

We can be proud of what we have achieved

“The project is in a good place,” write Phil and Doreen Watson in the report on their visit to KYAG in November, “and there is some exciting and excellent work providing a range of opportunities for young people – and the not so young. There are some really excellent teachers in all parts of the educational provision. Children, students and adults are highly motivated...and there is clear evidence of progress. We can be proud of what is being achieved and our money is on the whole well spent. That said there are issues which have been highlighted in this report.”

This newsletter presents some of these issues in extracts from their report on what seems to have been an exciting and enjoyable visit.



Children from one of the Schools under the Sky enjoy meeting Doreen

Financial Shortfall

The worsening exchange rate means that despite our continuing to send £48,000 a year, plus an additional £2,000 this year, KYAG will receive something like £14,000 less in taka over the three year period of the current agreement. “Our visit,” write Doreen and Philip, “revealed several areas where savings could be made with minimal impact on overall provision.” They recommended ceasing or significantly reducing medical provision and reducing the number of teachers (preferably by natural wastage) by at least four during the current year. They also suggested that some of the smaller Schools under the Sky should be amalgamated.

KYAG is understandably reluctant to reduce the provision of medicines but they recognise that the educational work – Schools under the Sky, sewing workshop, coaching classes and adult literacy - is, and must remain, the top priority for the resources they have available.

Chairman
Treasurer
Newsletter Editor

Kathleen Jackson
Geoffrey Pool, 7 Stonegate, Leicester LE2 2BL
Ken Prideaux-Brune, 13 Hollybush Lane, Amersham,
Bucks. HP6 6EB. Tel: 01494 433871. Email: pbrune@olcs.net
Kabir Ahmed, KYAG, PO Box 118, 3100 Sylhet, Bangladesh
The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, Sir Kevin Barron MP
www.khasdobir.org.uk

President KYAG
Patrons:
Web Site

Supporting



Could you cycle to Paris for KYAG next September?



Eight people have already expressed interest in this fundraising venture but ideally we need to double that number.

The trip will be organised by More Adventure and will be led by an experienced leader. Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation will be arranged. On the first three days the ride will be around 75 miles with a slightly shorter final leg to Paris.

Departure will be from Blackheath Common early on the first morning and that day's ride will end in Calais. On the second day you will ride to

Amiens and the third night will be spent in Compiègne. The ride will end under the Eiffel Tower in Paris. After a morning spent sightseeing in Paris you return to London by Eurostar.

Accommodation will be in hotels and luggage will be transported between them for you. And your main luggage and bicycle will be returned to London while you travel by Eurostar.

If you would be interested in taking part in this exciting expedition please email Maureen Haddock on: stemo@haddocks.fslife.co.uk.

Co-ordinator

Interviews for the post of Co-ordinator were held in November and Doreen and Mike Sherriff (who had joined Doreen and Phil) represented the Friends on the interviewing panel. Five candidates were interviewed but the panel decided that none met the requirements for the post and so no appointment was made.

The panel recommended that Afzal, who has been Acting Co-ordinator for the past several months, be appointed Monitoring Officer. He will monitor all aspects of the project and report to the President and the Committee. He will also continue to write reports as required and will represent KYAG in meetings with outside agencies. He will continue on the salary he has been receiving.

After talking to Zahin, the Director of Friends in Village Development, it became clear that the leadership skills needed to run the project would require a salary of at least T25,000 a month.

Last September's London Walk

Margaret Dartnall, who regularly attends fundraising meals in Loughborough, reports on the walk through the City of London last September.

We were a bit late arriving but the walk is quite a relaxed affair. Other walkers were still arriving and collecting their maps and quiz papers so it didn't matter.

As we set off the rain turned to drizzle and eventually petered out though it never became warm. The beauty of the route we followed was that it largely went along lanes and alleyways. Hardly anyone lives in this part of London so there was no

traffic in them. Off the main thoroughfares it really was uncannily quiet.

We eventually made our way back to All Hallows Church where very welcome tea and biscuits awaited us. We had a leisurely look round the church before we started for home.

Besides having a memorable day out we had raised about £360 for the Khasdobir project.

This year's Walk brought in £1,950.09, (£856 raised by John Burgess) compared to £1,596.07 the previous year. The 2016 Walk will be on Saturday September 3. Details next time.

Manik

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Manik in November. Manik had been in charge of the Sewing Workshop since its inception and over the years many hundreds of women owe their ability to stand on their own feet and earn their own living to him. He will be much missed and we send our sympathy to everyone in KYAG and the surrounding area.

Excellent practice in many Schools under the Sky

“It was a privilege”, say Doreen and Philip. “to watch skilled individuals, using all the resources at their disposal, including themselves, to motivate and stimulate the children... We observed five or six really excellent teachers – their expertise needs to be more widely shared.”

They add that numbers are falling in some schools and attendance is erratic. “In some cases those present

were less than 50% of the number on the register. Some schools do not warrant two teachers”. They add that “Akhtar would be of far greater use as a ‘lead teacher’, teaching in the schools and helping the teachers to improve”.

Children no longer have to pass a test to get in to primary school, simply to have attended pre-school and so more pre-schools are opening in the area.

Enthusiasm in the Coaching Classes

“There was small group work,” say Doreen and Philip, “often led by ex-students, covering English, accounts, chemistry and maths. Kabir and other teachers led larger group work...Numbers varied from day to day but the enthusiasm and dedication of the students was wonderful to observe.

We met many ex-students, some running their own little businesses or working for local businesses, others progressing through university, another working for the local media. All spoke of their huge indebtedness to KYAG and its on-going support.”

I hope you enjoy this newsletter but should you no longer wish to receive it please let me know.

Ken Prideaux-Brune
pbrune@olcs.net
01494 433871

Good creative work

“We witnessed some really good, creative work [in the sewing workshop]. Doreen provided new templates for making items such as bags, mobile phone covers and patchwork mats. The girls and teachers loved it and responded with enthusiasm. The hope is that some of the items may be saleable. There are now 14 sewing machines which are very well used One ex student uses the machines to make garments to sell and hopes to set up her own business soon.”

Adult literacy

The teaching in the adult literacy classes was rated ‘good’ or ‘very good’. “The adults were certainly engaged ... Particularly noteworthy was the way younger children helped their mums with reading and writing. Good community learning.” But Doreen and Philip say that the numbers attending were very small and they ask: “Is this value for money?”

A Happy Picnic

Kabir, President of KYAG, describes one of the highlights of the visit.

We hired two buses for the journey – one for KYAG and the other for Green Disabled Foundation (GDF) participants. We reached my home village of Kajadhana with a large group of 83 members including drivers and helpers.

Everyone divided into their own groups. They played cricket, walked through the rubber plantation, tea garden, hills and hillocks wherever they liked. The rice paddy was ripe and the open fields looked excellent with ripe corn at the top of the plants. Nature extended its beauty with charm. The sky was clear. Sun was mild. The air blew gently and it was a lovely atmosphere. On our way in the bus when it ran through hills and forests, fields and villages, shops and markets there was gentle music, songs, dances and oranges, apples and bananas as morning breakfast. Phil, Doreen, Mike (Sherriff) and Rumu (*one of KYAG’s committee members*) were with us in the bus. Food items for lunch were cooked by a group of cooks. The items were boiled rice, eggs, vegetables, dal, fried chicken and misti dhoi.

The spot was very favourable because it was safe to get fresh air. Lunch began from 1.30 pm in groups in an open space behind a building under construction, under the shade of bamboo bushes.

After lunch the children from GDF – (*mainly with little or no vision*) presented different types of songs with musical instruments. Phil and Doreen, Mike and others presented dances. It was a most charming and lovely atmosphere. It was very much enjoyable. The local people also enjoyed it very much. I lost myself in the enjoyment.

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Please complete either Section A or B and if you are a UK taxpayer and have not already done so please sign the Gift Aid form in Section C, making each pound you contribute worth an additional 25p. Then send this page to:

Geoffrey Pool, 7 St John's Road, Stoneygate, Leicester LE2 2BL

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Friends of Khasdobir. At Barclays Bank, Town Hall Square, Leicester, Branch. Sort Code: 20 49 17. Account no: 20587192

The sum of £..... on20.....

And thereafter the same amount on the same day each month until further notice.

.....(Signature)

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.....(Account No.)

C – Gift Aid

I am a UK taxpayer and would like Friends of Khasdobir to reclaim the tax I have paid on any donations I make to them.

Signed

Date

Notes:

This declaration is in force from the above date until it is cancelled. It need only be made once.

You must pay in tax (income tax and capital gains tax added together), at least the total of all donations that you make to charities each year. The donation that you make to the Friends of Khasdobir, Bangladesh is included in this total.

If your financial circumstances change, and you cease to pay income tax or capital gains tax at a level at least equal to the sum that you donate to all charities each year, then please let Friends of Khasdobir know by writing to the Treasurer.