

The Friends of Calcutta Cathedral Relief Service
(Charity Commission No: 266302; Inland Revenue No: XN 33280)

The White Cottage
Main Street
Botcheston
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26 February 2005

Dear

Annual Newsletter 2004/05

I have been mapping out the Annual Newsletter this time and realise that there is a great amount to tell you. For your ease, I have divided the letter into sections under relevant headings so that the news will be broken up and allow you to better dip into the letter as suits you best.

2004 Highlights

- The additional classroom at Gobinder Banerjee Lane School has been built and fitted out. You raised over £5,000 for this in sponsoring my Chicago Marathon in October 2001.
- Increase in donations from supporting churches in 2003 to the tune of £1,300. (See 2003 accounts enclosed)
- Decrease in donations from individual donors in 2003 by around £1,750.
- Christian Aid ("CA") and CASA (Bread for the World) stop contributions; CASA from December 2003 and CA from April 2004 (for more on this, see below).
- Julie Halford's Swimathon in 2003 raised £1,050 and in 2004 £623.
- Abby Wall and Silas Standage visited the relief team and raised £1,170 plus in sponsorship and gave a classical concert in St Paul's Cathedral.
- Pat Baker and Adrian Whalley ran the London Marathon in April 2004 and between then raised nearly £1,400.

Bequests

- Bequest of £47,121.77 in memory of the late Miss Joan Bates.
- Bequest of £1,000 in memory of the late Miss Garrett.
- Bequest of £1,195 in memory of the late John Payne.

At present, the Trustees are holding the bequest from the late Miss Bates in the charity's account. The Trustees are concerned to ensure that this sum is used for

the best purposes of the CRS and the Trustees feel that these purposes can perhaps be best assessed following my next visit to Kolkata - for more of which see below. We are, of course, very grateful indeed that the CRS team and their endeavours have been remembered in this way.

Friends Accounts for 2003

The audited accounts for 2003 are enclosed. You will see that these give a breakdown as to how the £23,794 we were able to send to Kolkata was made up. You can see the drop in individual donations but the not quite so equivalent rise in donations from supporting Churches. You will see that, of the Churches (listed in alphabetical order) and you will see that seven out of the twelve supporting Churches donated what can only be described as substantial sums. This is not to imply that all donations, of whatever size, are critically important.

Thanks to all the Friends who donated either through their respective PCCs or individually.

In 2004 I was able to send £25,000.

Withdrawal of Christian Aid ("CA") and CASA (or "Bread for the World")

I let you know about this in the last Newsletter so this is a follow-up.

CA has been supporting the CRS since the CRS was 'born' with the influx of refugees into Kolkata from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1972. After over 30 years of financial support, CA decided to review its strategy because it wanted to be able to release funds to support new initiatives in the countries in which CA works. It was perhaps an inevitability, therefore, that CA would need to phase out from some of its long standing partners who, over the years, had grown in stature and capacity to be able to stand on their own feet and which could mobilise resources from other sources.

It is not quite so clear as to why CASA ceased contributing in December 2003. To quote directly from the final withdrawal letter from CASA to CRS "Kindly note that under the present phase of CASA - BFW partnership project entitled "empowerment of NGOs (*sic.* non-governmental organisations) in West Bengal", urban programmes are not now our priority. Further, the available resources are not sufficient to accommodate more than 24/25 partners at a time and therefore we have decided to phase out from our partners whom we have supported in the past for more than two phases".

What this means in real terms is that the CRS has lost annual funding to the tune of nearly £50,000 (£33,000 from CA and £17,000 from CASA). Obviously this is a

great blow to CRS which has had to re-draw its strategy and amend its budget as a result. So far as the Trustees are concerned, having had a number of meetings and detailed discussions as to the way forward - including two of the trustees meeting with the senior management of CA to discuss CA's strategy in some detail - the Trustees view this as a tremendous opportunity and motivator. The stakes have been raised for us to significantly higher levels. The Friends are now the major annual contributor to the CRS. However, I have made it clear to Rig David that, being realistic, The Friends cannot commit to raise more than £25,000 each year, which position he appreciates. We must all just work that little bit harder!

Rig's Update

The best way for you to have an up to the minute update as to how the funding that we are providing is being deployed is for you to read the latest report from Rig covering October - January 2005. This is enclosed. I have asked Rig for an update report every three months. Over and above this, we, as Trustees, are working on setting up an independent monitoring process in Kolkata so that we can be kept best informed as to what is going on. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Proposed India trip

I would like to accompany a group of you to meet with the team in Kolkata. Due to the climate, the best time to go is between November and March. I am proposing a trip in November. My research (and several trial runs!) suggest that we fly into Kolkata, spend the first week in Kolkata with the team, visiting the slums (or "colonies") and seeing what is going on then spend the second week in New Delhi, taking in a trip to the Taj Mahal near Agra - a scene, I guarantee, you will never forget! We can return to London from Delhi.

The cost? If we can raise a minimum of 10 people, the return flight will be in the region of £500 (with one stop) or £650 (direct). The Kenilworth Hotel in Kolkata is what you would expect of a colonial hotel and more - will be at least a 4 or 5 * which will give us very preferential rates at around £32 per night (single) and £38 (double or twin). There is a 10% tax on top. These rooms are air conditioned and each has a private bathroom. Food would be in addition. This hotel is superb. I would propose that we travel from Kolkata to New Delhi by train (a sleeper) which is about 350 to 400 miles. I do not have costs as yet of accommodation in New Delhi but we can tailor this to suit our means.

I enclose a form to enable you to let me have your expression of interest. There is no need for a deposit now but I will be asking for one very shortly. If you are keen to come on this adventure, please let me have this completed form back straightaway (or by the end of March at the very latest) so I will be aware of the extent of interest. I can then get working on making the flight arrangements. Due

to the climate, November is a very popular travel time with people making their way either to India or the Himalayas via Kolkata. We need at least 10 to get the preferential airfare. Flights will be in the region of £650 if we cannot achieve this number. I have already sorted an Indian guide for us.

Publicising the Cause

During the year, I have been invited to go to speak and show slides at The Church of the Ascension, Blackheath, St Mary's, Thame, Oxfordshire (1 February 2004) and then on 28 March to be the guest of The Tadworth & Walton Overseas Aid Trust (or "TWOAT"), speaking at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Tadworth and then showing slides following a lunch. This is a great way to promote our most worthy cause. In a world of ever competing worthy causes, we need to remain focused, be alert of the acute competition for funding there is and be realistic and positive but not overwhelmed as to what we can achieve.

Child Sponsorship

Some of you are contributing to our "One Child through School" programme. The cost is £40 per year. If more Friends are prepared to make this commitment as an ongoing annual commitment, that will be fab. You will appreciate that a child does not only go to school for one year! If you would like me to let you have a direct debit form to enable you to participate, please let me know. I will be talking with Rig in more detail in November as to how we can extend this to those who, once they have left school, need to be funded through college to learn a practical skill.

CCRS Website

This is worth a look at www.cathedralreliefservice.net Let me know what you think.

Contact details

Please contact me at any time with ideas as to how we can progress our worthy cause and make things happen. I am happy to come to talk to you what is going on and to illustrate with photographs. You can contact me by email on whalleyallegro@hotmail.com, call me on 01455 828506 or 07798 580084 or write to me at the address at the top of this letter.

There is a big funding "gap" which we must seek to fill. Please bear the charity in your thoughts and prayers and let's see what we are guided to do to continue to make our venture even more of a success.

Yours as ever,

Adrian Whalley
Hon. Secretary