

Sangam News

संगम न्यूज़



The newsletter of the Friends of Sangam Foundation

Editorial

Welcome to the new look Sangam newsletter. At the last trustees meeting Stephen, who had produced the previous two, looked for a volunteer and I put up my hand. I hope you like the new format. The plan is to prepare a newsletter twice a year and send it out to all our supporters.

We are also planning to print a number spare so that if you are speaking to any groups or individuals you can have some to give away.

The newsletter is mainly written with supporters of Sangam School in mind, whether they are current or future supporters – well the whole idea is to support the school and the main way is through money!

We are planning to include regular features such as a report from the school, pictures, reports from people who have visited and activities and news from the supporters themselves.

If you have anything you would like to offer I would be very pleased to receive it.

The plan is that this newsletter will also be available on the website when you will be able to download it and have the pictures in colour!

This newsletter is being produced principally for distribution by post and for giving away to supporters.

If you would like to become one, please contact Stephen Petter.

If you would like extra copies to give away please contact me (addresses on a the back page).

See you at the AGM on Saturday 13 March 2004, this will be a big open event so please bring your friends.

William Waddilove

No. 3 Winter 2003/4

Carole Taylor, one of our committee members, spent some time working at Sangam and wrote this diary of a typical day:

I came by chance to Sangam instead of a friend who had been invited. It was an opening that brought many difficulties and lots of reward. My three months at Sangam, working for six days a week, gave me a God given opportunity to glimpse a world so far removed from the world of schools that I know. It gave me experience for which I am grateful. It takes that much time to even begin to comprehend the day-to-day hardships presented to running a school in Indri.

But what a wonderful place it is!

8.00 am. School bus arrives with students and staff. 15% of the students rely on this transport to Sangam.

8.20 am. The yellow bus negotiates pot holes, women fetching water, and carrying cow dung on their heads for their daily needs.

8.30 am. Something like 150 students, teachers, and carers converge on Sangam. Today is unprecedented cold. Children wear home-spun hats that they keep on throughout the day together with “hand me down” jumpers over their uniforms. All carry their all important stainless steel lunch tins (tiffin carriers) and their even more precious school bag. These children at this school in the main have



Thought for the day: “It is possible to work without results but never will there be results without work”

Benjamin Disraeli

An inspirational quotation on the wall of the School.



Indri village with a woman carrying a drinking water container, showing a typical house and the drying of cow pats for cooking fuel.

- to fund themselves and dog-eared text books are passed down from year to year.
- 8.40 am. Assembly outside, lines of young people on a dusty field, have prayers and singing. This is the time for Kamla Sawhney (the principal) to ensure the progress and philosophy of the school.
- 9.00 am. Class 7, thirteen to fourteen year olds looking to me for improved English which I later realised was a dream for perfect English. We wait in a room designed for the heat and not the cold. This affects me but not them, they are resilient. From now on and over the coming weeks they experience an English that is not just academic but practical. They experience words to actions, and feelings, names to colours and find interaction with their learning.
- 9.40 am. As though regimented the gong is sounded by Indra (school handyman) for change of lessons. Children stay put and teachers change class. In this climate the children need constant access to water and toilets but they are not allowed to enter or leave without permission. Given that Sangam has only two water taps and two toilets for its 150 students this means constant interruptions in teaching. The continuous break in concentration leaves me frustrated. Class 8 is the oldest class with 14 to 15 year olds, all teenagers, more self conscious and concerned with image. In this mixed class the boys and girls make sure they steer well clear of each other, as is culturally appropriate.
- 10.20 am. Teachers move round their classes again. I find myself in class 4, eight to nine year olds studying comprehension from tired weary books. We revert to "Simon Says" and a lot of laughter. They eventually start to understand the English accent and the trick of having to listen carefully.
- 11.00 am. We change class again and the children take a breather and chat in this change-over. Class 1 is in the original building, rows of 5 year olds sitting on

rush mats cross-legged. They are memorising their colours from a chalkboard. Spelling each one perfectly. There are very few visual aids on the wall as they ruin quickly in the heat and the dust however the children are eager to learn from me, as are the teachers. Where is the need greater?

11.40 am. Lunch, and pupils eat in their class or outside. Many have snacked already on their food. Staff gather in the watery sun to drink tea but don't eat. Birbati (helper) who has chapattis shares hers with Kamla and myself with a little very hot pickle. The boys play cricket and the girls chat or play tig.

12.10 pm. Lunchtime is over and back to class three. Here seven to eight year olds find themselves at desks for the first time. All stand as I enter the class -

although we are familiar with each other there is maintained a reverence that keeps me apart. It sometimes feels too deferential and hinders some of the contact I want to make.

- 12.45 pm. Class 5 are clamouring for my attention. Class 5 share the back of the large hall with class 7. Disruption from the lower class reduces the ability of the upper class to achieve their potential learning that will ensure their future employment. By this time they have all heard about "Simon says" and want to play.
- 1.20 pm. The ever efficient ex-army Indra sounds the gong and we change. I walk across the dusty yard shivering and tired back to the original building to be with KG class. Four year olds sitting in rows cross-legged in woolly hats and runny noses. We are all heavily reliant on the teacher Reka for her translation. They want to sing English nursery rhymes.
- 1.55 pm. At the sound of the gong it is the end of the day for the under 6 year olds - those who don't need the transport go home. They mysteriously disappear back into the village.

In the school calendar the 23rd of February is important. It is the open day to raise the profile of the school both locally to parents and for the all-important benefactors of the school. It is time for rehearsals of the poems, plays, singing and dancing that will be presented on the day. 50% will be delivered in English with all age groups taking part. They look to me for approval that it is already good but also for correction. The tension is difficult to hold. These rehearsals become more and more intense as the time goes by for the performers.

3.00 pm. The yellow bus drives across the dusty field to pick up its passengers. Children leave as they arrived, walking and laughing to the village. Sangam School is left to its quiet dry hills and peacocks strutting around.



Pupils making their way to the bus at the end of a day. Photograph by Clare L Lockwood (see the article about her visit).

Our Bus

Ruth Sherred, standing next to Kamla was the head teacher of another school in India. It was here that Eleanor Nesbitt and Kamla Sawhney first met and where they were teachers in the 1970s. Ruth has retired but has always followed with great interest the progress of Sangam School. It is thanks to the generosity of Ruth that the School was able to buy the bus. The addition of the bus is a great resource as it permits pupils from further away to attend.



Annual General Meeting

Saturday 13 March 2004 at Coventry.

Guest speaker: Margaret Waterworth. At Coventry Quaker Meeting House, Hill Street. Arrive at 12.00 for a Bring and Share lunch for 1.00 pm, the start of the AGM. Put the date in your diary. Full details later. Make a day of it. Lots of Sangam enthusiasts - and photographs. Our first big meeting, come with a friend. Margaret Waterworth is a Quaker and a teacher of children with special needs. She visits India frequently, where she has identified the needs of various groups, and has set up charitable organisations to minister to them. She has been engaged by the Department for International Aid as a consultant both for her expertise in establishing facilities for disabled children and in staff recruitment and development in NGOs. We have invited her to tell us about her experience, hoping that what we hear will help us in our support of Sangam School.

Visit to Sangam School.

During the summer my boyfriend, Keith, and I went to India for a four week holiday. The day before we left I was at Coventry Quaker Meeting and talking to William Waddilove about our trip. William mentioned the school and explained that we should go and visit if we got the chance - I am so glad that we did!

On August 13th 2003 we visited Sangam School. We were staying in Delhi at the end of our travels around North India. We booked a car and driver to take us to and from Indri, the small village where the school is situated. The journey itself took about one and a half hours and was very interesting. The surroundings transformed as we travelled from the city into the rural countryside looking at statues of Hindu Gods and temples and travelling along the bumpy roads past Gurgaon on the final stretch of the journey. We arrived mid-morning and were greeted at the school by Kamla Sawhney, the principal, and the school staff. Kamla told us about the school and how important the donations and assistance from others had been in keeping the school running. It was clear that Kamla is a extremely committed and caring person who has devoted much to seeing the pupils gain from the opportunity to have an education, something many of us take for granted.

The school buildings were simple and yet very practical. The most striking sound as we chatted to Kamla was the sound of peacocks in the school grounds. Kamla showed us around the school taking us to each class in turn. The pupils were busy at their studies but were encouraged to practise their English by asking and answering questions with us. Some of the pupils were quite nervous to speak, others took great delight in hearing us return their greetings of 'namaste!'. Pupils were taking part in a variety of lessons including English comprehension and science. The pupils learnt some of their lessons in English and other lessons in Hindi giving them the opportunity to develop their skills in speaking and reading both languages.

Later in the morning the pupils joined together as a large group to perform a variety of poems and songs in Hindi and English for us. We were impressed by the amount they had learnt and the actions accompanying their performances. These included the poem 'Who Has Seen the Wind?' in English and the song 'We shall Overcome' in Hindi. We certainly felt very honoured by the school. School at Sangam finishes by lunchtime and Kamla took us to visit her home and a local restaurant where she chose some of the nicest food we had tasted since we arrived in India. Spending this day with a local community and seeing the work of this wonderful school made our last week in India really special and is definitely an experience we will never forget.

Clare Lockwood

Thinking of visiting?

Visits to the school by 'Westerners' are warmly welcomed and give the school a special status. So if you are able to visit you are encouraged to do so. However before you do please will you speak to Eleanor Nesbitt. It is not that it is a problem but she knows the area and culture well and it will help 'Westerners' be prepared for what they might see and find.

Administrators Report

Since becoming an incorporated body and a registered charity there has been less to do as administrator. The mailing list is static. (I hope people send me changes of address, phone number, email, etc.) Perhaps we should be working to get more supporters.

Jennifer Kavanagh has resigned from the Committee, and Carole Taylor has agreed to join it. We were pleased that Hari Khurana, the Treasurer of the Foundation, was able to attend the Committee's last meeting. Hari wishes to resign as Treasurer of Sangam Foundation this Spring but is happy to continue in the capacity of consultant to the Foundation. 'The Friends of Sangam Foundation wish to thank Hari for sharing his expertise and so putting its financial procedures on a stronger footing.'

No-one has opted to become a member of the Company, which is not surprising as it gives no real benefit. However if there were a difference of opinion on policy or in elections to the Management Committee only members would be able to vote.

I hope to go to India in January. This is mainly for personal (spiritual) reasons, but I hope to visit the school and members of the Board of the Foundation, perhaps to help find another Treasurer.

Stephen Petter, Administrator and Company Secretary

Treasurer's Report

As of November, 12 supporters have taken out monthly or quarterly standing orders, donating in total £125 per month. We have also received £1043 and \$200 in ad hoc donations. We eventually sent our first tranche of funds, £970, to Sangam Foundation in October. There had been delays while we agreed priorities and then while we waited for assurances that adequate accounts were being maintained by the Foundation. Currently we

are preparing our accounts to 31st December. We look forward to the AGM when supporters may have ideas as to how we can increase donations.

Notes from Council Meeting 27 September 2003

Stephen Petter presented a financial report for the period from the inception of FOSF to 31st August, with estimate for September. He told us that in October we expected to be receiving £98 per month in Standing Orders, in addition to ad hoc donations. The expenditure included £112 on administrative expenses including two newsletters. Most of the costs of incorporating FOSF and registering it as a charity (approximately £150) were met from funds donated prior to its incorporation.

We were told about the problem of the Sangam Foundation not having produced accounts in the form required by the Indian Government for funds from abroad. At the meeting on 13th August, it was decided that we would remit no funds until last year's accounts are completed and audited in accordance with Indian law. (The problems have now been resolved). Eleanor Nesbitt read us one of the letters that she has written to the Secretary of Sangam Foundation and to Kamla Sawhney stating the urgency of getting last year's accounts audited and about recruiting a Principal to be appointed when Kamla Sawhney retires.

Eleanor Nesbitt will prepare an Annual Report for the year to 31/12/03 for the AGM. Stephen Petter wishes to relinquish some of his roles in FOSF in the next year or two. [Currently he is a Director/Trustee, the Company Secretary, temporarily deputising as Treasurer, and Administrator].

Kamla tells us that she plans to appoint Rajiv as her clerical assistant. She tells us that the accounts are currently with the Auditor.

Friends of Sangam Foundation as a support group based in the UK devoted to supporting the Sangam Foundation and its school.

Trustee/Directors are:- Joy Barrow, Hugh Boulter, Trupti Edwards, David Fish, Jo Hallett, Eleanor Nesbitt, Stephen Petter, Carole Taylor, William Waddilove and Elizabeth Whittacker.

Contacts:

Stephen Petter - Company Secretary and Administrator, for all financial and administrative matters & charity giving schemes. Email: spetter2@clara.co.uk

Eleanor Nesbitt - A founder member and principal contact with the school. Please contact her if you are thinking of visiting. Email: eleanor.nesbitt@warwick.ac.uk Tel: 024 7650 2443

Hari Khurana - India based treasurer for the Sangam Foundation - he handles money and financial matters only in India.

William Waddilove - Newsletter editor. Please send to me anything for the newsletter. I can email a pdf (Acrobat) version of this newsletter, and you get the pictures in colour. Address: The Hollies, Priory Road, Wolston, Coventry CV8 3FX Email: william@waddilove.co.uk Tel. 024 7654 4255

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