

**INSPIRATION:** Ex-city schoolgirl's mission to bring clean water to Ethiopia

# Dream that led Annette to write a book



**A FORMER Coventry schoolgirl has written a book in a bid to fulfil a dream to bring clean water to Ethiopia.**

Annette Allen, who spent part of her childhood in the city and attended Coundon Court School, has published *An Ethiopian Odyssey* to raise money for the drought-stricken African country where more than three-quarters of the population has to drink contaminated water.

Annette, aged 54, moved to Coventry in 1964 at the age of 11 when her father, an aeronautical engineer, came to work at the city firm of Bristol Siddeley.

Before the family had lived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but she had forgotten about life in the country until she came to write her book, inspired by a dream she had.

She said: "I have always had dreams that predict the future. But this one took me to the past - to Addis Ababa.

"I was standing in a parched clearing and could feel the scorched earth burning through my shoes.

"I was with an Ethiopian couple talking about poverty and drought. I bent down to feel the dry topsoil and I knew, beyond doubt, that my quest in life was to bring clean water to Ethiopia."

After being made redundant, Annette, who now lives in Buckinghamshire, began work on her book based on an old school photograph of herself with her classmates at the Nazareth School in Addis Ababa.

With the help of the internet and the media, she managed to track down 29 of her 38 lost friends and her book tells the story of their lives since she last saw them in 1964.

Half the book's royalties will go to charity, the majority to WaterAid Ethiopia.

Annette discovered what had happened to the two

■ **RETRACING HER STEPS...** Annette Allen and (below, third from right on the front row) among schoolgirls in Addis Ababa whose lives she has revisited as research for her book, *An Ethiopian Odyssey*, which will raise cash for charity.



By Jane Stirland

little princesses, Mary and Sihin Asfaw Wossen, who had sat next to her in class - both granddaughters of the assassinated Emperor Haile Selassie - and she was reunited with another classmate, Marta Asrat, who was still at the school, as the secretary.

Annette's year-long, 25,000-mile journey takes readers across three continents and ends in February 2005 at Ground Zero, New York, where two more of her classmates now live.

■ *An Ethiopian Odyssey*, published in paperback by Trafford Publishing (ISBN 1-4251-0529-7), is available from book-sellers, priced £12.99, or visit [www.anethiopianodyssey.com](http://www.anethiopianodyssey.com)

## ... and quest over silver cross

ANNETTE is anxious to trace the owner of a silver cross she found in a flat rented by her family in Coventry's Allesley Park.

It was while packing to leave with her family for a new life in South Africa in March 1966 that she discovered the item under her bed.

She said: "I noticed something glinting and found it was a marcasite and silver cross - perhaps left there by another girl who'd had to pack in a hurry."

With no way of knowing how to find the owner and with a plane to catch, Annette kept hold of the cross.

"I have kept it with me throughout



■ **CLUE...** Annette and her twin brother Roy outside the Allesley Park flat in 1964.

my life, as a symbol of faith and hope, wherever I have travelled in the world," she said.

"But now I would dearly love to reunite it with its rightful owner."

Annette cannot remember the name of the road where she lived in Allesley Park.

Annette would also like to trace former classmates from Coundon Court School, particularly three friends she remembers, Claire Varnom, Annette Mitchell and Denise Kirkland. She can be contacted by email at [annette@annetteallen.plus.com](mailto:annette@annetteallen.plus.com)