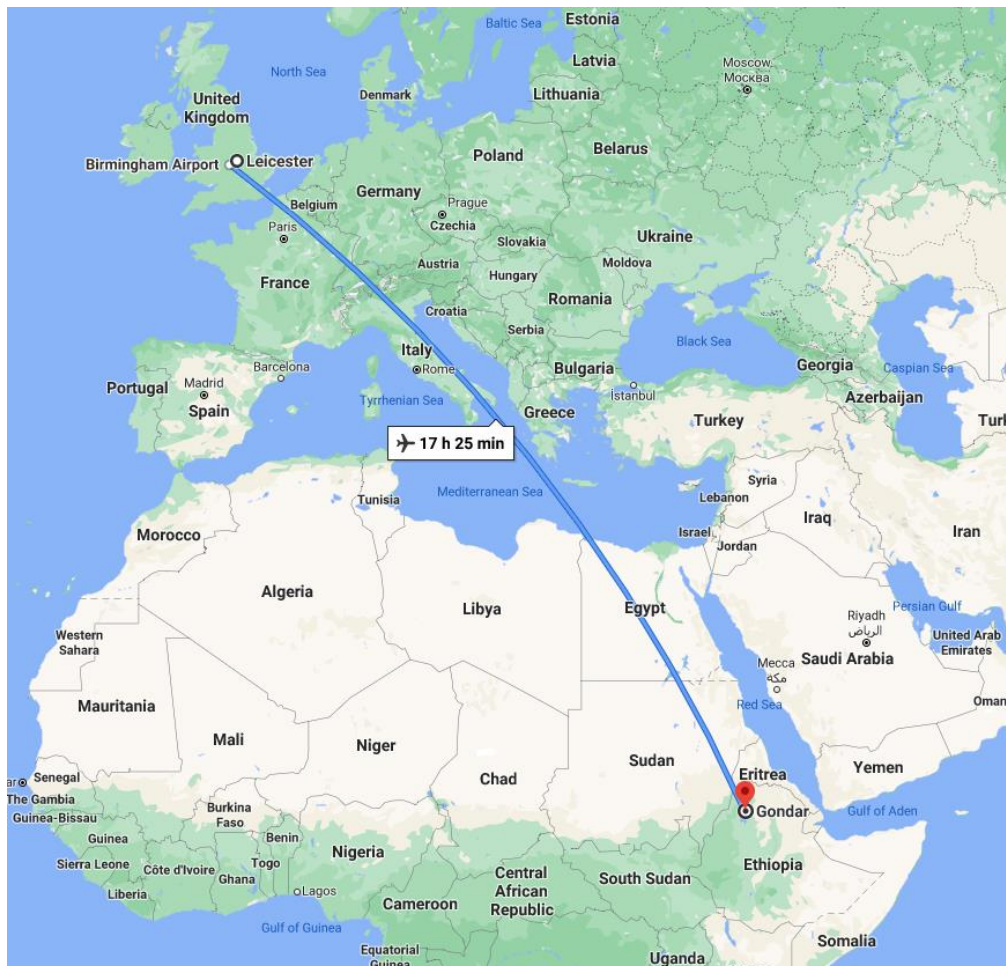


In 2014, having won a Travel Bursary, an orthopaedic registrar from Leicester, Laurence Wicks visited the University of Gondar Hospital (UoGH), Northern Ethiopia. Gondar is a hilly city on the edges of the picturesque Simian Mountain range. The hospital dates back to the Italian occupation in the 1930s with the first batch of medics graduating in 1979. It serves the city and neighbouring rural areas of the state of Amhara. Its total catchment population is approximately 3 million people, for whom this is the nearest hospital with medical staff and facilities.



There is a huge burden of trauma in Ethiopia due to poor road safety and employment being mainly manual or agricultural. There are also many ballistic injuries due to the surplus of weapons left over from the Civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s.



Until very recently, there have been very few orthopaedic specialists in Ethiopia. There are currently 5 training programmes for registrars. This, to provide service for a population of 90 million! So, a large proportion of trauma care was and is still carried out by non-orthopaedic (General) surgeons. In addition, facilities were very basic with a small selection of orthopaedic implants, totally inadequate to manage the workload of cases in Gondar.

Following Laurence's visits, a few further visits followed by Mr Alwyn Abraham, Mr Chris Kershaw, Mr Dean Birch and others. This further strengthened ties between the orthopaedic department in Leicester and UoGH.



Three separate events then combined to create what is now the Leicester Gondar Orthopaedic Partnership (LGOP) and the UoGH Orthopaedic department as we know it. The first was a commitment by the Rotary Club of Leicester under the chairmanship of Richard Power to raise \$200k specifically to equip an orthopaedic operating theatre. Rotary used Medical Aid International, a recognised provider of equipment to source a whole inventory of orthopaedic kit and to ship it to Gondar by container. At about the same time, UoGH appointed two trained orthopaedic surgeons, Dr Ananya Kasahun and Dr Yessuf Mohd. Last and not least, UoGH committed to build a dedicated, modern orthopaedic trauma theatre.

A combination of personnel, equipment and infrastructure has meant that as from March 2020 good orthopaedic trauma care is now available in Gondar and the people of that region. National recognition soon followed with a registrar training programme.





The only thing missing is a proper celebration and opening ceremony. COVID kyboshed saw to it. This would otherwise have happened sometime in the summer of 2020. It would have been a fitting way to honour the efforts of Rotary International, UoGH and the orthopaedic professionals from Leicester who would have contributed immensely to treating injuries and the resulting disability for the people of Ethiopia.

Here's to the next visit and a lasting programme of exchange and training.....COVID permitting.