



Aquabox news

NOVEMBER 2020 – AQUABOX NEWSLETTER

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Facebook: [facebook.com/aquabox charity](https://facebook.com/aquaboxcharity) **Website:** www.aquabox.org

Aquabox launches Clean Water For Christmas appeal

AQUABOX has launched Clean Water for Christmas, a seasonal gift promotion which will increase availability of clean, safe water in disaster zones around the world.

The Clean Water for Christmas message emphasises that:

- Aquabox is a volunteer-led charity based in the UK which saves lives internationally
- Aquabox volunteers assemble robust hand-pumped water filters, and send them to disaster zones and conflict zones all over the world
- So that people living in conditions of extreme deprivation can at least have access to clean, safe water for drinking, cooking and washing.

Without water, human life expectancy can be measured in just hours. Yet for millions of people around the world, the only available water is filthy and contaminated. Far from being the water of life, it's the water of death.

The Aquabox filter requires no power source or chemicals, and has a micro-filtration core which completely removes life-threatening water-borne pathogens such as typhoid, cholera, amoebic dysentery, worm cysts and polio. And subject to a simple daily maintenance routine, the filter just goes on working: some filters have now been in continuous use for more than seven years.

One Aquabox family filter costs just £25 to manufacture, yet it can produce up to half a million litres of clean, safe water. It's hard to think of a better use of £25.

GIFT CARD



Dear

'I have bought you a life saving-water filter.'

Your filter is capable of producing up to half a million litres of clean water and will be sent to a family surviving in the aftermath of conflict and natural disasters.'

From

www.aquabox.org [#cleanwaterforchristmas](https://twitter.com/cleanwaterforchristmas)

Aquabox is a registered charity no 1098409

#cleanwaterforchristmas

To support Clean Water for Christmas:

- Go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/cleanwaterforchristmas, and donate £25
- Remember to include your e-mail address when you donate, and Aquabox will send you a certificate which you can print out and give to the person in whose name you have made the donation
- Or you can donate via PayPal at www.aquabox.org, where you can also find out more about Aquabox and its work.

Join the Aquabox team

We always welcome new faces to the Aquabox team. If you're within easy reach of Wirksworth, you can become a filter assembler or a box packer. And if you're further away – even on the other side of the world – you can become an Aquabox ambassador. Find out more at www.aquabox.org.



Aquabox News is published by Aquabox, registered charity no 1098409. To contact the editor, email colin.petty@aquabox.org, or write to Aquabox News, PO Box 5398, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 4ZP. Please share Aquabox news with friends and colleagues – forward it electronically, and/or print out copies to circulate.

170 million litres of safe water!

DESPITE the Covid-19 pandemic, Aquabox has continued to despatch aid to disaster zones around the world in 2020, providing millions of litres of clean safe water in disaster areas and conflict zones.

The year began with a containerload of aid to Yemen, where the civilian population has been hard hit by the continuing civil war. This was a joint shipment with our friends at Jubilee Outreach Yorkshire (JOY).

On February 4 we despatched another shipment of aid to Hand In Hand in Birmingham, for onward transit to Syria – Hand In Hand has people on the ground there, to oversee the vital last stage of delivery and to ensure that the aid reaches its correct destination. A week later, another consignment of filters left the Wirksworth depot on their way to The Gambia.

Then came the spring lockdown, and we had to suspend operations – at least as far as filter assembly and box packing were concerned. But we had built up a healthy stock, so when the call came in May for aid following Cyclone Amphan in India, we were able to respond: an airfreight shipment of 120 family filters and five community filters left the depot on June 3, and less than a week later they were followed by a containerload by sea. Distribution at the receiving end was in the



Another shipment of aid leaves the Aquabox warehouse.

hands of the East India Rotary Welfare Trust, an association of Rotary clubs in the Calcutta area.

A second consignment was on its way to Yemen on August 24, again in a joint exercise with JOY, and at the time of writing, a parcel of 144 family filters and four community filters was due to leave for Beirut on November 25, for distribution by the Association of Lebanese Rotary Clubs. And there is another consignment ready for Nepal, awaiting confirmation from the

Ministry of Defence that they are ready to take delivery – all Aquabox shipments to Nepal are supervised by the Gurkha Regiment.

Meanwhile, individual filters have been despatched to new partners around the world. Two have gone to potential new Aquabox ambassadors in Germany, one in Leipzig and one in Stade, and another one has gone to Australia, where the Rotary Club of Eltham is going to be acting as Aquabox's Australian ambassador.

In total, shipments during

the year include more than 1,000 Gold boxes – each one containing a family filter as well as much else – plus a further 360 family filters and 21 community filters. A well-maintained family filter should be able to deliver half a million litres in its lifetime, and a community filter could potentially produce upwards of five million litres – so the year's shipments add up to a potential total of 170 million litres of clean, safe water for drinking, for cooking and for washing.

All achieved despite the pandemic, despite the two lockdowns, and despite the warehouse move during the autumn, during which it was impossible to do anything. Pretty impressive!

STOP PRESS: As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, another shipment has been confirmed. Nine pallets of gold boxes – a total of 180 boxes, each including an Aquafilter as well as other humanitarian aid – will leave the depot on November 25, on their way to Nepal. "It's a great demonstration of the Aquabox team continuing to respond across the world, even in the middle of a lockdown," said chair of trustees Roger Cassidy.

MEET THE TRUSTEES:



Roz Adamson

ROZ ADAMSON's first career was in education: she was a teacher, specialising in biology, then later trained as an Ofsted inspector.

During her career she was seconded to the Open University and to Courtaulds, before retiring as deputy headteacher at a large Derby secondary school.

She joined Aquabox as a volunteer box packer 15 years ago, was invited to

join the board of trustees in 2017, and is now deputy chair of the board, with particular responsibility for supervising the network of Aquabox ambassadors.

Her guiding principle is straightforward: "To me, Aquabox illustrates perfectly how the dedication and selflessness of a group of volunteers can make such a big difference to the lives of people across the world."

HqO: Aquabox's new home

AQUABOX has completed its move – all of 100 yards across the industrial estate – to its new home, now officially named Aquabox HqO. The move means that we now have much better facilities, a vastly improved environment for our volunteers, and the potential to substantially increase our output of water filters.

Why have we moved? Well, the lease on the old building had only a couple of years to run, and a recent health and safety survey had pointed out a number of significant problems with issues like fire safety, access and fume extraction. In view of the short lease, it would have been very difficult to justify the cost of dealing with these issues.

Coincidentally, our neighbours Willow Direct needed more space, and our landlords offered us a building on the same site which we were able to tailor to our needs. Moreover, the landlords carried out the transfer of all our stocks and equipment, and also met most of the costs of the structural modifications – and the building has been extensively remodelled, with all the painting and decorating, kitchen fitting



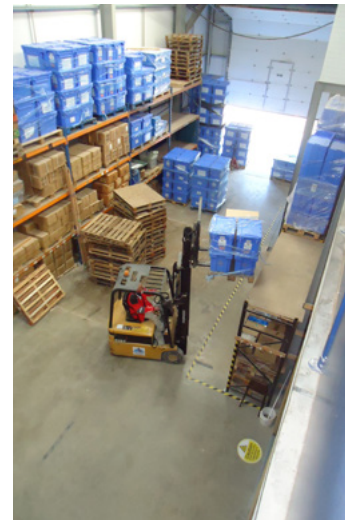
The new building has been completely refitted to meet Aquabox's needs.

and so on done by volunteers.

For the first time ever, we have a real reception area where we can welcome supporters and guests, and make a professional job of demonstrating to them what we do. The new filter assembly room has much better fume extraction, and it and the box packing room are both on the ground floor for easy access. Moreover, they are both well heated, so our volunteers

will now have a much better working environment, especially in winter – the old warehouse was impossible to heat effectively. There's a kitchen, and a ground floor toilet – both of which the old building lacked – and everything on the ground floor has been planned to be both wheelchair-friendly and Covid-19 safe.

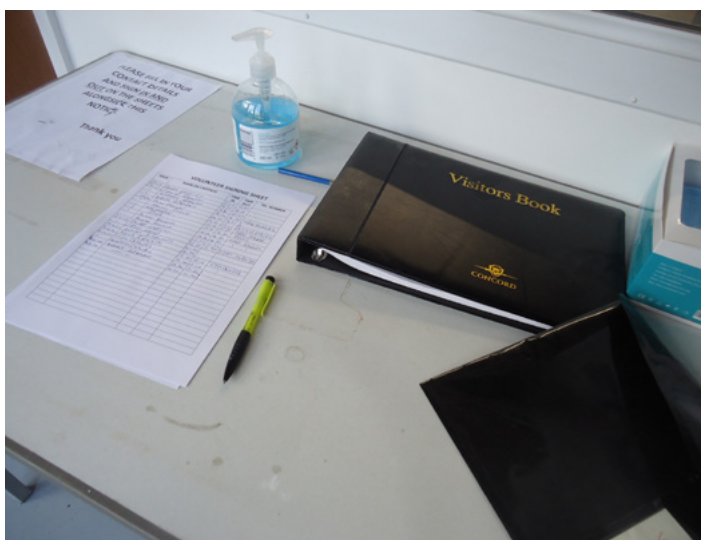
Above the filter assembly room and box packing room,



The main warehouse area is spacious and light...



... and there is lots more storage space on the mezzanine floors as well.



For Covid-19 security, everybody has to sign in and out.



For the first time, we have a comfortable reception area where we can welcome visitors and supporters.

a mezzanine floor gives us lots of easily accessible storage space, and the top floor has two meeting rooms, a second kitchen, more toilets, and more storage space. We have a phone landline and internet access – another first – and there's scope in the future to develop this floor as a meeting and training centre, with the potential to create a new revenue source.

"The move has been quite an upheaval, but we now have a building which has been designed entirely around our needs," said Aquabox chairman Roger Cassidy. "We will be better placed to welcome visitors, better equipped to support our volunteers, and ultimately better able to send out more aid to people in need around the world."



We now have a clean, warm room for the gold box packing teams.



Moving equipment out of the old filter assembly room – it was cramped and badly lit.



The new filter assembly room has a logical planned workflow, and gives us the ability to increase production substantially.



Trustee Albert Ripamonti checks off the first shipment to leave the new depot, bound for Nepal.



We had no trouble filling the skip! That's the new building in the background.



The sign says it all – we're open for business!

< Once the building work was completed, all the decorating was done by volunteers.



This is how it was before: clearing the old warehouse.

This is where your money goes!

BECAUSE AQUABOX is almost entirely run by volunteers, nearly every penny we receive in donations goes into assembling filters, packing aid boxes, and despatching them to disaster areas and conflict zones around the world.

We never send aid, though, until we are confident that we have a trusted, reliable partner at the other end: an organisation which can take delivery of the shipment, organise onward distribution, and make sure that our aid actually reaches the people it's intended for.

That partner organisation has one more vitally important role too: that of demonstrating the Aquabox water filter, showing the aid recipients both how to use it, and also how to maintain it.

In Syria, where bitter conflict has caused massive distress to the civilian population, our local partner is the charity Hand in Hand for Aid and Development. And it's thanks to their volunteers on the ground in Syria and their photographs that we can show you the final link in a long chain of events – a chain which starts with your donation, and which ends in a dusty, windswept refugee camp. We'll let the pictures speak for themselves.



Aquabox



To find out how you can support our work, go to www.aquabox.org.

Aquabox aid delivered on foot!

HERE IN THE UK, we rarely experience events like earthquakes, mud-slides and landslips. In Nepal, they present a regular threat to life and communities.

One such event happened on August 14 this year, in the Sindhupalchowk district, an area characterised by narrow valleys and steep mountains. It is highly rural, with woefully inadequate health services, and many isolated communities are heavily dependent on what can be cultivated in the poor soils of the region. A sudden landslide destroyed some homes and left many others seriously damaged. At least 11 people are known to have died, with

at least 30 more declared missing.

Over many years Aquabox has developed a strong relationship with Nepal; we maintain a contingency stock of aid boxes in Kathmandu, ready for secure distribution at times of need through the efforts of the Gurkhas, the Nepalese police, and local Rotary clubs. But the August landslide presented another problem: it destroyed roads as well as homes, leaving already remote communities totally isolated.

The only way to move the aid that arrived was on foot, and often across dangerous and difficult terrain – as shown by these pictures. But the local people rose to the challenge, and it's humbling to witness the efforts they made to deliver aid to those in need. Each of those boxes weighs 19kg! Every box hauled up the steep, crumbling pathways represented a life-line for a family, in particular by providing access to safe drinking water where none is available.

All our aid costs a significant amount to supply and distribute across the world, and all our income is contingent upon the generosity of donors. If you would like to support us and help families survive the aftermath of disasters such as this, please see how you can do this on our website: www.aquabox.org.



Other ways of finding more information:

Email: enquiries@aquabox.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/aquabox charity](https://www.facebook.com/aquaboxcharity)

Why Nepal?

LYING IN one of the most seismically active regions of the world, Nepal has a long history of earthquakes. The worst in recent years was in April 2015, when a magnitude 7.8 quake destroyed buildings in Kathmandu, the capital, and created landslides and avalanches across the Himalayas. 9,000 people died and more than 22,000 suffered injuries.

Only 17 days later, there was another major quake. About a third of the population were affected, hundreds of thousands of people lost everything, and more than 600,000 homes were destroyed.

Although that was more than five years ago, the fact that Nepal sits on a major fault line means that earthquakes are a constant threat. According to earthquaketrack.com, at November 23 this year Nepal had experienced a total of 15 quakes in the past year. And a study by ETH University in Zurich has recently concluded that Nepal still faces the threat of much stronger quakes, with a magnitude of 8 or more.

Yemen: where our help is desperately needed

ONE OF THE most significant Aquabox initiatives in the past year or so has been getting aid into Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries, where rival factions have been fighting a bitter civil war since 2015. Supplying aid to conflict zones is nothing new for us, but there are aspects of this conflict that make our efforts particularly relevant:

- **Yemen has no rivers to depend on for water.** It relies totally on aquifers – underground water resources – and these limited resources have been targeted by both sides during the war. Water storage capacity has been destroyed by military action, wells have been exhausted, aquifer recharge rates are decreasing, and salt water intrusion is increasing,
- The lack of governance has left Yemen without a viable water supply, and the country is **facing the world's worst water and sanitation crisis.**
- The price of drinking water has rocketed, and has become unaffordable for most Yemenis.
- **Cholera has reached epidemic level**, with a total of more than two million cases reported by 2019, and thousands of deaths.



- In 2018, the **UN warned** that 13 million Yemeni civilians faced starvation, in what could become the worst famine in the world in 100 years.
- According to the UN, **Yemen faces becoming the poorest country in the world**, with 79% of the population below the poverty line and 65% in extreme poverty by 2022.
- This year, the UNHCR has reported that **more than 3.6m people have been forced to flee their homes**, and 24m are in dire need of aid.

Despite the considerable challenge of getting aid into conflict zones in a country with very little infrastructure, Aquabox will continue to supply water filters and humanitarian aid to Yemen however and whenever we can. By supporting Aquabox, you are helping us to help some of the most needy people in the world!

Aquabox to re-start Australian link

AQUABOX has re-established links with the Rotary club of Eltham in Australia, potentially giving us a new distribution route to the Pacific basin.

This is a renewal rather than a new development: for 20 years, the Eltham club ran the Aquabox Australia project, providing safe water and humanitarian aid to victims of natural disasters across the Asia Pacific region. The project was wound up in mid 2020, having shipped more than 2,100 boxes in the past 10 years. The final shipments of Aquaboxes were sent to Fiji

and Vanuatu, to aid victims of tropical cyclone Harold. "But now we have re-established a link, we can tap into Eltham's excellent connections in the Asia Pacific basin – a region where we have always struggled," said trustee Roz Adamson.

The new agreement means that Aquabox now has an ambassador in Australia: Eltham club member Dale Atkins. "Eltham is a vibrant, active club centred around the leafy suburb of Eltham on the north-east outskirts of Melbourne," said Dale. "It was chartered in 1973, and currently has 60 members."



Dale Atkins, Aquabox's new ambassador in Australia.

As well as providing financial and physical assistance to local causes, Eltham RC organises the Rotary Eltham Festival, usually held over two days in November each year.

Dale was the director of Aquabox Australia for the past five years, and now heads the team responsible for the club's role as Aquabox's Australian Ambassador. "With our extensive experience in the field, and contacts in the region, the club will be able to greatly assist Aquabox in both fundraising and the provision of aid to regional disasters," he said.

Help spread the word

If you have found this newsletter interesting (and we hope you have), please don't keep it to yourself! Spread the word: forward it to friends, neighbours and colleagues; circulate it to your social media contacts; print it out and pin it up on noticeboards. Let as many people as possible know about Aquabox and its work – and encourage them to support us. Thank you!

Every penny counts!

BIG DONATIONS are welcome, of course – but small donations matter too. Until Covid-19 came along, our network of ambassadors regularly gave talks to Rotary clubs, Womens Institutes, church groups, scout groups, schools, and all sorts of other community groups. And here's an example of how those talks can make a difference – a letter received not long ago by one of our ambassadors:

I'm not sure if you remember, but you came to Dronfield Afternoon Townswomen's Guild last November, to demonstrate and talk about Aquabox. We were very impressed with your talk, and totally taken aback at how much equipment you could get in the boxes.

As a Guild, we collect pennies (literally), and when we reached the grand sum of £40 in the past we donated it to WaterAid, but we were so impressed with Aquabox that a vote was taken, and carried, to donate this amount to your organisation. £40 has now been reached, and I am very pleased to enclose a cheque for that amount.

I'm sure that with all the natural disasters that are occurring around the world at the moment, you're very busy. Good luck!

*Yours sincerely
Mary Ratcliffe, Treasurer
Dronfield Afternoon
Townswomen's Guild*

That £40 will cover most of the manufacturing cost of two Aquabox filters – and those two filters will end up somewhere in the world where people desperately need clean water for drinking, for cooking, and for washing. Between them, they could produce up to a million litres of safe water – and all because a small group of Townswomen's Guild members in north-east Derbyshire collect pennies. Truly, every penny counts!

Ambassador talks

While the Covid-19 restrictions are still in force, our ambassadors can't give talks – not face to face, anyway. But we can (and do) deliver online presentations via Zoom. If you're a member of a group which would like a Zoom presentation, we will be happy to oblige. Go to www.aquabox.org, and click on 'find out more' and then 'book a speaker'.



Volunteers sign up for Aquabox re-start

NEW VOLUNTEERS are lining up to join the Aquabox filter assembly teams and box packing teams – all we need is the go-ahead to restart production.

"We have had 33 enquiries from people interested in becoming volunteers," said trustee Albert Ripamonti. "Before the second lockdown we had arranged a series of introductory visits to the new warehouse, and a total of 18 people took part in those – but some people haven't yet had the opportunity, like those living outside Derbyshire and those who are particularly concerned about Covid-19."

As and when the new depot is able to start production, the plan is to prioritise increasing the output of family filters, and 10 of the current gold box packers have put their hands up to re-train to work on filter assembly.

That doesn't mean that gold boxes will be neglected: the new depot has a dedicated

packing area, and the box packing teams will continue to produce boxes of mixed humanitarian aid. "Obviously we can't do anything at the moment, until we can restart production, and that's a blank page at the moment," said Albert. "And we have exhausted the stock of filters we had built up before the pandemic hit – but we have bought some additional filters in from the Safe Water Trust to top up our stocks. So as soon as we're able to restart we will have a stock for the packers to start packing into gold boxes."

Overall, the volunteer position is encouraging: "We have lots of interest in joining us, and lots of interest from people wanting to re-train," said Albert. "We have always worked only half days, so we have lots of capacity for extra shifts. And because we now have properly heated assembly and packing facilities, we can plan longer shifts as well."



Wirksworth market delivers the goods

WASTE NOT WANT NOT – as we cleared the old Aquabox building, we accumulated a pile of things which had been gathering dust, and which we really didn't need to own any more. So we took a stall at the weekly market in Wirksworth, to see if we could convert some of the unwanted stock to funds. A very satisfactory outcome: four hours' trading raised £236 – and Wirksworth Town Council charged us a one-off charity rate for stall rental of just £6. Bless them!