

2008 Newsletter from Muriel Thomson

Working with the St Joseph's Social Service Centre, Chennai, India

Latest story from India – March 2008

Hello again,

I've just returned from my annual visit to India and once more it has been a busy visit as you will see in this newsletter. This is the second newsletter I have produced to update you on the progress of my project in India, which I set up in 2006 to help the children of the St Joseph's Social Service Centre and those from the poor neighbourhood area. Last year I continued my fundraising with over 30 talks throughout the North East of Scotland. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who invited me to talk and to all who have supported my project — it is thanks to your generosity and support that I have been able to put things into place to improve the future health and education of some children in a small corner of Chennai. Next year the St Joseph's Social Service Centre celebrates its 25th anniversary and great credit must be given to Sister Bakkiam for her dedicated work over the last 25 years. My fund raising will continue to be aimed at securing a better future for the children by improving their health care and education. I'm already counting the days until next year when I can return to Chennai and spend time with my new family. May God bless each and every one of them and the great work that the Sisters and Staff are doing in giving the children a home where they are cared for and loved.



Muriel

The children thrive on the English education

During my stay in India I visited both the Marian & Montfort schools where I have the children receiving an English speaking education. I spoke with the children's teachers and they are very pleased with their progress. Young Cyril and Antony who have now been at the Marian school for a year and a half are thriving on their education. I can now have small chats in English with them both and we can understand one another. Cyril who started late at the school has caught up and is doing very well and I noticed a great improvement this year in his reading and English conversation. The five little ones who started in the Marian Kindergarten last summer are all enjoying the school. Little Lawrance is struggling a bit but the others are all doing very well and it was great to see how they had blossomed since my last visit. I am in no doubt that the work that has been put in at the St Joseph's Centre by the teacher I employed last year to help after school, has made a great deal of difference. She runs a lovely after school class for them all, to ensure their homework is done and they are up to speed. The ones at Montfort Matriculation School are also doing well. Mid term exams were on while I was there—Nirmal received a B Grade, Parameshwaran a B Grade but the star of them all was wee Hebciba who has received A+'s and A's for all her term exams and has quite a collection of Gold certificates already. If I was to say I was bursting with pride when Principal Brother George told me this—it would be an understatement! I would like to say a huge thank you to all who have committed to sponsor a child's education.



Medical care of the children now fully covered.

Last year I set up twice yearly visits to the Sri Ramachandra Hospital for the 90 children under five years old who come in for day care and also for the little ones living at the St Joseph's Centre. This has been working well and Sister Bakkiam is pleased with this facility. This year I went with a group of 30 of the children for their health check and again met with Dr Mallikesan the Medical Superintendent. As was the case on the last two visits the usual problems came up. Many needed treatment for complaints such as sore throats and ears, skin problems and worms and head lice which is a constant problem with the children. We were given vitamin and iron tablets for them all free of charge. In a neighbourhood where health education is limited, if one child picks up something and carries it into the Centre, it spreads to most of the children there. In the past Sister Bakkiam used to have a Doctor who came to the Centre on a voluntary basis, twice monthly to check the health of the children but unfortunately she no longer comes and Sister was very much missing her visits. While I was in India I visited the Rotary Club of East Madras and got talking to a member who is a Doctor. I explained the situation at the St Joseph's Centre and asked if he could help. He put me in contact with a colleague of his and on my last day in India I met with Dr Roshni and Dr Kamel who have agreed to help Sister Bakkiam. They will visit the St Joseph's Centre every two weeks and deal with any medical problems there and then. They are hopeful of getting sponsored medical supplies for common problems the children of this area face. With 6 monthly health checks at the Sri Ramachandra Hospital, a Doctor on hand every two weeks to administer medical care and any emergencies being taken care of at the nearby St Thomas hospital this now means that the medical care of all the children is well covered. This should help alleviate the problem of infections spreading to all the children. For Sister Bakkiam who is running a home which caters for around 120 children this is a great comfort.



The Annual Day Out is a great success

Last year I took the children and the ladies who work in the Centre for a day out to the Zoo — this year the children chose to go to Golden Beach. Golden Beach is an amusement park on the beach front about an hour from the St Joseph's Centre. All the children were excited and for days beforehand all I heard was



"Anty, Anty Golden Beach, Golden Beach!" We hired two buses and 44 of us set off for a day out, which started with a noisy bus journey singing 'The Wheels on the Bus' and various other songs. The amusement park was great fun for the children with many different rides they could enjoy. The ladies had packed a picnic lunch which we had in a lovely shaded area of the park before setting off for fun and games down on the beach. As we headed down to the water the sand burnt our feet it

was so hot! The children and ladies enjoyed getting their feet wet in the sea with some of the boys stripping down to their underpants and jumping into the waves. After that we had some noisy team races on the beach before a well earned ice cream for everyone. We stopped at St Anthony's on the Seashore for coffee and biscuits on the way back before finally boarding the bus for home. There was a race of the two buses to see who would be back home first, with the buses dodging in and out of the usual noisy, nose to tail traffic of Chennai. The race culminated with our driver going round a roundabout the wrong way in order to overtake the other bus. It could only happen in India!!

Golf is now established at the Montfort School

You may remember from my last newsletter that I took a Tri-golf kit to India to introduce golf to the Montfort Matriculation school. On my return to Scotland I spoke with the R & A who were willing to help take this a step further. The R & A very kindly sent out 20 sets of junior golf clubs and some more of the Tri-Golf kits and spoke with the Indian Golf Union. The Indian Golf Union have now put the Montfort Matriculation school on their South India Golf Programme and we have Golf Professionals at the school daily, teaching the children.



Jayanan

the Head Professional who runs the programme is excited about the prospects, especially with India now become a force to be reckoned with in the world of golf. All the pupils at the school in first standard have been given an introduction to golf and at present the Professionals are teaching those in sixth standard. After the introductory sessions, those selected who showed promise



and interest will then receive more specialised tuition. I stood in on a number of the sessions and all the children were enjoying the chance to try something different. I met with Dilip Thomas who is the Chairman of the Indian Golf Union Coaching Committee, to discuss the future of the golf programme at Montfort Matriculation School. My aim is to get golf into a Tamil school next, as the reason I took the Tri-golf kit to India was to give under privileged children a chance to try golf, which is an elitist sport in India. Next year I hope to have the children who live in the St Joseph's Centre included on the coaching programme. Naturally I am delighted the golf programme has taken off at the Montfort School and I am sure junior golf in the South of India will become a big thing in the future.

Other news:

A) The work started last year by Global Volunteers is now almost complete. The new toilet block is up and running and the whole centre has been painted inside and out. All the downstairs children's area has been tiled up to around three feet on the walls and the floor all tiled in a lovely white and orange tile. It is so much brighter and fresher for the children to play in, do their homework and sleep.

B) At Christmas I sent out funds for them all to receive a gift. The Day Care children were each given a new yellow and green uniform embroidered with a badge of the 'St Joseph's Centre Crèche' on it. The children who live in the Centre received a new Christmas outfit and the ladies working there received new saris.



C) One of the young boys who lives in the Centre and goes to the local Tamil school, is struggling with his exam results, so I met with Sister Fatima the Head Mistress at his school and asked if she could help. She has agreed to give him extra tuition sessions. He will receive one to one tuition for two hours in the morning and one hour in the evening until his exams in May. The situation will be reviewed then, with possibly one hour per day thereafter until I return next January. Sister Fatima has very kindly offered to keep me posted with his progress.

D) Part of my fundraising for the next 5 years covers the full Hostel Care costs for 12 of the children living in the St Joseph's Centre who go to the Tamil school. In addition I also cover the Hostel Care for some of the children living in the St Joseph's Centre who are receiving an English education. The approximate cost to provide full Hostel Care is £160 per child per year. You can sponsor a child for any length of time up to five years. This can be paid £160 annually or £13 monthly by standing order. Please contact me if you are interested. Click [Here](#)

E) To sponsor a child to be educated at the English speaking Montfort Matriculation School in Chennai, where English will be their main language, costs approximately £240 per year. This covers the cost of education, uniform, books, socks and shoes, schoolbag, pencil cases and sundries. You can sponsor a child for as many years as you wish—there is no obligation to sponsor for all their school days. Sponsorship can be paid £240 annually or £20 monthly by standing order. Please contact me if you are interested. Click [Here](#)

If you are interested in sponsoring a child's education, want to give a donation or would like me to run my presentation talk on my work in India please contact me.

All donation cheques should be made payable to: 'Little Drops Charity Trust'.— (Registration Number: SC 028069) and sent to me at Portlethen Golf Club marked 'Personal'.

Please note that 100% of your donation goes directly to my project—all printing, postage and administration costs are borne by myself.

My thanks go to Sister Bakkiam and all the staff at St Joseph's Social Service Centre, Dr. Mallikesan and the staff of Sri Ramachandra Hospital, Principal Brother George and his staff at the Montfort School, Head Mistress Sister Phyllis of Marian School, Head Mistress Sister Fatima of the RCM High School and to the 'Little Drops Charity Trust' for the help and assistance they have given me in my mission to give the children the start in life they are entitled to.

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