as they follow up on our visit.'

Now for the second instalment:

Our contact with Zambian nature continued. Just before Tim and Mary left in early April, as we were coming back home from the swimming pool we noticed a snake outside the house, just by my vehicle. Tiffany Poidevin, champion snake killer, was with us. I ran inside to get a pole which is ideal for the task and very soon she had the snake dead. We examined it afterwards and decided that it was a black mamba, one of the most venomous snakes in the area. We reckon it was sick as it wasn't behaving typically and was quite lethargic, so was a fairly easy target. I was very happy to know that it was no longer lurking in the grass.

I had a couple of days at Loloma in early April for clinics. We had a visiting ophthalmologist from Cincinnati, US, so he and his wife came as well. He was able to identify a number of patients who would benefit from cataract surgery and we were able to take them back to Chit with us so that he could perform the necessary operation and restore their vision. I think he was busier than me to be honest – I had some ward patients to see and a few out-patients also, but the number was reduced as I had already seen the group at Kabompo. We enjoyed fellowship in the home with Marian Ronald and Rebekah Flynn (both from Canada).

Some of you will be aware that David Beer (eldest child of Tim and Joy Beer from Loloma) had an accident back in February and fractured his leg. He was treated locally initially, but then came through to Chit for orthopaedic review when the team visited from Lusaka and when he got an external fixator. This has considerably increased his ability to get around on crutches and it was good to be able to encourage his activities, both during his few days at Chit and later at Loloma. That week the Sunday lunch table expanded to allow 14 diners. Quite a record!

The weekend before I left, it was a joy to have visitors (the Speichingers) over from Dipalata. My good friend Jennelle Heikoop (ex- Speichinger) is over for a couple of months with her husband and two year old daughter to cover the maternity work at Dipalata during Betty Magennis's furlough in N Ireland. It was such a joy to see them again. I hadn't seen Jennelle and Mark since their wedding back in 2016, and had never met Ariana at all. She is a lovely little girl. She is just at the age when language development is taking off and so tries to copy every new word that she hears. We had a lovely time catching up. Julie-Rachel Elwood and Tiffany Poidevin joined us as well.

Betty Magennis and I travelled part way home together. The Lord provided the flight from Chit just when we needed it – the visiting ophthalmologist and his wife were going out to Lusaka the very day I needed to connect with my longhaul flight, and Betty joined in too. We had a good flight to Lusaka with Bruce Poidevin. As I walked across the tarmac at Lusaka airport I was very surprised to hear

someone saying, 'Hello Dr Ros, How are you? Do you remember me? It was the son of one of the cataract patients who had brought his father to Chitokoloki for surgery. A small world! The flight to Dubai was good and once there Betty and I parted company – she was booked on the Gatwick flight and was flying from there directly to Belfast, or so she thought. I was going to Heathrow as usual. The Gatwick flight was delayed and poor Betty didn't make her connection, but, thankfully, Patricia Wiseman, whom she knows well, was able to collect her and give her overnight accommodation before her onward journey. My own flight to London was uneventful and I arrived home safely.

As I write the team at Chit is saying good bye to Tiffany Poidevin who has been with us for the past 16 months. She will be greatly missed in the hospital for all her help – not least with Luvale translation(!). Personally speaking, I shall miss her fellowship in the home. She is heading off to Vancouver to complete a linguistics course to facilitate her involvement in translation work which is her exercise before the Lord. She was brought up in Zambia of missionary parents and consequently grew up among the people, learning the Luvale language like a native and acquiring all the cultural background that goes with it. You might remember her as she settles back into life in Canada, and also for the Lord's guidance for her future in His will.

I have now been home in UK for 2 weeks which have flown filled with visitors, jobs in the home, the Easter conferences and a trip up North (or was it down Memory Lane?) with my cousin who is tracing the family tree. DV I plan to return to Zambia in late June and would value your prayers as I look to the Lord for His guidance and help in this.

Finally, just a few pictures...



Dr Ros at work. Clinic at Kabompo



Lunch with Speichingers. Left-to right: Tiffany Poidevin, Ariana Heikoop, Jennelle & Mark Heikoop, Jeff & June Speichinger, Mike & Vicky Gaynier (US ophthalmologist and his wife), RJ



Leaving Chitokoloki 12.04.19. Left-to-right: Dustin and Kelsey Deehart (medical visitors from US), Vicky Gaynier, RJ, Betty Magennis