



Greetings all,

Fear not, the Lawrences were not lost on their holidays, but are in fact back onboard the Global Mercy and as busy as ever!

We had a wonderful time on leave in Cape Town in January. Family from the UK and Jersey flew out to join us and we enjoyed some down time in Cape Town then travelled the Western Cape, catching up with Aunts, cousins and second cousins as well as visiting a safari reserve.



There was the chance to catch a cricket match at the iconic Newlands ground before heading back to Sierra Leone to rejoin the ship for the second half of the field service.

We returned to find the atmosphere on the ship somewhat deflated. After the high of the festive season, flu had been doing the rounds amongst the crew and unfortunately Elizma succumbed badly. At one stage the case numbers were rising quickly and there was a real risk that the hospital would have to cancel surgeries due to a lack of fit staff. In a stark reminder of covid times, face masks became compulsory in all public areas.



The children were straight back to school, reuniting with classmates and teachers and quickly getting back into their routine. Both classes have been visiting different shipboard departments which gave Piran's Kindergarten the chance to embark a lifeboat and Abigail's Grade 2 an insight in to cargo work.

Meanwhile, Ian was asked to take on a new challenge – stepping up to be Captain.

Although he has sailed as "Old Man" in the dim and distant past, this is a whole new challenge – a very different ship with a much bigger crew and a high profile role in the shipboard community. After three weeks of handover, he took command at the end of February for the remainder of this field service and the passage back to Europe.



Elizma resumed her role in the People & Culture (Human Resources) department and has quickly become to “go to” person for projects and crew related matters. She also reprised her role as event organiser for the Woman’s Retreat weekend, coordinating baking and food for over a hundred people.



A second round of illness struck the crew in early March, this time GI related, which resulted in restrictions on food service and lead to people being isolated in their cabins in an attempt to stop the spread. Again, poor Elizma was hit hard and was left exhausted after being bed ridden for a week.

In and amongst all this there have been trips out to explore...

To the beach for a morning of play with local disabled children...



To the railway museum - a time capsule of locomotives and artefacts from the days when Sierra Leone was traversed by a narrow gauge railway...





A boat trip to Bunce Island - once a key trading post operated by slave trading companies and where the original canon lie in the ramparts as they were left when the fort was abandoned 200 years ago.

Which was followed by lunch at a traditional village on an island in the Freetown estuary...

Then there was a Sunday afternoon bbq at the British High Commissioner's residence where the excitement got too much for Piran and he fell asleep on her living room sofa.



As we've mentioned previously, the pace of life is fast – school, work and community events mean that the days pass quickly. None of us are directly involved with the medical side of the operation and, as a result, it is easy for a week to pass in which we don't interact with the people we are actually here to serve. Nevertheless, we have had some meaningful and heartfelt times with patients and will share more on that in our next blog.

Until then, we thank you as always for your continued love, support and prayers,

Ian, Elizma, Abigail & Piran