

TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA

Last November, Michael Buerk of BBC TV News returned from a visit to Tigray in northern Ethiopia, organised by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST). His report on BBC TV gave a gruesome warning that there had been severe drought again in Tigray, and if nothing was done hundreds of thousands of people would suffer starvation over the next few months until the 1990 crop could be harvested.

Unlike the severe drought of 1984/85, which caught the world by surprise, this time a catastrophe could be avoided if relief supplies of food and seed corn could be organised quickly.

Enquiries with Oxfam and Christian Aid revealed that the Aid Agencies Disaster Committee was hard at work organising relief programmes and that much of the relief supplies would be channelled through REST, who had the organisation on the ground, knew the people concerned and the best ways to reach them. But REST needed money, and recent reports have highlighted

their difficulties with continued bombardment of relief convoys by Ethiopian Government jets, despite promises to UN and other diplomatic and humanitarian missions, to allow relief supplies through to the stricken areas, so the needs of REST have become even more urgent.

In Shipton and Milton it was decided to invite shops, hotels, petrol stations, the library and the bank to carry information posters and leaflets about REST with collecting boxes, for a limited period. There was a ready response. The Baptist Chapels also became involved, Wychwood School devoted an Assembly to Tigray, a rummage sale was organised in Shipton and the Parochial Church Councils of the two village churches each offered £100 from church funds.

As a result £679 has been collected and donated and has been sent to REST. Further contributions will be gratefully received and information about REST is available from Jack Foster, Hoplands, Shipton Road, Milton. Telephone 830436.

SIR BENJAMIN BAKER (1840-1907)

This month sees the centenary of the opening of the Forth Bridge. A partner of Sir John Fowler, it was said at the time of his death "The Forth Bridge owes its inception in its present form to Sir Benjamin Baker". His grave in Idbury has been described as "Looking like a bridge builder's", with four flying buttresses surmounted by a celtic cross.

For those who did not see the article and photographs taken in Idbury in an earlier issue of this magazine, it described

how he was buried at Idbury by his special request, and on the day of the funeral twelve black ponies were harnessed to the bier and a special train from London brought many notable people to follow his coffin up the long hill from Kingham station to Idbury.

Besides the Forth Bridge, he was closely concerned with the building of several London tube railways and Victoria Station, and was consulting engineer for the first Aswan Dam. He also designed the vessel which carried Cleopatra's Needle from Egypt to England.