THE EAST SHEEN-CHENGANNUR TRUST

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VISITORS TO CHENGANNUR

Several supporters of the Trust have visited Chengannur in 2011. Most recently Geoff Thorsby and his wife Ting revisited and stayed with Jacob and Deepa. Geoff's association with the Trust goes back to 1986 when, along with his late wife Sylvia, he worked as a volunteer carpenter in one of the local schools that the trust was then helping. In 1998 (after Sylvia sadly died) he returned and started a wheelchair making workshop; work which continued for several years.

'It is always a delight to go back' says Geoff , 'Jacob, Deepa, and Jacob's Mum Lily are always so welcoming. I get to see people I haven't seen for 10, 12 or even 25 years and it is very nostalgic'.

This time Geoff and Ting were able to meet up with 2 of the 4 children they have been sponsoring for many years. Jacob also organised several visits for them including one to a small local school with about 80 pupils from quite poor families where they were able to give away pens and purses Geoff had brought with them. This is a school the Trust have helped before with sports equipment etc. Bright eyed and bushy tailed the children were delighted with their presents and 'surprisingly' says Geoff 'they mostly chose pens in preference to the hand embroidered purses'

The last visit was to see the 45th house the trust has helped to fund and build where they met Sandhya & Monachen and their two young children. Monachen was badly injured by a rock fall in the quarry where he worked and he now makes a minimal income from a 'petty shop'.

'The abiding memory of our visit' said Geoff and Ting as they packed their bags before returning to Thailand 'is of how patient Jacob is in dealing with all the requests on his time from the sponsored families and how the small amounts of money we give go such a long way in helping to improve the quality of life of the people we assist.`

DANCE TALENT RECOGNISED

A young girl named Rakhee at a local school approached Jacob with a request for help. She has a great talent for Indian dancing but did not have the costume needed to enable her to take part in proper programmes or competitions. She has to hire a costume when she enters at district level. Rakhee has been studying dancing for the past 8 years but her dance fees come to £5 for 8 class per month which is difficult for her family to manage as her father is a labourer on a minimal wage. We've bought her a costume which she is proudly wearing in the photo. If anyone would like to support her dance classes for £5 a month please let us know.

45th HOUSE COMPLETED

Possibly our project that has the greatest lasting effect is our house building. For around £1500 Jacob manages, with great tenacity, to organise and oversee construction and expenditure on small basic homes for families who are usually living in squalor. He reports :

`September 7th was another important day for the Trust when at 10 AM we handed over our 45th house to Monachen, Sandhya and their two little children. It was a wonderful occasion when many of their friends and relatives were present. The priest of their parish Rev. George Lobo, who took much interest in the construction, blessed the house and handed over the keys to the grateful family. I welcomed the crowd (see photo) on behalf of all with a short speech highlighting the wonderful contribution made for this house by Ian and Rosemary Riddell and the children of the Sheen Mount School. The effort from the family was terrific when they managed to finish the house in almost record time of just three months. As the Rev. Father said a thank you speech on behalf of the family, I could see tears of joy filling Sandhya's & Monachen's eyes. It was also a time when I pondered that I never could understand what its like living without a house as my late beloved father had left me with a big house to live in, but the tears of the family conveyed everything! It is quite a large house we've built measuring almost 500 square feet with a prayer room at the entrance, a sitting hall lengthwise, two bedrooms and a neatly laid out tiled kitchen with a smokeless fire place.(the efficient chimney can be seen in the photo). They served a breakfast to all who came and I was told the crowd kept pouring in till late in the evening as it was a holiday. You have made their dreams a reality`

OTHER AID

We have helped many other families, nursery schools, students and `pensioners` during 2011 with small amounts of aid for specific purposes. Just three examples are:

OMANA was sponsored by Helpage but since they pulled out of the area she now gets provisions from us regularly through our `Hungry Fund`. She lost her husband and depends on her only son for help who is a painter but does not have work on a daily basis. Her small hut was in need of a new roof so for around £100 Jacob arranged for this to be replaced so it would be watertight in the monsoons.

JESSA JOY is studying for general nursing in Andhra Pradesh. Nursing is an expensive course but offers a bright future and so many girls opt for that by whatever means possible. In Jessa's case, she went for the course with the help of neighbours and friends at Church. They are meeting the fees somehow on a yearly basis but as her father is a labourer and only has occasional work they were not sure that she would be able to continue. So we stepped in with a terms fees of £75.

VIPIN passed the entrance exam for a course in computer science and engineering and managed to get into the govt. engineering college in Chengannur on merit. His father was employed in Kuwait but had to leave during the war about 20 years ago and has been jobless since then. The subsidized govt. fees for the course are about £275 per year besides other expenses for text books and materials. The first year fees were paid with the help of his relatives and friends and we've paid for his 2nd year. He has a brother who is doing his first year course in college for commerce. His father finds it difficult to meet all these expenses and that of the family needs. Vipin dreams of being an engineer in future to pull his family out of all their daily problems.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Once again we would like to thank Nicola Lenthall for auditing our 2010 accounts free of charge. Kay Mattin would have been delighted to see our income was up 24% over the previous year. Thanks to all of you who have generously given help to many different projects and families through the year.

****A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS****