



Special Edition Newsletter - January 2008

**THE OPENING OF THE
NEW HOSTEL AT STEDLAND**

Changing children's lives in Southern India

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Can you contribute anything?

The Executive Committee would welcome comments and suggestions about anything to do with what we do, the projects, management, future Newsletters, etc.

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NEW FACES ON THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

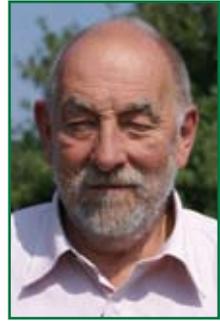
At our ninth AGM in October, Peter Carter of Skegness stood down from the Executive Committee. Peter has been involved with us almost from the beginning and has served on the management committee for five years. Peter has been very generous, including with his time for us and has held a barbecue every summer to raise fund for Lincs. We are very grateful to Peter and very much hope to see him and Anita and friends at future events and that he will continue to support us.

New faces on the Executive Committee are Des Butler of Lincoln and Kath Hayes of Mumby, near Alford. Both Rotarians, Des is a senior financial adviser and we are hoping he will bring his organisational and financial acumen to the management. Kath is a nursing home administrator and, with the help of her IT skills, is taking over one of Brian's jobs – keeping the membership records. Apparently, there are now around 325 of us to keep track of.



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

In little more than a year, the idea of building a new hostel building capable of accommodating 50 boys at Stedland was conceived, the building designed, the funds raised **(by you)** and the building work implemented and completed.



It's hard to believe that when the January 2007 visiting group met with Ignatius in Madurai he was only then able to show us preliminary building prices and design drawings (which were to be the subject of much discussion and deliberation for several more weeks after we were back in the UK before we gave the go ahead for the work to start). And yet, just 12 months on, the project is completed and Brian with his fellow *Lincs* members and supporters have just returned from India after attending the official opening ceremony amid typical celebrations!

In financial terms, the hostel building (which will accommodate 50 of the most poor and needy children imaginable) has cost us £12,680 (a huge amount there but which would not go very far on a building site here!). The funds have had to be raised and this on top of everything else we are doing in partnership with Ignatius' charity, SDET. **It has been a magnificent effort, especially by those members who have hosted functions of their own. And so, on behalf of the severely underprivileged children we are helping, thank you very much.**



Elsewhere in this Newsletter, Ignatius has written his own moving story of the building of the new hostel 'Lincs House'.

Grant



P.S. The Christmas Appeal to sponsor a 'kids out day' for the 65 boys and girls we help received tremendous support

too. It raised over £1,200, that is about 4 times the cost (£5 each). You can be sure the surplus will be put to a very good use. So, have another big pat on the back!

FROM THE FUNDRAISING CORNER

Members subscriptions and donations and receipts from talks and presentations about our work in southern India are the lifeblood of the funding of our organisation. However, the 'one-off' fundraising functions have a dual purpose. First, they enable us to accumulate funds for special projects (for example, the building of the hostel this year) and to meet the continual stream of requests from SDET for help. Secondly, the functions enable the members to keep in touch, be sociable and to make and extend friendships.

For the record, the 'Pig and lamb roast' at the Alford Manor House in the summer raised nearly £2,000! Kate Pike's lunch at her home near Grantham a few days later was tremendously successful and raised £722 and, just recently, Patsy Booth's dinner

party with friends at North Hykeham brought in £225 more. Well done!

So, come on! How can you help? What about a lunch on the lawn or a barbeque in the summer 2008? Maybe a coffee morning, afternoon tea with some friends or a cheese and wine? Or, could you bring a few unwanted items to a carboot sale (we have one or two potential venues). Call or email, details below.



John Roddam

Tel: 01522 789161

Email: john@lincswithindia.org.uk

... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ...

We are proposing to hold a short sponsored walk in the late Spring 2008 based on a route from the Kings Arms at Tealby. The route is about four miles long, taking approx two hours (but there are opportunities for short cuts!) and you will be guided at all times.

We will finish with a very nice buffet and, no doubt, the odd glass or two. So, for some fresh air, good company and the opportunity to raise some funds come along with a friend or two and have some fun. If you are interested just let me know and I will contact you with the date and meeting time to put in your diaries when the details are settled. John Roddam

PS. If you are a non-walker, don't worry, come along and join us at the pub!

... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ...

INDIA'S MISSING BRIDES

As those of our members fortunate enough to have been able to visit our projects will testify, there can be no mistaking the genuine happiness of the girls in the hostel at Chokkalampatti. By sharp contrast however, a few weeks ago the BBC ran a documentary about 'India's missing girls'. This included the shocking story of the discovery of a two day old baby girl who had ben buried alive, left for dead simply because she was a girl.

Doctors named the girl Bhoo Laxmi, 'the earth goddess'. She was one of thousands of baby girls who every week are abandoned, aborted or killed, simply because of their gender.

Her grandfather confessed to the girl's attempted murder. With seven daughters to be provided for, he claimed the family could not afford the burden and expense of having yet another girl in the household. Of course, there cannot be a shred or justification or mitigation for the heinous thing he did but the case highlights social conditions it is hard for us to comprehend, including the burden of the dowry.

Demanding dowry has been outlawed for 50 years in India but it is a tradition that lives on across all social castes and classes. So great is the burden that girls are seen to place on a family, that some believe it is better that they are never born.

Boys are prized because they will carry on the family line and, crucially, provide for parents in their old age. Parents worry about finding the money to pay the wedding dowries of daughters. In the

poorest areas, as Bhoo Laxmi's case shows, infanticide is seen as one solution.

Now, with advances in medical technology available in urban areas many parents are resorting to ultrasound scans to determine the gender of unborn babies. If it is a girl, parents often seek means to obtain an abortion. Perhaps a blind eye is being turned to the growing incidence of sex selective abortions in the belief it is better that a girl is killed before birth, rather than after.

Sex selection tests leading to abortion on the basis of gender have been banned for 15 years in India. But the law has simply forced the trade underground. UN figures indicate that 750,000 girls are aborted every year in India. Despite government efforts to end sex selection official figures show that there are only 840 girls for every 1,000 boys in India. This disparity in the numbers of young men and women and the continued burden of the dowry system has other social conditions - a marked shortage of brides!

Geoff Allen

LINCS HOUSE - A NEW LIFE TO THE CHILDREN AT SDET LAND



(We asked Ignatius to write his own story of the building of the new boys hostel at Stedland. Here it is, in his own words. Ed)

Actually, from the right beginning we were thinking of building a hostel at Sdetland. We started with 12 boys in a very simple hut at Sdetland in 2002. So I had appealed for assistance for a building with our friend Mr. Brian in many times. But we seriously think about it in the rainy season of 2005.

At one night in that October, when I was with our children in the existing cement and asbestos roofed building there was a heavy rain with storm wind. We had kept 31 children in a tiny room with two staff members. Due to the heavy rain, most of the joints in the asbestos and cement roof leaked water very badly. Within some minutes we couldn't able to find any dry place to keep the children safely. Suddenly the power was also switched off. We heard threatening thunders with sparkled lightnings in the outside. Really at that moment I realised my inability and worried about the poorest poor condition of our children with the helpless and hopeless context.

At the end of that month when we gathered our Hostel Governing Committee we mainly discussed for a permanent and safe building for our boys. We unitedly passed a resolution to find out the sources to construct the new building at Sdetland.

In August 2006, Lincs with India principally agreed to give their helping hands in

our issue with very generous heart. We thanked them by our whole hearts. Before that I didn't have knowledge on systematic approach for construction. But our friend Mr. Brian taught me the good lesson in the scientific approach for construct the building for our proper need.

He gave me a sketch for a new building with our consent on needs. It was 750 sq.fts in size. We felt that it was not enough for our needs and appealed him to increase the size. After that he enlarged the size for 960 sq.fts. He also asked us to design a good elevation for the proposed building.

I searched for a good Architect for design the elevation. I met many designers at Madurai and finally chose the Abi Elevations for our needs. They gave me a good appearance to the building but add the space of Portico with size of 100 sq.fts with the purpose of beautify the building. I got the approval from Lincs for the elevation with increasing size of the building.

That sketch was given to many Engineering contractors here and collected their quotations for the construction. Among them the quotation of Sri Ganesh Construction seems to be nominal and its section plan was considered. When we enquired about the Government rules for the residential building, we were shocked by its terms and conditions. The public welfare department clearly says that for the residential accommodation building, it should be constructed with the size of minimum 31 sq.ft. per student. Then we again approached Lincs with India for this issue and Mr. Brian guided me to discuss this issue with the Lincs members during their visit in January 2007.

In your January visit, I shared the views with President and other members of Lincs at Hotel Pandiyan in Madurai. I had requested for the building with size of 1550 sq.ft. and had recommended to select Sri Ganesh Construction for construction. In March 2007 Lincs approved our project and released the first payment for the construction. In 18th April morning we started the construction with prayer meeting and so much of happiness in our hearts.



The boys at work

We closely watched the construction and our Supervising Engineer, Mr. Thiruppathiraj, visited on every finishing points. We strictly followed the Contractor, Mr. Muniappan, in terms of quality and standard of the building he was very flexible and understand the mission of this project.

The whole construction work was accomplished in the first week of December. We decided it most appropriate to have the inauguration of the building with an official opening ceremony on the occasion of the visit of the *Lincs with India* supporters in January.

We all at Sdetland are in very very happy mood and cannot find the words to express our feelings while we see this Lincs House in visual

by Ignatius Amalraj



PICTURES FROM 'LINGS HOUSE' OPENING CEREMONY



Rotarian, District Assistant Governor,
Peter Manton





SPONSORSHIP MATTERS

Now that the new boys hostel 'Lincs House' is in use we expect Ignatius to take in more of the very poorest and disadvantaged children from the communities he is helping. The children will be accommodated and educated locally to try to avoid them sliding into child slavery. Officially at present, Ignatius has 40 boys at Stedland (although he may well have one or two more already!). All 39 boys at Stedland have sponsors, as have the 25 girls at the girls hostel in Chokkalampatti. However, in anticipation of Ignatius asking for the funding of more children we are keen to hear from prospective new sponsors willing and

able to pay £10 a month to give a child the same opportunities the boys and girls pictured in this Newsletter are receiving. For further information and offers of help please contact me or any Committee member known to you.

If you are an existing sponsor, will you please check if your Bank standing order payments, or your other selected means of payment, are up to date. Contact me if you are in any doubt

Maggie Allan – Sponsorship Secretary
Tel: 01507 462384
Email maggie@lincswithindia.org.uk

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE!

India is world renowned for natural remedies and on one of his many visits to the sub-continent Brian bought a small bottle of Winder Green to apply to his ageing joints. He was delighted to find that an application would be beneficial to treat a number of ailments and he has been good enough to allow us to reproduce below the label of the bottle for the benefit of fellow sufferers of a particularly unpleasant condition.

WINDER GREEN

**It Relives Joint Pains, Back Pain,
Rhetic Pain, Arthritics,
Spind Lices
And any pain.
For any pain use directly.**

Brian reports that since applying it he has completely avoided **Spind Lices** (Yes, and lost a lot of friends! Ed.)

LEGAL THINGS

There was an excellent turnout at this year's AGM when the members adopted some amendments to our constitution proposed by the Management Committee.

The most significant alteration, to our 'aims and objectives', reflects the development of our organisation from its humble origins as a fundraising support group of projects promoted by the International Childrens Trust.

The rule changes have paved the way for our application to the Charity Commission for registered status which is now being processed for submission. These are more than mere formalities, there are plenty more hurdles and fences to jump and I shall keep the members posted.

Contact me if you have any queries, want a copy of our Constitution or any other information.

Jim Needley - Email: jim@lincswithindia.org.uk

SDET'S SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Ignatius has a very special and personal reason for his efforts on behalf of the physically and mentally disabled children in and around Srivilliputtur. He has twin sons David and Philip, aged 17. Both are highly intelligent and articulate. More personable young men it would be hard to find anywhere. But, Philip was born with cerebral palsy.

Ignatius knows all about the difficulties and prejudice of his own society against the disabled among them. He has struggled to obtain any help for Philip. Mainstream education is practically impossible. However, happily for Philip, he has devoted parents. Most of the disabled children of this poor area of India are victims of religious dogma which dictates that physical and mental incapacity is in consequence of sinful behavior in a previous life. For the poorest of these peoples, disabled children can be too much of an economic and practical burden. The children can be abandoned. So, with funding from the International Children's Trust three years or so ago, Ignatius' SDET founded two schools, one in Sdetland itself and the other in rented premises in Srivilliputtur:

- at the core of the scheme, is the 'day care' facility which provides basic care, food and physical therapy for up to 60 children at the two centres, split according to the extent of their disabilities;
- while the 'day care' scheme provides welcome respite for the families of these poor children, SDET tries to deal with the inherent prejudices against disability that exist within the communities by counselling of the parents and open theatre in the

streets to confront the superstitions;

- local state schools are lobbied to take in the disabled youngsters and are encouraged to provide facilities for wheelchair access and the like but such is the depth of the problems that this is extremely difficult; as Ignatius is only too well aware from his own efforts for his own son.

Members will recollect that we were dismayed when we heard that SDET's project for these children and families was under threat when doubts were raised last year about the continued reliability of ICT's funding source. Mercifully, however, ICT's money has kept coming through and SDET are managing, at least for now. *Lincs* still fund the cost of the daily transport of the children to and from the centres. Now, the success of Ignatius' dedication has been recognised by the Tamilnadu State Government in the form of the centres being designated as Special Schools.

The Independent published a tribute to Ignatius on the 10th December.

Go to www.independent.co.uk. Then search 'Ignatius Amalraj'. ICT was one of the three charities supported by the Independent's own readers Christmas Appeal.

Geoff Allen

OUR LINKS WITH ICT AND THEIR HOME SPONSORSHIP CHILDREN

Several of the founder members of Lincs with India are also members of International Children's Trust. For information about ICT have a look at their website 'www.ictinfo.org.uk'. Their aim is to be a leading authority on the development needs of severely disadvantaged children at risk through poverty throughout the world.

On the 9th November Geoff Allen attended ICT's AGM at Amnesty International's Human Rights Action Centre in London. The AGM was combined with a Conference on Child Labour, hosted by ICT, attended by speakers and representatives of other charities working on programmes sharing the objectives of the abolition and relieving the effects of child labour – sharing information and experience. ICT has a partnership with SDET along the same lines as Lincs. Like us they "help disadvantaged girls and boys living in extreme poverty, in single-parent and

other precarious family income situations, through home-sponsorship programmes that allow these very poor families to keep their children in formal education - children who would otherwise have become child labourers on local farms or in small factories." ICT and Lincs are SDET's only means of financial support.

Of the nine children Lincs originally supported in ICT's home sponsorship scheme only four now remain. The others have all successfully completed their secondary education.

Briefly from Ignatius

Vasiammal (the baby girl featured in the Summer Newsletter when her mother fell from a tree while collecting wild honey and who is now being brought up by her grandfather) "appears well and fine but has no growth according to her age". Her grandparents "are looking after her satisfactorily" and "her father Selvam doesn't appear afterwards" (Ed. that is, after the scene in the village described in Vasiammal's story)

Puvaneswari (the little girl with the badly deformed foot) "is also well but her kidney problem is still going on. She goes to the normal school regularly and once in a week

she attends our Special School at Sdetland and is getting special education and simple exercise for her good health".

Stedland news "This year we don't have enough rain, but we are all happy to have a new accommodation" (Ed. He means the hostel of course. On a less happy note, Ignatius is likely to have understated the shortage of water, the effects of which will be horrible)

We have planted 360 trees at Sdetland newly.

We have appointed a new warden, Mr.Pandiaraman, who is trained in teaching.

We have recently had letters from these children. Here is a reminder about who they are, their backgrounds and what they are doing now.



Banupriya is now 11 and the youngest of the quartet. Her father, a blacksmith, was killed in a traffic accident when Banupriya and her brother were very young. Since then her mother, helped by the sponsorship payments, has supported both her children and her elderly mother by working as a casual agricultural labourer.

In her letter, Banupriya tells us that she has now reached VIIth standard at Krishnankovil Higher Secondary School where, incidentally, she appears to be doing well. Each year the sponsored children are taken on an ‘educational tour’ which must be one of the high points of their year. Banupriya speaks about this in her words “SDET people took us to Kanyakumari (the southern tip of India) as an educational tour. We visited Gandhi Mandabam, Vivekananda Statue and Kamarajar Mandabam. We went to Kayatharu and visited memorial place of Veerapandiya Kattapomman. The trip was a very unforgettable days in my life”



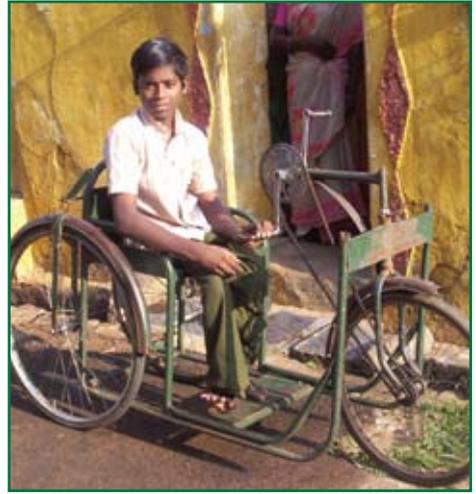
Ponmalar, 14, is studying in Xth standard at the same school as Banupriya. When the end of year results are known a decision will be taken whether to support her through to XIIth standard, and possibly beyond, or whether some form of trade training would be more appropriate.

Ponmalar’s family are particularly poor. Her father lost his sight some years ago leaving her mother as the family’s only breadwinner. Had it not been for the sponsorship payments there is no doubt this girl would have become a child labourer. Her letter to us starts “I am your ever loving Ponmalar. I am fine here. I wish you for your long and prosperous life”. She goes on to report on the same educational tour as Banupriya, and adds “... after that we visited Vetkalamman Temple, there we found peacock and five headed cobra statue”. Her letter ends “I will be very thankful to you for your kind help”.



Velankanni has a particularly sad family background. Her father has just been released from a lengthy prison sentence and, whilst he was incarcerated, her mother lost her left arm while working as a labourer on a building site. Apart from our support through sponsorship we have been able to help this family in other ways, in particular, by providing them with a small house when they were made homeless. As might have been expected, Velankanni has not done very well at school and, although now 15 years old, she has still only reached VIIIth standard. It is probable that we shall provide some sort of trade training for her.

In her translated letter Velankanni says “We celebrated the birthday of Kamarajar (probably a hindu god) I took part in essay, oratorical, drawing and music competition. Myself and my friends were very happy on that day. I thank you for your help”. (We shall continue to monitor the condition of this girl's tragic family)



Pandiaraj is a victim of polio and can not stand unaided. Four years ago we provided him with a tricycle propelled by hand operated pedals which allowed him to be independently mobile for the first time in his life.

At 15, Pandiaraj is in the XIth standard at the Mankapuram Higher Secondary School in Srivilliputtur where, in this year's mid-term tests he came a creditable 7th in his study group. He has shown an aptitude for maths and we hope to steer him towards a career in either bookkeeping or accountancy. In his most recent letter he tells us that “We celebrated 60th Independence Day in a grand manner. We hoisted national flag on that day”. And “Thank you very much for your valuable help”.

We shall continue to support these ICT Home Sponsorship children for as long as is necessary.

Brian

STEDLAND'S 'KIDS OUT DAY'

Reports of the January 2008 *Lincs with India* supporters visit will appear in the next issue. But surely among the highlights was their day out with all the 65 children of the hostels at Sdetland and Chokkalampatti with the SDET staff at the Water Theme Park at Athisayam, just north of Madurai.



Children enjoying the 'kids out day' (more pictures on the back cover)

Maybe not quite Disneyland, the Theme Park provided many and varied attractions for our children, most of whom would never before have had an outing of any sort; undoubtedly, an event which will remain in their memories for a very long time. Besides sampling the attractions and rides, the children enjoyed lunch in the restaurant and soft drinks and ice cream throughout the day. They were all given a commemorative tee shirt as a reminder of a wonderful day out.

Members of the visiting *Lincs* supporters group arranged to be in Madurai at the

time and were able to join the children for most of the day. Avoiding only the swimming the visitors bravely accompanied the children on most of the rides.

If you are wondering about the weather, do not be concerned. As usual, outside the monsoon, we had a cloudless blue sky and a temperature of about 30°C.

A truly unforgettable day! Very many thanks to you all, in response to the Christmas Appeal, who contributed to the cost. Let us hope that we can repeat it annually.

Brian

PICTURES FROM STEDLAND'S 'KIDS OUT DAY'



All the costs of design, publication and distribution of this Newsletter have been sponsored to avoid any cost to our charity.