

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 ETHIOPIAN HERITAGE TRUST (UK)

This year from 1 January to 31 December 2020 was a somewhat muted year for the Ethiopian Heritage Trust (UK). Inevitably coronavirus has impacted on our work, both in the UK and Ethiopia.

ETHIOPIAN HERITAGE TRUST (UK)

STATUS

1. I am pleased to say that we are now registered with the Charity Commission. During negotiations with them in 2019 they asked us to revise our Constitution. At the Annual General Meeting on 3 February 2020 our new Constitution was approved and signed. Following this, the Trust was registered by the Charity Commission 1188689. A long, winding road that did, fortunately, have an ending.
2. We already are recognised for Gift Aid by HMRC.

THE BOARD

1. Board Members who were elected at the 2019 Annual General Meeting served throughout 2020. They are Christopher Sargent, Ensermu Workneh, Dr. Fatemeh Ahmadi, Dr. Jacke Phillips, Jonathan Darwall-Smith, Komeil Karimi, Luisa Tatoli, Dr. Negusse Tewoldemedhin, Michael Sargent and Dr. Yonas Ghebremichael Weldeselassie.
2. The Board met five times during the year; four of these meetings were virtual meetings.
3. It has not been an easy year and I would like to thank all members of the Board for their generous efforts throughout the year.
4. In particular I would like to mention Ensermu Workneh, Dr. Negusse Tewoldemedhin and Dr. Yonas Ghebremichael Weldeselassie for their essential role in advising the Board regarding Ethiopian customs and recent developments.

MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

1. The Covid 19 pandemic has made raising money more difficult this year. People's attention is, understandably, distracted and giving has naturally focussed more on coronavirus related charities.
2. Nevertheless, as the Treasurer will report in more detail, we have successfully raised over £8,000 during the year.
3. Our membership numbers remain roughly the same as last year – 87 - with 22 donors.
4. Our aim had been to launch a membership drive using social media, having as the launching pad a reception at the Ethiopian Embassy. Covid 19 led to the postponement of these plans.
5. There has been a small but steady increase in the year in the number of members paying by Standing Order, which is much appreciated.

6. We are grateful to Luisa Tatoli, who just before Christmas raised £360 through the sale of scarves which she knitted herself.

7. We are also thankful to Eric Robson, a painter who has had a life-long love affair with Ethiopia. Three of his watercolours of Ethiopia were sold, with 50% of the price being donated to the Trust.

8. I am pleased to say that the new Ethiopian Ambassador HE Mr. Teferi Melesse Desta has confirmed his strong support. Lord Bates, who in October was appointed Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, has also kindly joined the Trust.

9. As promised in our literature no funds have been spent in the UK on administration. All costs are born personally by the Trustees.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Once more thanks are due to Dr. Yonas Ghebremichael for managing our accounts and membership database. This he has done despite having a demanding job at Warwick University as well as having the misfortune that he and all his family caught Covid 19. Happily they are all now well.

2. Gift Aid brought in £2,388, a very welcome sum.

3. Our symbol has now been officially registered as a Trade Mark.

4. Our leaflet was revised and reprinted.

5. We acquired a new phone number – 0300 365 1417.

6. Our Operating Procedures manual was kindly updated by Christopher Sargent and is available to view on our website.

7. Our thanks are due, once more, to John Bowthorpe, who kindly inspected and certified the accounts.

WEBSITE

1. Our completely new website went live in the summer. Our grateful thanks to Komeil Karimi, a Board Member who designed and set it up while having a hectic time of work at the British Council. I think it's great.

2. Another Board Member, equally busy, Luisa Tatoli has since kindly taken over responsibility for updating the website. Included in that is a new page on the website devoted to birds (the Entoto Natural Park is designated an Important Bird Area for Ethiopia). Luisa also kindly designed our revamped Newsletter.

5. I am pleased to say that all our governance documents are freely available to view on our website – Constitution, Data Protection Manual, Operating Procedures, Annual Reports, Annual Accounts and Newsletters.

6. A Board Member, Ensermu Workneh, has kindly donated a camera to the Addis Ababa Trust, which will be used to set up a flow of images about the Park and any new developments of the Trust in Ethiopia to be used on the website and any other social media that may be developed.

TOUR OF ETHIOPIA/VISITS TO ETHIOPIA

1.A major casualty of the pandemic was the planned Magic and Mysteries Tour of Ethiopia. Not only was it – inevitably – cancelled for 2020, but it seems unwise to re-schedule it for the foreseeable future. A great pity, but we thank Dr. Jacke Phillips for all her efforts over this tour.

2.Another disappointment was that the scheduled visit of Dr. Negusse Tewoldemedhin, one of our Board Members, to Ethiopia had to be cancelled. He had most kindly offered to spend 3 months from April 2020 as a volunteer with the Ethiopian Heritage Trust in Addis Ababa. It is hoped this visit can be rescheduled this year.

3.Two other, shorter visits by Board Members had also to be cancelled.

ETHIOPIAN HERITAGE TRUST IN ETHIOPIA

1.First of all may I offer our thanks to the President of the Board of the Ethiopian Heritage Trust, Lik Kahinat Abayneh. He has led the Trust with courage through a difficult year and we appreciate all he has done.

2.Sadly I have to report a Board Member of the Trust in Addis Ababa, Ato Hailu Zeleke passed away as a result of Covid 19.

3.More generally, as in the UK, coronavirus proved a constraint on a range of activities. The situation was exacerbated by political uncertainties and by the resignation of the General Manager in the summer.

4.Since then the Trust has operated under an Acting General Manager, Emebet Teferra. Filling the post of General Manager on a permanent basis proved problematic for the Trust as their financial position did not allow them to meet the salary expectations of suitable candidates. After discussion the UK Trust offered to contribute approximately up to 20,000 birr per month for up to eighteen months as a supplement to the salary of a suitable candidate. The UK Trust has reserved some of the funds collected this year to help meet the commitment it has made.

5.I am pleased to report that the Trust has now appointed Ato Mekoya Mamo as General Manager. Ato Mekoya has a BSc in Wildlife Management and Ecotourism and an MSc in Biodiversity Conservation and Management and has worked for 11 years for the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, for the last two years as the Park Manager of the Yangudi-Rasa National Park, Afar Region. We look forward to working with him. He started work 4 days ago.

6.The funds which were sent to the Trust from the UK during the year were channelled to assist in the planting of indigenous trees in Entoto Natural Park and in the setting up of a tree nursery on the lower slopes of the Entoto Natural Park. The ground has been cleared and levelled for the nursery, the fencing completed and the workshed is under construction. For the past three years the Trust has had to buy indigenous seedlings to plant in the Park. The construction of the Nursery should make the Trust self-sufficient in terms of seedlings required for its own use and even possibly allow the production of seedlings for sale.

7.The planting of native seedlings in Entoto Natural Park as usual took place in the rainy season in July and August, but on a more limited scale than had been hoped. In 2018 8,000 seedlings had been planted; the succeeding year saw the figure reach 25,000. It had been hoped to reach the same total this year, but the intervention of Covid 19 meant that in the end the total was 9,400. Not what had been aimed for, but certainly an acceptable result, given the circumstances.

8. Rotary International were a big supporter and paid for and helped plant 4000 trees. 9 other Ethiopian institutions, including 3 banks, contributed to the operation and over 200 volunteers took part in the planting.

9. Trees planted were Cordia Africana 4,010, Olea Africana 3,716, Juniperous procera 950 and Podocarpus falcatus 750.

10. Unfortunately it is necessary to report that the claim originating from Oromiya for half of the Entoto Natural Park remains. Efforts to sort out this problem continue.

11. The Trust received good news earlier in the year that it would be allowed by Addis Ababa Municipality to cut down more eucalyptus trees in the Park. This is essential to allow space for the planting of more indigenous trees. It is also important in that it will bring much needed revenue to the Trust, as the timber will be sold. The cutting operation has been completed, but it takes time for the funds to be received. They will bring much needed relief to a stretched budget. Pressure continues to be exerted on Addis Ababa Municipality to allow the cutting of eucalyptus trees on a regular basis by reconfirming the Trust's right to the land.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost must be our thanks to all our donors and members who keep faith, and without whom there would be no Trust. Our genuine and sincere thanks, both for financial help and assistance in so many other ways.

Second must be thanks to the Trust's Board Members, who, as in previous years, have devoted much time and effort – and not a little money – to keep the Trust living, breathing and going. A great job.

And just a word about our Iranian colleagues, who have surpassed themselves this year, both as members and Trustees. We owe to them the design of our leaflet and poster, the drafting of our Data Protection policy, maintaining our previous website and designing and setting up our new website. All this combined with generous giving. Their contributions are much appreciated.

Finally and unashamedly, I close with the same Greek saying that I quoted last year:

“A society grows great when old people plant trees whose shade they will never see.”

Thank you.

Michael Sargent
Chairperson