

# Friends of Calcutta Cathedral Relief Service



## Newsletter - June 2009

### YOUR CHANCE TO MEET DIRECTOR RIG DAVID!

You now have the opportunity to meet Director, Mr Rig David, when he visits the UK planned for 24th September to 10th October. He will be giving a presentation at St Margaret's Church, Lee, Lewisham on **Saturday 26th September**. The meeting will be scheduled during the day to allow visitors from further afield the opportunity to travel in order to take advantage of this. The church is readily accessible by public transport. He will give an illustrated talk of the work of CRS in



Director Rig David

Kolkata and its surrounding communities and there will be time to meet with him informally over lunch.

Full details will be issued towards the end of August, but please reserve this date in your diary. To receive details please contact Ray Brookes via telephone on 0208 852 7272 or alternatively by email at [raymond.brookes@btinternet.com](mailto:raymond.brookes@btinternet.com).

### NEW KEY MEMBER OF CRS TEAM

The newest addition to the CRS team in Kolkata is Reshmi Mukerji, who joined us in April of this year. She started her CRS journey as a volunteer with the Medical Programme at which time she visited the various CRS project areas and assisted the medical team. Reshmi has a strong interest in international development, with a focus on health. She comes into CRS as an Assistant Coordinator and deputy to Director, Rig David, thus overseeing all three programmes: Education, Empowerment and Health whilst also contributing her skills in grant applications and resource mobilization.

Reshmi completed her GCE O and A Levels at the Calcutta International School linked to the University of London. Her gap year was spent in Calcutta where she developed her own programme for the underprivileged children and women working as domestic helps in her locality. She took her degree in biology at the University of the South, Sewanee in Tennessee, USA upon being selected as one of their five international merit scholars.



Reshmi Mukerji

Major in Biology. She thus has a strong foundation in this field through her courses in economic development, women's empowerment and microfinance, food security etc. She was awarded a travel grant to do a comparative study of economic development in India with a university faculty member. The programme involved visits to UN field sites, Grameen Bank replication projects (microfinance projects where loans are granted to rural women to set up micro enterprises – similar to existing CRS self-help groups) and United Nations World Food Programme Offices in India and the USA. She has consistently been a member of the Dean's Honour List, the University's highest academic honour society, and was awarded the prize for best biology major for her graduating class. Her work experience includes an assistantship with the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Kolkata where she conducted an epidemiological study on malnutrition among the city's slum children. In addition, Reshmi has found time to pass a French language course at Alliance Francais, Kolkata!

Sewanee's liberal arts curriculum allowed her to combine her interest in international development with her

We warmly welcome Reshmi into the CRS community and look forward with excitement to working with her in the days to come!

## WHAT MAKES CRS DIFFERENT?

*CRS is one of many organisations – whether Christian, another religion or secular – which support poorer communities in the city of Kolkata and the villages around with activities such as primary schools, health centres and women’s empowerment groups. With so many organisations running similar projects, you may wonder whether there is any difference between them all. Jenny Lunn describes three factors which she thinks make CRS stand out.*

**Responsiveness** to the needs of local communities – CRS works with local partners, such as slum or village committees, and allows them to direct the work. CRS does not impose its own ideas as to which projects to run. Rather, local people identify what they want, the local partner presents this to CRS, and then CRS will try to support them accordingly. It is very important that communities identify their own needs and priorities and have a sense of ownership and control in the process of development.

An example is in Basanti Devi, a resettlement scheme on the outskirts of Kolkata. The government rehoused city slum dwellers in a purpose-built ‘colony’ with lanes, electricity and water and believe they have solved the problem of overcrowding and that the people will now be automatically better off. In

fact, the area has no jobs, no markets, no schools and no hospitals. The local committee identified some specific needs. Many women are away all day as they are domestic servants in the city, therefore there was a need for pre-school childcare. CRS now supports a crèche for children of working mothers. The colony is located such that people had to travel great distances to buy food. The inhabitants have obtained small loans from CRS to establish a thriving market in the colony selling fruit, vegetables, meat and other goods, which also provides local people with an income.

The target of **self-sufficiency** – If a charitable organisation supports a community year after year, by giving them what they need or want, the community become reliant on it. This is the ‘welfare approach’. In contrast, CRS wants every commu-

nity to become self-reliant and able to solve its own problems. Hence there is a small charge for e.g. monthly school fees, which makes the people realise that they are not given things for free. It is the goal of every CRS project to make it self-sustaining and CRS can then withdraw its involvement.

**Professionalism** of the staff – CRS is a smaller organisation with around 15 paid staff. They not only run the organisation with great commitment, but also with high levels of professionalism, not just goodwill. The funders and supporters of CRS can be confident that it is run efficiently, effectively and professionally and achieves excellent work with its financial and human resources. It is an effective and inspiring organisation.

Jenny Lunn April 2009

*Jenny Lunn, from the University of London, is currently doing a PhD looking at faith-based organisations in Kolkata. This is an extract from a longer article reflecting on the work of CRS which can be obtained on request.*

## NEWS ITEMS

### **Lavatories at Gobinder Banerjee Lane – Progress update**

You will recall from our December Newsletter that presently there is 1 squat toilet for 180 boys and girls and the women’s empowerment groups and for the staff. Tadworth and Walton Overseas Aid Trust and an individual donor (a couple) have each donated £500 and another individual donor has provided £100 to provide separate toilets for the boys and girls with hand washing facilities and the installation of a septic tank. Many thanks for your generosity in spending your pennies to enable them to better spend theirs.

### **Melbourne (Derbyshire) Parish Church into the fold**

This follows on from a visit of Rev’d Dr John Davies, Vicar of Melbourne, to Kolkata last November on Derby Diocesan business to visit

Bishops College – a theological college for trainee priests - and, as a consequence, Rig and some of the CRS projects. Melbourne PCC has allocated £500 which is to be used to enable nutritional and health check-ups on over 1,000 children in the schools in 8 of the colonies where CRS is operating. John and Rig are to host a curry night in Melbourne on **5th October** as part of Rig’s visit. We welcome the members of the congregation of Melbourne Parish Church to The Team and thank them for their initial generosity.

### **Loughborough Emmanuel Football Club (“LEFC”)**

Thinking outside the box for innovative ways to raise awareness and funds, Adrian has found a unique opportunity for the Friends to sponsor the under 10s football squad at LEFC, a club of 6 teams from under

7s to under 17s. A CRS logo has been created (as you can see from the top of this newsletter) which will appear on the under 10s football kit with the Friends website address also being included on the rain jacket. Rig and Reshmi are setting up under 10s squads in 2 of the colonies, the intention being that the members of the squads will interact, ultimately leading to exchange visits and a tournament. In addition, this venture will raise the profile and awareness of the Friends task, will provide a financial return and may enable the Friends to be selected as a favoured charity by Emmanuel Church, Loughborough, a vibrant, lively and full (!) church and will open up speaking and awareness opportunities. This project has only been made possible by an additional kind contribution from one of the Trustees.

## CAMBRIDGE GATHERING OF "FRIENDS"

Little St Mary's Church in Cambridge planned an event during our trip to Calcutta last November and Henry Blyth was able to see pictures of the health centre in Balarampur being opened by his nephew, the Reverend Sunil Caleb.

As the date approached, it became clear that Rig's visa would not be granted in time. In spite of this disappointment, it was a most successful and enjoyable day. After a service and lunch, Adrian, Ray and I showed photographs taken

Clive Brown

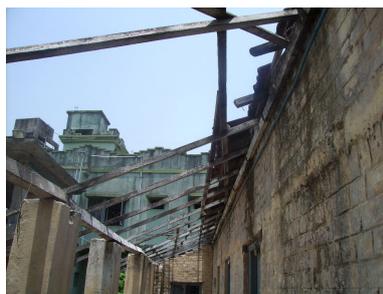
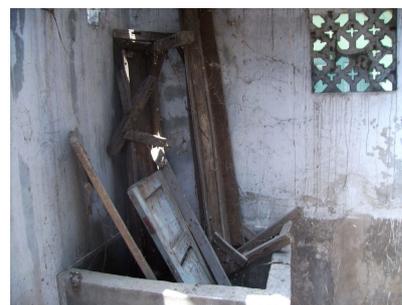
## DUM DUM SARADA VIDYAPITH RENOVATION

Dum Dum Sarada Vidyapith is a school building that houses CRS' education and empowerment initiatives. The primary school presently has a student strength of over 40, whilst the empowerment programme boasts of four self help groups (SHGs), for a total of 40 women. The school was built in 1975 but has since been in a state of constant disrepair, thus leading to its present condition. However, the school will soon witness its big-

arranged by her son, Jonathan of Holy Trinity Church, Eltham.

The completion of the renovation project will allow planned expansion of the education and empowerment programmes, to finally materialize. The increase in enrollment will permit several other projects associated with the education/empowerment classes to be intro-

schools. The increased availability of space will allow the introduction of skill training courses (tailoring,



gest facelift since its inception, thanks to a generous gift of £1,100. This sum was donated by relatives and friends of the late Esme Prince, in lieu of flowers at her funeral and

duced. The school health clinic will be restarted whereby students will be checked by a pediatrician and given appropriate medication.

Coaching support will be provided to both school students as well as those from government secondary

embroidery, beautician, etc.), as well as adult literacy classes, which will empower the women of the community.

Furthermore, there are plans to introduce a basic computer training course for the local youth which will enhance their employment prospects significantly. A training course in spoken English and soft skill development, to complement the computer training, is also being incorporated in further plans of development of the school.

## MORE NEWS ITEMS

### Diocese of Derby and Church of North India diocesan link

Rev'd Dr John Davies has alerted Adrian of this existing link and has put him in touch with one of the link's principal drivers which Adrian is pursuing with the Diocese of Kolkata and Bishops College particularly in mind. More later.

### Possible link between St Paul's Cathedral, London with St Paul's Cathedral, Kolkata

Some interest in such a link has been expressed by St Paul's Cath-

edral in London and Adrian is taking this up with Bishop Ashoke in Kolkata. More later.

### No stopping him – Adrian is off again running from London to Brighton (56 miles) on 20 September to raise funds

The CRS Team is working with Sarwagin Vikas Samiti in Jharkhand (Bihar State) west of West Bengal, which has been defined by the Indian Government as being greatly deprived – male / female literacy at 51.6% / 22.5% respectively; 59.2%

of children under 3 yrs being underweight due to acute malnutrition; only 28.9 % of women being aware of the existence of HIV / AIDS amongst a male population of largely migrant labourers etc etc.... £2,000 is needed for education materials, the provision of medicine and health check-ups by a local doctor and to provide teachers and community health workers. The need is so great that the 56 miles will seem a doddle by comparison. More details on the website shortly.

## ST ALFEGE'S SCHOOL, GREENWICH ESTABLISH A LINK WITH GB LANE

It's been a wonderful 6 months keeping in touch with you. Knowing a school is really in India is really really fascinating because I can share it with my family. I think all the children in your school are really caring and loving to each other.

The reason why we're raising money for you is because we heard that ~~we heard that~~ you don't ~~have~~ have enough money plus we care for other people in different parts of the world. The ~~photos~~ pictures that you sent us were really encouraging and also it's my first gift from India. I like keeping in touch with you because to me G.B. Lane is a very very very special school and I would like to visit your school one day. I am so sorry that you <sup>have</sup> ~~are~~ ~~unfortunate~~ very little money but ~~our~~ our money will help you ~~get~~ a lot.

This 6 months ~~we~~ we have spent together were really joyful. I wish that one ~~day~~ day we could meet each other. If you want to ~~to know~~ know are school its St Alfege with St Peter's C.E primary school and the class is ~~year~~ year 4 so it will also be wonderful if you visit it.

St Alfege's with St Peter's School in Greenwich have forged a link with GB Lane School. Following the Friends' visit to Kolkata, there have been a couple of exchanges of correspondence and over £150 has been collected and sent to India this year. The school staff are extremely happy with the relationship. Rig will visit the school and the children will be most excited.



An extract from a recent letter of a pupil at St Alfege's

St Alfege's School hands over a cheque

### WEBSITE: [www.friends-of-crs.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-crs.org.uk)

#### Revamping and Revolutionising the Website

Thanks to a very kind donation from a seasoned Friends supporter, the CRS website in Kolkata is being amalgamated with the Friends website in the UK to save costs. The finished result is being revolutionised and will be managed and changed going forward. You should be able to see the initial difference by the end of July.

### BANKER'S ORDER & GIFT AID?

The Friends of Calcutta Cathedral Relief Service derives its funds from church contributions and individual donations. The raising of funds can be greatly helped by two factors. We carry out administration on a voluntary basis. Regular payments by Banker's Order enables us to build on current donations. By making a Gift Aid declaration you help us to recover some £2,000 per year from the government to forward to CRS. Forms can be downloaded from the website or obtained by request from Adrian Whalley.

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### COMMUNICATION BY EMAIL?

Many of you will appreciate that email makes an important contribution to both the speed and cost of communication. If you are able to receive future Newsletters and communication by email, the cost savings will go to CRS in Kolkata.

Please email your address to Adrian Whalley at [adrian@mpswebco.org.uk](mailto:adrian@mpswebco.org.uk). Your address will be kept completely secure with Friends addresses and will not be used for any purpose other than for communications in relation to CRS and its business.



PremierOil has generously covered the production costs of this Newsletter. The company is a leading independent oil and gas company with interests in the UK, South and South East Asia and Africa and prides itself on the assistance it provides in local infrastructure for the poorer countries in which it operates.