

So trip number 52 begins! and at last everything is in place to start of our farm / though possibly small holding is a more appropriate word!

Very occasionally I am able to accommodate visitors, so have a group visiting to see our work in progress.

Travelling are, Barbara and Janet, Albert and Emily, Sam, Pauline, Paula (trustee) and Charlie, residents of Brundall, Blofield, Gorleston, Norwich and London.

The major event of the visit has been, at last, the opening of our small holding, which has been funded by an International Rotary grant, thanks for this go to Ewell Rotary, especially Derek Povey who is an ex Brundall resident and long term sponsor, and our partners here, Madurai West Rotary club. I won't go in to detail about the amount of paperwork involved, it has taken almost 2 years to reach this point, but at last we have fencing on the land owned ( and registered ) by us, chicken, goat and cow sheds erected, bore well sunk, 750 chickens, fifty goats and two cows on site. In addition we have solar panels on the roof of our shelter home, bedding packs for some of our leprosy patients and children with cancer. The biggest bonus is two new vehicles, their use explained as we go through the report. This grant has been a real boost and will help to move us towards a level of self sufficiency.

So after a lovely day at the beach with 52 of our elders, Muthukumar and I left the visiting group to continue to enjoy the beach and took the night train through to Madurai, to attend a lavish inauguration ceremony. We started at the farm where the symbolic ribbon was cut by the Rotary District Governor, followed by speeches and dinner for the assembled Rotary

brethren. A long but fulfilling day, and now potential for us to look at a new phase of development.

How this will fit in with the existing projects and overall is explained as we look at each one.

### **The Shelter Home**

This really goes from strength to strength. We are now well established, most of the beds occupied, with the benefit of our kitchens to provide not only for our elders and the slum lunch centre, but also to provide meals for the nearby leprosy colony and home. With fifty meals for our staff and residents every day, another fifty for the slum elders, and 300 twice monthly for the leprosy home, we are producing almost one thousand meals monthly. We obviously have excellent cooks!



The elders have monthly doctor examinations and regular checks by visiting nurses. 52 of the elders came to the beach for a day, which also included a boating afternoon. Thoroughly enjoyed by all.

The ladies are all looking so much better, good food, regular medical care and for many of them a bed to sleep on for the first time in their lives has made such a difference. They are a joy to be with.

It is very hot here! Around 38c.

## **The farm**

Much of what we do will of course be enhanced by the farm which will help our budget considerably in the longer term.. We are at the planning stage of how to use the chickens ( meat or laying), the goats will be raised and sold on, the cows producing milk, but we are looking carefully at the economics of this. Fortunately our two staff members Ranjith and Karti ( with us as young boys and educated by us) have Masters degrees in rural development- so will know the best way forward. What we do have now also is a facility for training some of our older children. It will take a few months to rationalise the best way forward, but they will find it! Muthukumar has started a hydroponic unit to produce grass for the goats and cows, this is working well and will have a bearing on where we go from here. Also on site we have mango trees, though these are a bit old, and coconut trees, these are young, but there will be some income from them or they will supplement the diets of our elders and children. So early days, and there are issues to resolve, but we have the staff to find the best way forward. The days that Muthukumar and I previously spent visiting rural farms to gain ideas and experience have proved to be worthwhile, but of course we still have much to learn.

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## **New Vehicles**

After six years of running our general purpose cum ambulance vehicle and auto rickshaw are beginning to cost a lot in maintenance. The two new vehicles will be such an asset. One of them will be used exclusively for the children we care for who have cancer, enabling hospital and staff welfare visits. The other will be used for street clinic work ( particularly as we start our

clinics for cataract patients): but will also enable us to take people with leprosy from the colony and nearby home to and from hospital. It will also continue to do the daily lunch runs between our Shelter home and the slum.

## **Bedding packs and solar panels**

There was just enough money left from the grant to put solar panels on the roof of the shelter home, money saving of course. The final purchase was bedding packs (mattresses and sheets) for some of the children with cancer and leprosy colony .

The grant totalled almost £27,000, it has moved us forward in the work, now we must realise the benefits of these assets.

## **The Projects**

I have already mentioned the **Shelter Home**, this really is the hub of our work. Our resident elders have improved so much, but we still have active tuberculosis, elephantiasis and other conditions relating to years of street living. However, the atmosphere is wonderful, it is a joy to be with these wonderful souls. The benefit is also available for those who remain in the slum, and we had a lovely lunch with both groups combined. Being so close to the **Leprosy Colony** is really advantageous, and we will be starting now to provide a monthly meal for the 42 families we already sponsor.

The work with the colony is bearing fruit. The improvement in general health is really noticeable, due of course to the monthly supplies we provide, particularly the multi vitamins and antiseptics for wound cleaning. Most of all though is the sense of happiness that comes from knowing that you are valued and loved. Every time I go there I come away with an almost

indescribable feeling of peace and thankfulness that I have had the opportunity to meet such special people.

### **Rural food bags**



The excessive heat stopped my planned visit to the rural villages earlier this year, but this time it was essential to get to them. That lives have been saved there by the monthly food distribution is without doubt. The conditions in the

villages that are severely affected by drought are serious, they are so isolated that even reaching them, or leaving them is a marathon effort.

It was awful to see some women trying to extract water from a hole in the ground. The elders asked if we could consider a bore well for them, but it is unlikely that there will be enough water. We will arrange a survey, but do not have much hope. There is a government water tower, but this has limited water, certainly not enough to provide for their needs. There are so many villages like this.....a lot of suffering.

### **Children with Cancer**

There was no time on this trip to get to some of the children. However, the scheme is running well and we are supporting 50 children now. Each child / family receives £8 monthly to cover medication costs, and further help with the expenses of getting

to and from hospital. The new vehicle will expand the area we can cover now, which is over 200 square miles and we continue to work closely with the Regional Cancer Centre. Paula and I met on two occasions with representatives from the hospital, and my March visit will concentrate on meeting as many of the children and families as possible and looking at ways to make what we can offer most effective.



Paula, Charlie and I also spent a morning with one of the two palliative Care ambulances we run, visiting an elderly terminally ill lady in an isolated village living in a very poor hut, but this is being improved by local support. The palliative Care ambulances we have sponsored for the past 17 years have now visited over half a million patients.....

### **The Children's Centre**

70+ children joined us for a day at the beach shortly before the end of the trip, we all had a great time. On our final day in Madurai they put on a programme of dance and skating for us. The centre goes from strength to strength, aided it must be said by an improvement in school facilities by the government. For several years they have provided uniforms and books, plus a basic lunch. This has been improved in the last year and it is compulsory now for all children to go to school.

However, our children live in a slum with no water, electricity or sanitation, most will live in a crowded shack, so it is important that we continue our programme. Most of our children go on to either higher education or at least vocational training, and we have excellent tuition teachers helping on a daily basis. We use

a generator in the evenings so that homework can be completed, and provide supplementary food morning and evening as many of our children will have the school lunch as their only meal. We provide a full lunch at weekends.

### **Volunteers**

We are able to do as much work as we do is thanks to our growing numbers of volunteers. Many of them are young people who were children on our projects, they give willingly of their time and boundless energy - without their help we could not contemplate taking our project elders and children away, and the centres run with their support and enthusiasm.

### **Tailoring Unit**

Has been running for almost 2 years now and has received a lot of support from Norfolk Guiding as we started with funds in memory of Jill Day, a leading light in the organisation. 16 ladies from the slum train in 2 shifts every day, over 6 month period, this has worked really well and most of the ladies can find work on completion of their training period. We use treadle machines as there is no electricity.

### **Leprosy colony and home**

We have been supporting our colony for over 3 years now, and the nearby government home for the past year. The work in the government home is food provision, currently twice a month, a full meal for 300 people. We also provide a monthly supply of sugar. Some of the inmates from the home need assistance to get to hospital - they cannot use public transport, so we have been helping with this too, around 16 trips every month. In our colony the number of families being helped is 42. This has had a tremendous impact on health and well-being. Most of

the residents have multi deformities, mainly affecting their hands, and so ability to work. We provide monthly supplies of 10kg of rice, vegetables, multi vitamins, biscuits and essential antiseptics and wound cleaning materials for each family. There is also a need to provide transport to and from hospital. To say we have made a difference is an understatement. It is an absolute joy to see the real change in the colony, general health has improved considerably- but perhaps most noticeable is the atmosphere in the colony. They know that they are valued, what a joy to hug them and show that. Visiting is the highlight of any trip to India. We have decided now to also have a monthly "feast" with food from our own kitchen. They are delighted to know this, and it will create a community event as they share. It is a privilege to serve them.

### **Finally**

It was a good trip and the farm and vehicles particularly have enabled us to consolidate and move forward. Self sustainability has to be our long term aim, these bonus extras will help us move in that direction.

The visitors will reiterate what I always say, thank you to our wonderful, loyal sponsors and supporters. Several hundred lives have been changed, fear has been taken out of many others, and it is your support that has enabled it.. there is a lovely new hymn that sums it all up : some lines .....

" go to the hungry to those who have nothing"

"Go where the farmlands are empty and bare"

" go where my sheep are rejected and lost"

I dined with sinners and reached out to lepers,

Go and do likewise and not count the cost"

Thank you for enabling us to do so. Every blessing  
Pat.



Football for boys and girls Rural food bag distributed



Farm opening

The Vidiyal Trust is a hands on he trustees promise to use donated funds in their entirety on the projects. Our very limited overheads come from a very small proportion of gift aid.

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New website: [www.vidiyaltrust.com](http://www.vidiyaltrust.com).

## THE VIDIYAL TRUST

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Pats visit no.52



We have our own shelter home for the elderly  
Have a daily slum lunch club for the elderly  
Support a leprosy colony and home  
Support a poor Dahlit village  
Have a tailoring Unit  
Support over 100 slum children.

