

Hello my dear family and friends. The weeks are going by so fast and I must apologise because I feel I'm well overdue an update on life in Bluefields. In two weeks time I'll be packing up ready to return home for another 6 months.

Since I last wrote, my friend Jean has paid another visit for nearly a month and wow did we work. Every day we were out on the streets whatever the weather. I decided Jean hadn't come to have a comfortable, relaxing vacation, so I walked the shoes off her feet and we achieved so much.



*For Mother's Day our ladies at the lunch club received a small gift.*

*Giving out pencil cases in a school. See the joy on that boys face!*



We did craft work at two different children's feeding programmes, cooked and served 50 lunches to adults every Saturday who mainly sleep rough, one day a week at 6am we went onto the streets with our thermos flasks of coffee and bread and another day in the week at lunch time we walked round various parts of Bluefields giving out sandwiches, crisps and pouches of water. We paid two visits to the maternity home, taking in 40 bags each time of basic essentials for mother and baby and my latest project is going into the maternity home at 8am with the flasks filled with hot chocolate and serving cake or fruit bread.





*6am coffee and bread being enjoyed by this man pushing a heavy cart load.*

There were times when I left Jean to make up the bags of goodies for the children or the maternity home, or preparing a craft while I got on with my 'real' work of visiting the 9 schools where we have our sponsored children being educated or keeping on top of the continuous paper work that the job entails. It all worked well and Jean went home with a happy heart, thankful for the opportunity of serving so many underprivileged people.

These projects which have become so much a part of the everyday life in Bluefields, will continue while I'm home for two reasons – firstly my friends back home who have set up standing orders with their banks to support the work here, is sufficient to cover the costs and secondly I have some wonderful trustworthy volunteers I can depend on to keep everything running. The beauty of the internet means we can keep touch if they hit any problems.

I got quick a shock when someone told me recently I was on Facebook giving out sandwiches in the town and also a small piece of information about me. I felt it rather creepy that this person was following me taking photos and then posting them on Facebook without me knowing anything about it or who this person was. Two days later, the Bluefields Notices picked up on this and did a larger script, again without speaking to me first and asking permission to publish it. It was all very nicely put and many lovely comments were made, but I still don't feel too easy that this can happen so easily without me having any knowledge of it.

I've got it translated into English and I might get round to sending a copy later on.

This time I've been involved more with the hospital with very generous donations which I've received. It's certainly been an eye opener of the things which the hospital lack when I realise how well equipped our hospitals are in the UK. These donations vary, but all meet a desperate need. I've been able to purchase individual pieces of equipment which mean certain operations can take place without the patient having to pay to go private, to larger items like air conditioning, where the heat is so overpowering, particularly in the laboratory where the A/C was so inadequate so many people's test results were ruined!



*Then a lap top has provided the staff in the paediatric department a means of storing all the information, as against keeping everything logged in books.*

Also a printer to save the emergency department handwriting many documents or going to the directors office at the other end of the hospital to use a printer there. I had two wrought iron benches made as seating is so sparse or in much need of repair. One is outside the directors office and the other in the corridor of the intensive care unit. The dental department is really benefiting from the items that I was able to get last year. The dentist likes to show me photos of some of the work he has been able to do with his patients.

One of our lunch club men suffers great pain with an ulcerated leg that will not heal, yet he makes the journey for his lunch each Saturday. The hospital is trying to persuade him to have an amputation, but he is refusing. His mobility is painstakingly slow and painful using his walking stick to get around. I was able to buy a second hand walking frame which gives him more stability and Jean bought him a back pack so his hands are free for using the walker.



The school children have just been on two weeks vacation and arrived back to receive their school reports for the first semester. We've got some very clever children who are given the title 'academically excellent' if all their marks are between 96% - 100% and take first place. Then those children with marks 90% - 95% go on the honour roll and take second place. These children have the privilege of wearing a sash announcing their achievement as they take part in the schools' march for Independence Day. This is the biggest celebration for Nicaragua and hundreds line the streets of the town to watch all the various schools taking part next month.



Weather wise, I think we are like many countries, unpredictable with too much sun or too much rain. We are in the rainy season right now but mixed in with an unexpected day of sun and temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius. These are the months for hurricanes and we've thought a couple of times that one was on its way.

I've been very fortunate to not have experienced the worst of hurricanes or earthquakes in my eighteen years of being here.

*This is our back garden flooded.*

Well I must press on with all the work I still have to do in these next two weeks. I will see many of you real soon.

Love and blessings

*Margaret*