

# THE KALIMPONG ASSOCIATION (UK)



## *Summer 2008 Newsletter*

---

### *A Message from the President*

Giving away substantial amounts of money to good causes is a very satisfying occupation. However, it is also a big responsibility. That is why in 2007 we undertook a review of our grant-making. We came up with ways to make ourselves more open to other ideas by developing a new approach to funding for 2008 and beyond. These developments occurred at a time when we were already committed to re-thinking how we could improve the way we operate.

Last year we saw some major shifts in the world economy and also that in Britain. As a result money became tighter in both the private and public sectors. This had an inevitable impact on people who would wholeheartedly support us but felt the crunch. So in a structured process, we devoted much of the first half of 2008 to assessing the situation. Having given quite a bit of money towards structural works in the school, we found that now our biggest grant-making efforts must go towards Sponsorship.

Having recently attended the International Conference in Kolkata, it became apparent that this is where the shortfall lies. If we want the school to progress in educating poor Anglo Indian children, we must assist by providing cash for this purpose. We now ask for your support in our endeavours to educate even more Anglo-Indian children from the slums of Kolkata/Shillong/Assam and beyond.

Summer has finally arrived with the sun shining and the ambient temperatures climbing up to warmer seasonal levels. 2007 went by so quickly and we look back amazed at how quickly time passes and how soon the months pass by.

So, what will 2008 bring us? We should take stock of our lives, of what we have and share it around. Our mission in life must be to help one another and also those who are less fortunate than ourselves. We must reach out to those who are so deserving of our care and attention. It is our duty to give something back to this earth that we live in.

### *From the Editor's Desk*

When I was approached by Margaretta to take up the role of Editor my first thought was "Do I really need the hassle?" However, on my way to the gym that morning I couldn't get the request out of my head and then it came to me that perhaps this was a calling of a sort and I knew that I wouldn't be able to refuse. It was the same when I was looking through our local papers and came across a request from Age Concern asking for people to volunteer to become befrienders. Jeff and I joined up and we now visit an elderly gentleman once a week for an hour. He is confined to a wheelchair, is very lonely and is glad of our company. He is an avid reader, very interesting to talk to and has shown quite an interest in our school, so I lent him a couple of the books which were written by Dr Minto and Simon Mainwaring.

Quite a lot has happened in my life since I was last Editor. I took early retirement, remarried, now live permanently in Spain and most recently became a grandmother. Who ever said that time stands still!!

Our congratulations to Vanda Fraser, Mr Webster and the entire Heat Flexi Team for their sterling efforts in raising much needed funds for the school. An article and a photograph from Vanda appears on pages 2 and 3.

Our congratulations to John and Christine Dempster on their recent wedding. They have written a very interesting account of their wedding and honeymoon and we wish them a long and happy married life.

There are items of interest about the school as well as those OGBs trying to trace friends and loved ones. Please get in touch if you can assist in any way.

Just a reminder that the Association will be holding a Dance on Saturday 18 October in Croydon. If past dances are anything to go by I am sure that this will be a most enjoyable occasion. Please therefore support this charitable event in aid of DGH.

Take good care of yourselves and each other and keep those articles coming in. Remember – the Newsletter is only as good as the material received.

*Yolande Fegredo*

May the rest of the year be good and kind to you and may you walk this earth with confidence as it is an open door before us, an open door which each of us must pass through but once; the opportunities to do good must always be taken. There will be chances to do good, to help our fellow man; so let us use each moment of the remaining months of 2008 to do the very best we can, whenever we can.

*Margaretta Purtill (Byers)*

---

***BIKE BENGAL 10 – 16 FEBRUARY 2008***



Back in Scotland and a world away from India, I am toiling to express what the ride has been like and what it meant to me. Walking around my little garden, and seeing the changes in the last two weeks, the snowdrops dancing with the gusts, the bright colours of the crocuses and the swollen heads of the daffodils .... I flick a switch and I get instant heat, the washing machine does my laundry and I climb into a warm bath, no effort or worries. I have so much.

And then I remember the vast wheat, lentil and paddy fields en route to Kalimpong ....families sitting in the nursery fields in Bengal picking saplings and bunching them into little bundles, the farmers bending over the paddy fields, planting with precision and speed the saplings and then seeing the next field in a more mature stage and then the next ready to harvest and the next field bare following the harvest and the next being ploughed by bullocks to prepare for the next planting!! In a few months all these plains would be flooded by the monsoon rains and perhaps crops lost or should the monsoons be late then crops would also fail. We passed palms laden with coconuts, and trees heaving with papayas and bananas and the closer we go to the foothills, the start of the miles and miles of tea gardens waiting for the pluckers who would start handpicking in a few months time. Accompanying us on the highway was every form of transport carrying the harvest of the fields and fish caught in the tiny little ponds. We saw bicycles carrying kid goats in jute sacks on each side of the back pannier and also carrying up to a family of four. Children were working in the fields and not at school. Homes were simple, made of mud and people bathed in the little ponds where clothes were washed by hand. Cyclists and people on motorcycles and scooters would accompany us asking questions. Truckers and bus loads would wave to this spectacle of veterans with safety helmets and cycling shorts, quite an alien sight to most.

Whenever we stopped crowds of locals would appear to just look, some would ask about the bikes, touch them, move the gears (not good when they were not moving), and then just sit and keep us company till we moved on. When I

explained in my best Hindi that we were cycling to help poor children go to school, it somehow seemed an empty explanation as all the children around us were in need of exactly what we were trying to achieve.

Our trek team, Heat Flexi Team, as they called themselves ensured our safety, comfort and kept the kitchen tent working hard to match our appetites, well mine I guess as I ate like a horse!! A mixture of Nepali, Sherpa and Bengali staff, their faces were a joy to see at the end of each day's cycling. The vision of our tents neatly prepared with the "toilet tent" and "bath tent" ready on our arrival was a reassuring and welcome sight.

Our leader, organiser and inspiration Rev. John Webster maintained discipline and harmony and entertained us at each day's end, and if anyone was losing heart and could not face the next day's pedalling, he would soon dispel any thoughts of quitting. I know that for some it was lots of enjoyment and a little effort and for others the effort was greater than the enjoyment but ten veterans set off and ten made it all the way.

Our shaky start out of the bustling city of Kolkata on day one was soon forgotten as we clocked up the first 66 miles. Thereafter it never seemed as tough, until day six when we cycled for 84 miles in seven hours. The weather was perfect, warm and sunny and the rest stops were regular. I drank lots of "chai" (sweet Indian tea made with milk and with a hint of root ginger). I soon earned the nickname of "Vandaloo" as I was always looking for the next convenience. I guess for the two women in the group, we did have to make more of an effort to find somewhere private and so we would enter the homes of the villagers and be welcomed to use their facilities. As a midwife I was fascinated with the babies and would love to hear the birth stories. But John would push us on to the next stop.

Phoning home was a pleasure and a daily contact with a colleague at work meant that my story was being shared and I was getting lots of encouragement. The map on the wall was marked as a guide to my progress. Andrew, the true cyclist in the group would race ahead at times and mark on the road in bold scrawl when we reached, 400, 500 then 600 kms (it always sounds better than miles)!

The final day must be described. It started off fairly flat for the first twenty miles, then we hit three inclines of about 500ft with the joy of the freewheel down the other side. Monkeys sat nonchalantly on the roadside chattering as we raced past them. Then it was the big climb after lunch. I shovelled down as much food as I could handle, filled my water bottle and then once we crossed the Teesta Bridge it was each cyclist to their own pace. The climb ahead was 4000ft and over ten miles with most of the gradient at 10%. I knew that Andrew was ahead and would make the climb. I had done a deal with myself that I would cycle a mile and then walk the next but with a mantra I chanted "Thank you Archie, thank you Allister, thank you Gavin (my cycling trainers), thank you Gemma (my spinning class trainer) – I kept the bike going because if I had stopped pedalling I surely would have gone backwards. One hairpin bend loomed steeper than any other and I was ready to get off the bike but I remembered Allister saying don't look any further than the road in front of your wheel and one hour and forty minutes later I cycled into the town of Kalimpong. I had done it all, much to my own amazement and felt on top of the world, well we nearly were!!

The rest of the group also made it combining some cycling and walking, pushing their bikes and I know the effort was as great for them. We only had the walk through the town and then the last 500ft more to go to get to the Homes. The welcome and march through the town was uplifting, the school Pipe Band leading us brought a tear to the eyes of the grown Scotsmen. The Principal of the Tibetan school in town, a former pupil of the Homes, had his students lining the road to welcome us and garland us with "Khadass" (a silk scarf which welcomes and honours us). Then the last two miles up to the school, a steep ascent. It was easy considering I had done ten miles of the same already. The welcome at the Homes was heart warming. Seeing the children, hearing the welcome speech from the Bursar and Principal and then the tea and cakes ..... we had come 412 miles, a journey symbolic of the one the school children make to the Homes from the streets of Kolkata to the lofty foothills of the Himalayas. It had been worth every painful muscle, sleepless night, mosquito bite and aching body. All the hours of training in Scotland had been worth the wonderful journey we had shared with new friends, cyclists and the Heat Flexi Team.

I know that for me it has been a wonderful experience and to think that it will raise funds for Dr Graham's Homes, a place that was my home for so many years. Thanks to you all for the promise of sponsorship and to those who have already given generously. Thanks also to the school friends in India who welcomed us in Kolkata, Siliguri and Kalimpong and contributed to swell the funds raised. At this time I can tell you that over £3,500 has been raised and as a group we hope that we have raised over £30,000. Children at Dr Graham's Homes are ensured an education and preparation that will help them live lives of worth and in turn help others. Thank you for helping to make this possible. However, I have been disappointed at the lack of OGB support. This is not a criticism, but it is a general malaise within a powerful group who can make such a difference to the Homes. Criticism of the Homes is made by OGBs who do not offer support. Anyway I had a wonderful adventure and it was good to be back in the Homes.

***Vanda Fraser (nee Goodwin)***

## WEDDING BELLS

I am delighted to tell you that Christine and I were married in a hilltop retreat in the Daintree Rainforest overlooking the Coral Sea in tropical North Queensland. Though Christine and I did not have our immediate family and friends with us, Carmen, the owner of the retreat, did everything and more to make our day a most memorable one.

We flew Virgin from Perth to Sydney on the midnight horror (something which we will try never to do again ... we were booked on the 08.00 hours flight but some four days before our departure date the airline informed us that they had re-programmed the flight to midnight), and then from Sydney to Cairns. On arrival in Cairns we were surprised that our two suitcases were not to be found on the baggage carousel. We were quietly pleased that we had taken the trouble to carry our wedding gear with us, as I thought that our checked baggage would never return. But it did, on the next flight up.



A cab took us to the Cairns hotel for the night. Next day, after breakfast, we hired a Ford and drove towards the Daintree, stopping en route first at Mossman to discuss the marriage ceremony with Rosina Santarossa the Marriage Celebrant. As we had time on our hands, we took a detour to see Mossman Gorge, and this was well worth the time. Then back onto the Captain Cook Highway which has the Pacific Ocean on one side and, invariably, fields of sugar cane on the other, to Port Douglas, where we stopped for lunch. It was a lovely, warm, and sunny day. Back to the highway and, before the Daintree Village, a road sign indicates the route to take to get to the Daintree river crossing. The ferry taking us across the estuarine crocodile infested Daintree River is unique and is of the cable variety type having a flat top. The cars simply drive onto the ferry on one side of the river, the ferry hauls itself across the river, and the cars drive off on the other side. The charge was \$18 for a return trip. On the other side, the Daintree Rainforest side, the road is different. It is still a sealed road of course, but it is narrower than the highway and has the rainforest encompassing it. It reminded me of the drive from the Teesta Bridge to Kalimpong, though not having the gradient of the latter of course. Unfortunately, here too, in this most beautiful of forests, the authorities have had to put in speed bumps to slow vehicles down to protect the animals of the rainforest, and especially, the endangered Cassowary. And, also to attempt to curb the hoon tendency in some of us.

We should have found our retreat sixteen kilometres from the ferry crossing, but we had forgotten about the sixteen k's bit and simply motored on, until common sense told us that hey, we should ask someone where to go. What followed, of course, is we had to do a 'U-ee' (a Kolkata turn as Christine puts it) and that is how we go to Cockatoo Hill Retreat – and what a place it is.

Set on a ridge overlooking the emerald rainforest canopy, this wonderfully secluded hilltop retreat is an escapist's Eden. Our residence was the third one of four thatched tree lodges beautifully styled with king-size hand-crafted beds veiled in a swirl of muslin, softer under-bed lighting and polished timber floors. Full height glass doors opened out to a private balcony, or you could, from your pillow, watch the ever-changing moods of the sun, the forest and the sea. I

recall one night watching a full moon waxing away while we sipped wine. We listened to the rainforest, watched ships ever-so-slowly sail by on the Coral Sea, and waited patiently for the fantastic Cassowary bird to walk by on the forest floor. But it never made an appearance and we never did get to see this remarkable bird.

However, we did get to swim in the wet-edge pool with its cabana bar, and enjoy the garden and the surroundings – see the web of the golden orb spider and a frog or two attesting to the health of the area – and butterflies of great variety, the most magnificent of which would have to be the Ulysses with the iridescent blue and also the Cairns birdwing which has a black green and yellow colouring. In the morning the birdwing butterfly is slow, waiting for the sun to warm it up I guess, after which it flies around with far more zing. On our fourth day, a brush turkey scampered around the forest floor close to our cottage, while above, cockatoos squabbled and flew around in pairs.

Has anyone been to the Daintree rainforest? I had not, and did not think much of all the hype about it, as a forest is a forest and that's it as far as I was concerned. One saw forests while driving to Kalimpong from the plains and then going back down again to Siliguri and Bagdogra and that was quite something in my opinion. But should you be fortunate enough to visit the Daintree, you will see that it is quite unique, and most beautiful. It is, I am told, the only rainforest in the world that comes down to meet the reef, and the result is a sight and an experience not to be missed. Owners and managers of the businesses in the Daintree told us that not many Aussies visit and that it was far more likely that overseas tourists did. This is a shame.

In the Daintree there are many things to do and see. The Marrdja boardwalk, a free tour, has signs, diagrams and pictures illustrating how the mangroves came about, how they work and how they continue to survive and the necessity of having them in the first instance. It astonishes me the impact that mangroves have on both forest life and on us.

The Discovery Centre tour costs about \$30 and is another good one to do. You are able to do a treetop walk and there is also a large tower that rises way above the forest. Like the Marrdja one, there is a boardwalk and in both these areas of the rainforest, the boardwalk, is necessary, to prevent people inadvertently destroying the forest. The Marrdja one is in the main a mangrove section while the Discovery Centre is chiefly central forest.

The Cooper Creek Guided Wilderness tour costs \$40 and is another good one to go on. Prue was our learned guide and I guess there is very little indeed that she does not know about that ancient forest. I was most interested in all that she pointed out and was fascinated by her knowledge of the forest, its history, and the particulars of the vast variety of the plants contained therein. One could, really, listen to her for hours as she takes you around on the walking tour, but the tour duration is two hours. She must have liked the seven of us in the tour group because it was three hours by the time we returned to the starting point. Our group consisted of a husband and wife with their daughter (a solicitor) from the UK, an elderly retired couple from the USA, and Christine and myself.

You will see massive mahogany trees worth \$40 – 50,000 each (a pie in the sky price as they will never be harvested, the buttressed roots of the ancient yellow pender trees, giant strangler figs, and palms the like and variety that I doubt you would have ever seen before. Imagine standing in a forest that is 130 million years old. Epiphytes flourishing in impossible positions, the old and giant tree that George Clooney stood in front of for the film *The Thin Red Line*. When Prue pointed this out to the group I guess everyone promptly took their cameras out and had their photographs taken in exactly the same place, much to the amusement of Prue.

The owners of the retreat that Christine and I stayed in also have a secluded self-catering cottage along a lovely section of Coopers Creek, a freshwater stream. If there are any words to describe this place it would have to be a little slice of heaven. Carmen, the owner, gladly showed us around before the new guests arrived and we decided then and there that this is where we would return to, possibly for our first anniversary. The property greets you with a kilometre of arched palms creating a green tunnel. At the foot of Thorntons Peak, it has the Cooper Creek flowing gently by. Due to the minerals in the river, the water is of a blue hue and the scene is one of great beauty. It is not the blue of the ocean or of the sky for it is clearer than these. It looked like pure crystal and we marvelled at the sight of it. Christine slipped into her swimming 'cossie' and slid into the clear clean water. Fully grown turtles the size of one's palm, with their young, together with a variety of small fish, were in the water with her. The creek is of course surrounded on all sides by the rainforest with all its diversity and beauty. The Daintree rainforest is a lowland rainforest and is typified by large leaf foliage, of strangler figs and woody vines, of fan palms and trees with buttressed roots. [The tree that George Clooney stood in front of was such a tree, and it is a giant.] This self-catering cottage is a peaceful place, perfect for a couple, with not a chance of being disturbed, except by the fauna of the rainforest itself. To stay here you would need to bring in sufficient stores for a few days or a week or whatever, from Cape Tribulation, or from the town of Mossman. A limited variety of groceries are available from a small store at the petrol station a few k's away back on the main Daintree road.

After being shown around the cottage and having a swim in the creek we left Carmen at the cottage as we had to get some lunch. After lunch we went on the Wilderness Tour and on our return to the hilltop retreat Carmen asked us whether we had come across the Cassowary birds. We had not. What had happened was that after we left Carmen at her Coopers Creek cottage, her two guests had shortly arrived and as they were being settled in, not one but two Cassowary birds had simply wandered onto the property. The guests had, on an earlier visit the previous year, stayed at the hilltop retreat and no matter how many times they had hoped to see the Cassowary, none had presented themselves. And now, in the first ten minutes of the very first day of their second visit to the Daintree, a mating pair had come along. Carmen and her two guests, were, to put it mildly, gob smacked at this most rare sighting. Apparently the Cassowary is the only inhabitant of the rainforest that has a very large liver which enables it to metabolize the toxins contained in about 37 varieties of poisonous rainforest flora. They are the seed dispensers and play a vital role in the forest. If the cassowary bird is lost, that is, wiped out; the rainforest will be wiped out, too. Far too many are being killed due to collision with vehicles, by domesticated dogs, and by the antics of the feral pig. There are feral pigs in the rainforest and unfortunately, they are doing exceptionally well. They breed like hell and cannot be culled even though they cause extensive damage to the rainforest flora and fauna. The very rare Cassowary lives on the rainforest floor and really do not stand a chance against the feral pig. The army should be called in during the summer; the army should wait along the rivers and creeks of the rainforest, and cull as many of the feral pigs as they can. However, the government will not do this. They ring their hands about the plight of the rainforest and of the endangered flora and fauna, put restrictions aplenty about human settlement in the area, and yet will do absolutely nothing about the very big problem of the feral pig. It makes no sense.

There are many activities on offer in the Daintree. We went on the Daintree river cruise and our luck was in as we ended up seeing seven crocs, including Fat Albert and Gummy (it had lost some teeth). There are jungle canopy surfing and walks on pristine beaches and eco-friendly boat rides on the river, kayaking on the Coral Sea, an insect and butterfly museum, 4wd safari tours and aboriginal culture to learn about. Walks through old growth rainforest on natural trails and on boardwalks, and views and sightseeing. Well worth a visit.

Incidentally, when we received our Marriage Certificate a few weeks after our return to Perth, we were disappointed, to say the least, that the certificate from the Queensland government department had no less than five spelling errors. We remembered with great clarity that the Marriage Celebrant and we had gone over the details of our names and our places of birth and where the marriage ceremony took place etc., and double checked all the entries, and yet we still received it with mistakes! We returned the document highlighting all the errors together with a covering letter demanding a marriage certificate with no errors in it. We hope that we do not turn blue holding our breath, waiting....

---

Our garden is looking bare as all the leaves have fallen off the deciduous trees, the trails of pumpkin plants have been removed, the rose bushes and grape vines pruned. I've completed the small low brick wall in the back to keep the lawn out of the garden beds and the garlic bulbs are doing exceptionally well under the rose bushes. Two additional Avocado plants that we knew nothing about have sprung up near the bare fig. The saplings, apart from the Mulberry and Macadamia are not doing as well as we had hoped. The mango plants have an unseasonable flush of growth and the dwarf peach and nectarine are still, well, dwarf. The guava gave us a few large fruit (much to the delight of Errol and Nurinissa) and we expect the same this year. Some of the jalapenos had bugs in them and the snails have definitely doubled in numbers. We installed a small frog pool in the side garden and incidentally harvested 37.97 kgs of pumpkins this year, which is up from the 15.45 kgs we were lucky to get last year. Your favourite pumpkin recipes are welcome!

We leave for a Globus tour of the UK in three week's time and are looking forward to it. Suzanne, Christine's middle daughter, is still with us at home and assures us that the house and garden will be well looked after. In time to come when (and if) Sue eventually leaves the nest, we will look at house-swapping when we holiday abroad. We know a couple who have done so, twice now, and it has worked very nicely for them.

On the 26 of last month Douglas Van Steensil and his wife Yvonne (Sampson) held a momo night at their home. You have no idea just how generous a couple they are, nor how versatile and what accomplished cooks they both are, too. Douglas has that green thumb of his and his back garden is, for the most part, full of fruit trees. Luckily we got an invite to the momo evening (they have one quite regularly) and also attending were Yvonne's sister Joy Surin, Ivan Smith and his sister Irene, Quirt D'Rozario and his lady, Richard Stokoe, Errol and Nurinissa Webber and their two great sons Jonathan and Nathan. Betty Robinson (Langham), Dudley and Valerie Appleby, and ex-teachers Patrick and Carol Freeze. Errol and Nissa opened a couple of bottles of bubbly and the entire gathering toasted the newly married couple (us). Douglas and Yvonne are having a lunchtime barbecue at their place on Saturday 2 August as their eldest daughter and family are visiting Perth from Canberra.

---

*Christine and John Dempster*

## **Hill School bats to forge UK ties – 04 April 2008 11.04 p.m. – [www.telegraphindia.com](http://www.telegraphindia.com)**

**Rajeev Ravidas**

“Kalimpong, April 4: Dr Graham’s Homes today played hosts to a cricket team from Cockermonth School in Northern England to foster ties between the two institutions.

The boys from Cockermonth played two 15-over matches as part of a tri-series. They beat Dr Graham’s Homes by 25 runs before losing to St Augustine’s School by 33 runs. Graham’s Homes, however, had beaten St Augustine’s by 18 runs a few days ago, which meant all three teams ended with one win each. The 15 English students accompanied by two teachers arrived here from Calcutta last evening after playing two matches against Future Hope School and Calcutta Cricket and Football Club earlier in the week.

“This is an attempt to encourage links (between the two schools),” said Peter French, the Assistant Head Teacher of Cockermonth. “Our kids will gain by interacting with different cultures. Broadening their horizons is an important part of education.” The English students, for starters, seemed focused on broadening their cricketing horizons.

“There is nothing like playing in conditions very different from home. To bat for 15 overs in 35-36 degrees Celsius (in Calcutta) was difficult,” said Hugh Gimber, a 17 year old left-hander, who sounded as if he was still smarting from the losses against the two Calcutta teams. “Had the same teams played in England, the results would have been different,” he added.

Gimber, though, seemed to relish the cooler climes here and scored 48 fluent runs against Graham’s Homes. His drives flowed as smoothly as the poetry of another native of Cockermonth, William Wordsworth.

Unusual for this time of year, the ground was covered with fog for the better part of the first match. It prompted David Foning, the Bursar of Graham’s Homes, to say to French: “Peter, didn’t I tell you not to bring the English weather along with your team!”

Foning said a team from Graham’s Homes could pay a reciprocal visit to England next year. “It could either be our cricket or football team. This is in keeping with the recent efforts to revive educational links between the UK and Kalimpong” he added.

“Such exchanges will do a world of good to our boys,” said Rocky Chhetri, a teacher and the Cricket Coach of St Augustine’s.”

***The above article was sent by Freddie Strong.***

---

## ***KALIMPONG ASSOCIATION WEBSITE***

Dave Edmunds has very kindly set up and is maintaining a website for the Association. Members can download previous issues of the Newsletter, outstanding articles, notices and information on forthcoming events. Please take a look when time permits. The address is [www.kalimong-association.co.uk](http://www.kalimong-association.co.uk)

Thanks Dave for all your hard work.

---

## ***ASSAM COTTAGE APPEAL UPDATE: 25 JULY 2008***

The current donations received so far for the Assam Cottage Appeal fund, which celebrates its Centenary year in 2009, now stands at an impressive £1,111.99. Note: This excludes donations recently sent to Vince (Treasurer).

Many thanks for your continued support – special thanks to Jean (ex-Elliott & Thorburn) for her generous donation received since the last update.

***Malcolm Johnson***

---

## **OBITUARIES**

### **BETTY McKAY (WALKER) – 1917 – 2008**

Beatrice McKenzie Walker was born in Sydney, Australia on 12 September 1917. After a long illness she died in Belmont, NSW on 6 February 2008.

She attended the Sydney Missionary and Bible College, and had originally intended going to China. In April 1940 she met Nan Kelly, who was home on furlough, and her husband Ted. They told her about St Andrew's Colonial Homes, and by September that year she was on a ship to India. The war in Europe had made it difficult for the Homes to get staff, and at that time Japan hadn't entered into the conflict, so Australia became a fertile recruiting ground. Betty spent her 23 Birthday on board ship.

Harold Goldsmith an old Homes boy (brother of Judy Bland) put her and Tina Coutts on the train in Calcutta for Siliguri and Kalimpong. Betty was appointed Assistant Housemother in Mansfield cottage under Ella Horgan. Shortly afterward she joined Dulcie Penny in Lucia King. A lifelong friendship developed and every year from the first publication of "Thomas the Tank Engine" books, Miss Penny sent Betty a copy signed by the Author Rev. Awdry who was Miss Penny's cousin.

Mr Purdie then appointed Betty as Housemother of Calcutta Cottage which was a small boy's cottage. Here she was joined by Connie Freestone newly arrived from Croydon College in Sydney. However, around 1948 Calcutta was made into a normal cottage with big and small boys. Betty transferred to the recently reopened Edinburgh Cottage. A gifted musician and singer, she often sang solos in the Church and at concerts.

Returning from furlough she met Stanley (Scot) McKay, the Chief Engineer on the ship. They married in the Katherine Graham Memorial Chapel in 1952 and returned to live in Australia. They had three sons and adopted three daughters.

### **George Smith**

---

### **MICHAEL SMITH – 1948 - 2008**



Mike was such a dear friend to me. We first met a long time ago in 1955 when we were just seven to eight years old in Scottish Canadian Cottage and it so happened that we were in the same class, 3<sup>rd</sup> Babies as it was known then. Third Babies would be the equivalent of Class 1 in the Kindergarten.

Those were the days when the world was at our feet. We had no worries; the cottage aunties would take care of our comfort and security and if you could call it "worry", the only fear we had was being rejected by our girlfriends or rather the girls we had a crush on. Life was beautiful; the future was ours for the taking.

Life in Kindergarten was enjoyable and what fun Mike, John Doyle and I would have. John was another friend of ours also in the same cottage. I can recall the times when we would sneak into the Teacher's Common room during morning break and help ourselves to a teaspoonful or two of sugar which we would share behind the classroom wall. It was all great fun and it never occurred to us that we were doing wrong but that it was plain mischief.



About 1959, Mike and his eldest brother Wilfred were shifted to Wiston Cottage but Mike and I maintained our friendship all those years until the early sixties when there was an exodus of Anglo Indians from India and Mike's parents also decided to leave for England. We kept in touch by mail for several years but Mike not being a great correspondent, gradually stopped writing and we lost contact.

I learnt about Mike again some ten years later in 1972 when I met Eddie Lamb in Kalimpong during the Home's Birthday celebrations. Eddie and Mike's father Hector happened to be friends and contemporaries in the Homes. It was during my first visit to England in 1975 when Mike and I renewed our friendship. By then Mike had returned to "Civvy Street" after a spell with the Royal Air Force, mostly in Cyprus. I should mention here that his brother Wilfred, who was both his hero and mentor, had died tragically in an accident in the early 1960s while serving in the Royal Air Force. He was only 20 at the time.

We kept in touch ever since and every year or so when I would visit London, we would meet up in his house or in London in some of the quieter pubs and drink beer to our hearts' content and talk about old times, our families and children and of course about other things that men like to talk about!

As I had my three children educated in England, I needed a local guardian and so it was that I turned to Mike to be one of my children's local guardians and he did a tremendous job. Those were happy years when Mike had a beautiful home with wife Janice and the two children Paul and Tammy. Whenever my children returned to India for the holidays which were as often as three times a year, Mike would pack a whole lot of goodies like chocolates, sweets and video cassettes that he had recorded from TV programs, as movies on video cassettes were very limited in those years. The popular TV shows were The A-Team, Knight Rider and Air Wolf, and I still have these in my video library.

Mike was a man who kept his personal problems to himself. He never once mentioned to me that his marriage was in trouble until one summer when I visited him at his house to find that Janice had left the family house. They had separated. I could see that it broke his heart but somehow he kept it to himself. However, whenever we met, he would still call Janice over the phone and later would ask me to speak with her as well. He never thought of remarrying but kept himself busy with his grand children.

The last time Mike and I met was in the summer of 2007. We met several times in the various pubs of London off Oxford Street. My daughter Jeannette, who had become very close to Mike invariably, joined us. She was in our company often and Mike enjoyed teasing her and also having great debates on the current affairs of the country, over several pints of beer and a plate of bangers and mash, (my favourite pub food) we spent time together! My last pub meeting with Mike was in one of those on Paddington Street where we watched beautiful girls pole dancing. Mike always looked on the happier side of life and that's what I admired about him and that's how I would like him to be remembered.

On the night of Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2008, I received a phone call from his son Paul informing me that Mike had had a massive heart attack on Sunday night, at about 9.30 pm, from which he never recovered. Mike was 59 years old and just approaching his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. I could not make it to his funeral on 19<sup>th</sup> March, but by daughter Jeannette was there to represent me. Curiously, she met Mike's elder brother, John, for the first time, but she felt listening to John speaking was so much like listening to Mike!

He will be much missed by his family, children, grandchildren and friends and especially by his mother Beryl with whom he was living.

I too shall miss Mike enormously. There was a very special bond between us. He was more than a brother to me; he was my very special friend.

***Robert Street (A Friend)***

---

## **NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL**

I send greetings from the Homes. It also gives me an opportunity to thank Margaretta and all the Office Bearers who give so much of their time to help raise funds for the Homes and to thank all of you who I know dearly. I love the Homes and would do anything for its future.

Things are somewhat difficult at Kalimpong presently with frequent 'bundhs' and new political shifts underway. In such times, closures are a measure of protest and we must cope. The Board would, however, like to set at rest any speculation and at the recently concluded International Conference made a categorical statement that we are committed to supporting the Homes in whatever way possible so that the Homes continues to grow in Kalimpong.

The Board does not envisage challenges that cannot be effectively met. Kalimpong has a very special meaning for all of us, in that Dr Graham founded the Homes on the hillside and it is here that the Homes have grown and served generations of children and the communities for over a century. It is unthinkable that the Homes can be delinked in any manner from Kalimpong. Whatever may be the nature of future political developments in the region, the Board is confident that the Government will ensure that there is law and order and protection to the lives of all. In recent years, several larger states in India have been divided into smaller states to meet local aspirations. Life in these states is normal and people and institutions are encouraged to go about their lives and work normally. Whatever may be the future developments in the region we are confident that normal life will not be adversely affected. Our stand is apolitical. Our purpose is to serve the interests of the children and other stakeholders and we will go about this task with commitment and dedication and always strive to promote the values that Dr Graham stood for.

Many broad issues were discussed at the International Conference and for the first time many local OGB Associations were invited to participate. The Board has also appointed a strong Local Advisory Committee to assist in the task of management of the Homes.

I am also pleased to advise that there are now over 400 supported children studying at the Homes and all are doing decently well. All 23 of our supported children sent up this year passed the Class XII Board Examinations which qualify them for college. Presently 41 children are in Colleges and are supported by the Homes. Hopefully, this year also a number of them will be admitted into college. Jobs in India are now quite freely available with the economy being so vibrant and offering so many opportunities to young people who speak English. This is therefore, a great time for our children and those prepared to work hard are doing extremely well.

At the Conference many suggestions were received by the Board of Management and these have been duly recorded and action on points have been taken up. This will also be my final year as President and Chairman of the Board of Management. It has indeed been a privilege to serve the Homes as its first Anglo Indian President for almost 15 years. I have often been asked if I am an OGB to which I have replied "I wish I were!" I, however, believe in the philosophy of Dr Graham most passionately and have used my contacts and talent to ensure that the Homes remains on a platform which not only helps develop all round decent human beings but strives to give children the confidence to achieve the very best in life. I have said it is a great time for people graduating and great opportunities lie ahead for those who are willing to work hard and honestly. I have also developed with great pride and with much passion for the Homes a heritage museum to which continued inputs from OGBs is a must. Old photographs, letters and your personal reminiscences and any keepsake (an old doll, a uniform) you might like to share or gift at some point in time.

Finally, we have said that with your Birthday Wish for the Homes you might like to demonstrate your gesture with a small donation on the Homes Birthday to say 'Thank You Homes' – I remember'. Any amount given to the Association to be sent to us will be most welcome and gratefully accepted. There is always a huge shortfall in contributions for our supported children and any amount will help towards this end.

I have had the privilege of meeting so many of you, shared your hospitality and your concerns for the Homes over the years. I want you to know that I have greatly valued your support and know that you will never forget our beloved Homes.

God Bless you always.

**Michael Robertson [Chairman. Board of Management]**

---

The following message was received from Mr A Sampayo, Principal of Dr Graham's Homes on 23 June 2008 after we had held our AGM on 21 June. [MP – President]

I sincerely apologise for not sending the information that you had asked for much earlier than this. I trust the information will give you a brief account of the happenings in the Homes. My sincere wishes to everyone.

<b>13 January 2008</b>	The ICSE and ISC sponsored students return to the Homes for special coaching classes to prepare them for their examinations.
<b>14 February 2008</b>	The first Kolkata Party arrived. The Teaching Staff Meeting was held the same day.
<b>15 February 2008</b>	The second Kolkata Party arrived.
<b>17 February 2008</b>	The Inaugural Service was held.
<b>18 February 2008</b>	The new academic session commenced.
<b>29 February 2008</b>	The ICSE & ISC Theory examinations commenced. This year 167 students sat for the ISC (XII) Examination and 131 students sat for the ICSE (X) Examination. The results of the said examinations were very good. 166 students passed in the ISC (XII) Examination and 128 students passed in the ICSE (X) Examinations.
<b>28 March 2008</b>	Dr Graham's Homes hosted the Senior Girl's Basketball Tournament and came second.
<b>5 April 2008</b>	The Deolo Cup Cross Country Race was held. It was interesting to note that we have some excellent sportsmen in the Junior School section.
<b>9 May 2008</b>	The Prize Day for the academic year 2007 – 2008 was held. The Prize Winners were excited to receive their gifts. Many Board Members, distinguished guests and parents of the prize winners were present, after which they all gathered in the Kindergarten Section for a cup of tea.
<b>10 May 2008</b>	The Annual May Fair. This is one event that is eagerly awaited by students and teachers alike. Many food and game stalls were erected. Mr P R Pradhan, former Principal of SUMI, who is a well known figure in Kalimpong was the Chief Guest. This year Meenakshi Pradhan of Class XII (B) (Mansfield Cottage) was crowned May Queen.
<b>11 May 2008</b>	The Annual Flower Service was held in the Chapel followed by a short service in the Garden of Remembrance.
<b>21 May 2008</b>	The Half-yearly Examinations commenced for all students.
<b>31 May 2008</b>	School closed for the Summer vacation. During the Summer break, those children who stayed behind were delighted when arrangements were made for cooking of all meals in the cottages for five days from the 2 – 6 June inclusive.
<b>16 June 2008</b>	We were supposed to resume classes on the 11 June but due to the present political unrest being experienced in the District of Darjeeling this was delayed until the 16 June.

With kind regards.

**Mr A Sampayo**  
**Principal**

## **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

### **Yvonne Cordell (nee Drummond-Hay)**

Garry Cordell, Yvonne's son writes "I was wondering if you can help me. My Mum (Yvonne Cordell, Maiden name Drummond-Hay) attended Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong, India from 1940 – 1947 and she would love to get in touch with some of her old friends. If you can help in any way or point me in the right direction, I would be very grateful. Some of the ladies my Mum would like to get in touch with are Cynthia Verana, Florence Hatton and Judy Moran. Please help in any way".

Regards

**Garry Cordell**

Email: [garry.cordell@btinternet.com](mailto:garry.cordell@btinternet.com)

---

### **George Ipe**

George Ipe lives in Singapore and has said that he would love to hear from any OGBs who remember him.

Email: [george.ipe@reuters.com](mailto:george.ipe@reuters.com)

---

### **Marjorie Jacinta Smith**

George Smith would like to trace the whereabouts of his sister Marjorie Jacinta Smith. Their father's name was Thomas Edward Harper-Smith and he worked in Powai Tea Estate for most of his working life and then at Teok. His grandfather was in Bhataikal. Powai is somewhere near Digboi but has no idea where the other tea estates are located.

Marjorie Smith was not in DGH but did nursing and lived in Shillong or Tezpur in late 1956. She is most probably married so of course her name would have changed but hopefully someone will be able to give him some information about her.

If anyone is able to offer any assistance George Smith's contact details are given below:

Email: [gsmith39@bigpond.net.au](mailto:gsmith39@bigpond.net.au)

31 McEwan Road  
Park Orchards  
Victoria  
Australia 3114. Tel. No: (61) 3 9876 1042

---

### **Krishnan Nair Sushil**

I am proud to state that I was a student of Dr Graham's School and completed my education in 1962. I was a Heathland boy and remember that during the Chinese attack in September – October we were evacuated to Assam. I believe I was in Class V at the time. Mr Macmillan (Australian) was the Class Teacher. I would love to hear from any of my school mates who remember me.

My address is:  
3B Maulana Azad Road  
New Delhi 11001  
India

---

## **Food for thought**

The best Vitamin for making friends is ...B1.

\*\*\*\*\*

The heaviest thing we can carry is a grudge.

\*\*\*\*\*

If we lack the courage to start, we have already finished.

\*\*\*\*\*

One thing we can't recycle is wasted time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Pain and suffering is inevitable but misery is optional.

\*\*\*\*\*

Yesterday is history, Tomorrow is a mystery, Today is a gift – that's why it is called 'the Present.

\*\*\*\*\*

A good exercise for the heart is to bend down and help another up.

---

## **Cooking Tips**

***Longer Lasting Fresh Herbs*** – Wash them and shake off the excess water and then place in a plastic bag in the salad section of the fridge.

***Broccoli Cooking Tip*** – Make an X incision in the stems of broccoli from the end towards the top before you cook it. It will then cook as fast as the top.

***Save Leftover Wine*** – Don't throw out all that leftover wine. Freeze into ice cubes for future use in casseroles and sauces.

\* \* \* \* \*