

# NEEM TREE TRUST

## NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2010



Thank you very much for the support you have given us in raising funds for the Boys' Home in Tirunelveli and St Luke's Leprosy Hospital, Peikulam. From April 2009-March 2010 the following groups invited us to speak to their members about the work of The Neem Tree Trust and as a result of the generous donations from these groups and sales on the day we raised £5,697.

Bradford on Avon Rotary  
Nunney WI  
Sixpenny Handley, Mothers' Union  
Westbury Woollies  
Wiltshire Ladies' Club, Devizes  
Colerne WI  
Luncheon Club, Bath  
Trowbridge WI  
Court Ladies Group, Yate  
St Laurence School, Bradford on Avon  
Bathavon Rotary  
Bromham Wives Group  
Pullen Court Day Centre, Shepton Mallet  
Worton & Marston Ladies  
Bennett Gardens Day Centre, Frome  
Westbury TWG  
Redfield Road Wives  
Arthritis Care, Wells  
Central United Reform Church, Bath  
Bradford on Avon WI  
Swainswick Ladies Group  
St Lawrence Day Centre, Wells  
Bishops' Cannings WI  
Tannery Day Centre, Street  
Beckington Day Centre

Winterwell WI  
Bath Wives Fellowship  
St Cuthbert Ladies' Group, Wells  
Chard Day Centre  
Hiway Club, Devizes  
Thursday Club, Batheaston  
Wesley Guild Box Methodist Group  
West Lavington Mothers' Union  
National Women's Register, Calne  
Arthritis Care, Devizes  
Men's Club United Church, Bradford on Avon  
Trefoil Guild, Chippenham  
Kingswood Salvation Army  
West Wilts Scout Fellowship  
Woldingham School, Surrey  
Abbeyfield, Bradford on Avon  
Salvation Army, Bath  
St Andrew's Mothers' Union, Melksham  
Cedar Court, Bradford on Avon  
Corsham Primary School  
Wiltshire Weaving Guild  
Ivy Lane Primary School, Chippenham  
Westwood WI  
Queens Road Ladies Group, Keynsham  
Grove School, Trowbridge

During the year we were at the following events selling Neem Tree Trust goods, which generated £1970 plus £1071 from other miscellaneous sales.

Breathe Festival Bradford on Avon  
Muscliff Park Family Fun Day, Bournemouth  
Westwood Flower Show  
St Laurence Street Party  
Mike & Alison's Coffee Morning

Winsley Village Project Fayre  
Longwell Green Concert  
Corsham School Christmas Fayre  
Twinning Bring & Buy Sale Bradford on Avon  
Winsley School Christmas Fayre

Donations from individuals and organisations for both the Boys' Home and St Luke's, including regular standing orders, amounted to £28,306.

We claimed Gift Aid of £3,474 from the Inland Revenue on donations from UK taxpayers.

You may remember from reading my previous newsletters that Arumugam is a boy who was affected by polio as a child and grew up at the Boys' Home. With the help of the Neem Tree Trust he now has his own tailoring business, "Alex Tailoring", and when I visited him last January he proudly welcomed me to his new shop. He is a fine tailor, is building up a good customer base and has recently been commissioned to make sets of clothes for all the girls at St Luke's Leprosy Hospital, Peikulam.



Arumugam giving his friend Maharaja a lift on his motorbike

With the help of his friend Kannan he makes many of the items we sell at our NTT stalls, and is also training up new boys. With money he has earned he has bought himself a specially adapted motorbike with stabilisers which he uses to transport himself and friends about.

Each month at the Boys' Home the children have a birthday celebration. Donations from supporters of the Neem Tree Trust are used to pay for a cake, and whoever has had a birthday during that month will have their photograph taken and the cake will be distributed amongst the boys. The boys are also served with a special meal in the evening.

This is a picture of the beautiful cake we had made in January at the local bakers when I was visiting the children. It is decorated with a bird of peace similar to the design on our Neem Tree Trust wrapping paper.



I have always been impressed by the sight of the boys at the home washing their own clothes, which they do cheerfully and without complaint. Although some of the smaller boys and those with special needs do have some help from the workers at the home, most of the boys diligently scrub away until their shirts sparkle in the sunshine.



## ST LUKE'S LEPROSY HOSPITAL, PEIKULAM

St Luke's Hospital has a new Chief Medical Superintendent, Dr Haebus S. Vethabothagam, who is the grandson of the founder of the hospital. Dr Haebus is in the process of putting into place arrangements for the transfer of monies from The Neem Tree Trust, which has been specifically donated for the benefit of patients at St Luke's. We are awaiting sight of a Memorandum of Understanding between St Luke's and The Leprosy Mission India but in the meantime we are retaining in a deposit account £13,696 donated by St Luke's supporters in the Financial Year 2009/2010.



The Leprosy Hospital is about 40 minutes drive from the Boys' Home and when I visit St Luke's I pass through many beautiful banana groves. I took this picture of some workers loading the fruit onto lorries as well as a picture of the flower of the banana, which looked very impressive hanging from its strong stalk.

Indians have used banana flowers in their cooking for centuries. The large and heavy flower is packed with potassium, magnesium and

iron and is large enough to provide a healthy dish for a number of people.



It's always a pleasure to visit St Luke's and spend time with both the patients and children. This year we continued the tradition of the children from St Luke's visiting the Boys' Home for the day. We call the occasion "Peikulam meets Krishnapuram" (the villages in which St Luke's and the Boys' Home are situated) and all the children thoroughly enjoy this visit. After playing games together and getting to know each other, in the late afternoon the children put on a programme of music and drama.

Last year I wrote about Kannigaa, the courageous young girl at St Luke's Hospital sponsored by The Neem Tree Trust, who was suffering with an incurable skin disease, Epidermolysis Bullosa Simplex. It is with much regret that I have to tell you that Kannigaa sadly died in January whilst I was in India. I was privileged to be asked to attend her funeral service at St Luke's where I met her mother, grandmother and sister. She was so very brave in coping with the constant pain of her condition and always had such a beautiful smile. Her family are very poor and The Neem Tree Trust has undertaken to sponsor Kannigaa's younger sister Kavitha through her education.



I was invited to give a talk to the Westbury Woollies knitting group in April 2009 and very much admired the ladies' skills with their machines. They offered to knit some woolly hats for the boys, which I took out to India in January. Here's a picture of some of the boys wearing their hats. When they rise in the very early morning to get ready for school at around 4 am the temperature can be rather cool!



We also have enthusiastic knitters in Rowde, Salisbury, Bath, Midsomer Norton and Bradford-on-Avon who have made delightful glove puppets for the children. Here are some of the girls at St Luke's Leprosy Hospital, Peikulam showing off their little knitted friends.



Over the years many of you have bought our Neem Tree Trust Go Green bags and I thought it would be fun to create a gallery on our website picturing our bags in interesting places. To start the ball rolling here is a picture of myself with Lakshmanan and some of the other workers outside the staff quarters where I live at the Boys' Home.



This is my dear friend Sylvia with her Neem Tree Trust bag on top of Table Mountain. If any of you are going anywhere interesting in the future (it doesn't have to be abroad) please take your bag with you and e-mail me a picture. If you are unfortunate enough not to have a bag, don't worry I can send one to you for £3 including postage!

During my recent visit we had an excursion to Kanyakumari, the southern most tip of India where three oceans meet - the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. On balmy, full-moon evenings, (locally called Chitra Pournami) it is said one can see the moonrise and sunset at the same time - on either side of the horizon. We weren't lucky enough to witness this phenomenon but enjoyed ourselves just the same.





On 21st November 2009 The United Church at Longwell Green, Bristol organised a concert in aid of The Neem Tree Trust. The Longwell Green Orchestra generously gave of their time playing a selection of music including Light Classics such as Danse Macabre, Polovtsian Dances and Snow Maiden as well as Mission Impossible and the Typewriter! The concert raised over £250, which The Neem Tree Trust put towards the purchase of the new vehicle for the home. Here is the be-garlanded Musical Director Paul Sidney with his tuba.



Mary Singleton has been making delicious jams, marmalades and chutneys for our charity for a good few years now and has generated many hundreds of pounds through her culinary efforts. One of her jams is called Dumpsie Dearie and is an old Gloucester recipe made from apples, plums and pears. We have added Mary's recipe to our tea towel collection and she is pictured here outside her house with the special tea towel dedicated to her.

For the last four years our friends Mike & Alison Wells at 22 Late Broads in Winsley have held a coffee morning in October in aid of the Neem Tree Trust and have, over the years, raised over £2,500, with last year's event reaching a record £857.81! This year is no exception and they have once again kindly offered to host a coffee morning on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October, so if you are local please come along and support us any time between 10am and noon. As well as serving coffee and delicious home made cakes made by our supporters, we will be selling items made and designed by the boys.



The Neem Tree Trust made a donation of £20,000 in December 2009 to the Boys' Home and with this money Dr Karuna Chelliah commissioned the refurbishment of the Main Hall and the toilet facilities at the home and replaced one of the vehicles with a brand new Tempo Traveller. We are raising funds this year to replace a second vehicle which will ensure the children's safe transportation to and from school.

This is the Home's new vehicle looking very splendid before it was used for the first time.

There is a beautiful tradition in India that a vehicle should be garlanded and blessed before its first outing.

We would like to thank the following organisations and schools for their interest and financial support during the year:

Projects Abroad, Goring, Sussex  
Keyline Security, Seend  
Medlock Trust, Bath  
St Kessog's Fellowship  
Woldingham School, Surrey

Feilden Clegg Bradley, Bath  
St Laurence School, Bradford on Avon  
Rotary Club, Bradford on Avon  
Rotary Club, Bathavon  
Grove School, Trowbridge

The boys who live at the home are from very poor families who live below the poverty line and find it very difficult financially to care for their disabled child. When the boys come to the home they are cared for and sent to school but they do not lose contact with their families who are encouraged to visit whenever they can. Here are some of the boys with their families who came to visit them during the Pongal Festival, which falls on the first day of the Tamil month of Thai (January 14 or 15) and is a celebration of harvest time in Tamil Nadu. Houses are cleaned, painted and decorated to give a festive look. Villagers draw beautiful kolams (rice powder designs) on their doorsteps, consume vast quantities of sugar cane, and prepare sweetened rice, milk and jaggery in new earthen pots.



Anithraj



Ponraj



Petchimutu



Vijayapandi



Sudulaiyandi and Velankanni enjoying the sugar cane during the Pongal festivities

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT - YOU HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE TO ALL THESE CHILDREN'S LIVES**