



Newsletter of the Epiphany Trust

Issue No.13

November 2006



The Arc's celebrates its 1st birthday. Read Sharon Noon's report on her year in the house. **Page 8**



'Child Action Sri Lanka' begins work with the street kids of Kandy. **Page 14**

School Doubles in Size



If you don't believe that small things can have an effect, you've never been in bed with a mosquito!

As year by year we pack for holidays in ever more distant places, Malaria tablets and insect repellent are as essential as sun cream. But for the children of the two new schools that we fund in Burma, tablets and repellent are scarce, and malaria is a constant threat. Widespread resistance to conventional malarial drugs has also contributed to increasing mortality in children. Mosquito nets are a luxury that few can afford, least of all the poor, and certainly not its Karen children. Many in the border areas with Thailand contract the disease – reportedly as often as twice a year, some never recover.

The Epiphany Trust now supports a total of 6 refugee schools in the region, two of which stand on the Burmese bank of the Salween River. These two schools were founded in 2001 and provide education for around 300 children. Like all the schools on the Burmese side of the border they are

Continued on page 6

Romania - D.R.C. - Sri Lanka - Burma - Pakistan - India - U.K.

Director's Report



2007 is the bi-centenary of the passing in our parliament of the Abolition of Slavery Act. Events to remember the sterling work of Wilberforce, Roscoe, and other 19th century abolitionists are planned in London, Liverpool, Bristol and other cities throughout the UK. Epiphany Trust patron David Alton will host a reception in the House of Lords in May where not only will the events of 200 years ago be remembered, but

so too will the plight of thousands throughout the world who still suffer as slaves: Children as young as four years old, who are forced to work in factories, kilns and fields. Young girls and boys who are trafficked as sex slaves. And boys who are given automatic weapons and forced to fight in wars. The list goes on. Lord Alton's reception will seek to honour those contemporary abolitionists who work tirelessly to stop this "modern day" slavery.

Debbi Edirisinghe is a young woman working at the heart of contemporary slavery. Debbi runs our 'Child Action' programme in Kandy, Sri Lanka. As detailed later in this issue of *Epiphany News*, she looks after more than forty youngsters living in abject poverty, constantly harassed by drug barons, sex slave bosses and those recruiting children for the LTTE (Tamil Tigers).

Also in Sri Lanka, Yasa Siriwardena of IVFA Galle has now helped re-start over two hundred family businesses, destroyed by the tsunami. The funds to start this micro-credit programme came from your most generous response to our appeal.

Elsewhere, our support of schools on the Thai/Burma border, a project largely inherited from James Mawdesley's charity – The



Metta Trust for Children's Education, has expanded to a further two schools; meaning that nearly 700 children are now educated as a result of our funding. The Arc, our ground-breaking project in Romania has completed its first year very successfully. The progress of the four young adults from Lugoj orphanage, as they make the transition from institutional to independent living, has been nothing short of remarkable.

Since our last newsletter the Trust has a new trustee and three new patrons. David Kay who recently retired from the Lloyds/TSB Foundation for England and Wales has agreed to join our board of trustees. David who brings a wealth of experience and expertise will join trustees Robert Song, Barbara Mace and Ken Hargreaves who do a superb job as the Trust grows year on year. Tim Kearns, who runs a successful Fair Trade Company – *V&P Juices*, Charlie Colchester - International Director of *Care*, and former England cricket captain Graham Gooch have all become patrons.

Once again thanks to everyone for your kind and generous support. The past 6 months has seen a further increase in our commitments around the world, and our ambition to do even more. I believe that our philosophy of empowering trusted individuals in the respective areas who can use their local knowledge and understanding to great benefit is the key to our continued success.

Bill Hampson

Cricket Legend Joins the Team



Graham Gooch needs little introduction, captain of England in 34 tests, scorer of 8900 runs (including 333 against India at Lords) and now a commentator with BBC Test Match Special. He is much respected wherever he goes and especially on the Indian sub-continent which he visits often. As patron he will be a valuable help to Epiphany.

‘Rejoice’ for Romania



You may remember reading in our Epiphany News March Issue that the *Rejoice Gospel Choir* travelled over to the Northwest of England last February and performed two concerts to raise money for the Trust. Well now they are on their way to Romania to perform a further couple of concerts in the cities of Oradea and Timisoara.

The choir, from Ballina in the West of Ireland, are funding a visit to sing at 2 venues which are expected to sell out both 500-seat halls. They will also be making the most of their talent, and time in Romania to perform at our English Pavilion within the Lugoj orphanage grounds and also at a community village in Oradea – which houses dozens of foster children.

The link with *Rejoice* was first forged on the Irish leg of our 2005 European tour when they backed patron Jessy Dixon. The choir have since fully embraced our efforts and are following in Jessy’s footsteps by travelling over to Romania to bring the Gospel to the children of Lugoj, Oradea, and the wider population.

Leader of the choir Lavinia Gilmartin commented: “We are all looking forward to the trip and feel privileged to be able to take our brand of the Gospel over to Romania. It will also be wonderful to see first hand how our support of the Epiphany Trust is being put into action.”

Go Digital!

You can now sign up to be part of our electronic newsletter as well, or instead of, the current paper copy of the *Epiphany News*. The digital version will be in PDF format and can be delivered direct to your ‘inbox’ instead of your doorstep.

If you want to sign up to our e-newsletter then please email gill@epiphany.org.uk, write ‘e-letter’ in the subject row, and we’ll do the rest.

The PDF format will also be made available online via our website (www.epiphany.org.uk).

Fire Engines Sail to Sri Lanka

Last month as part of our partnership with the City of Liverpool charity *Hands across the Sea* we donated two “Green Goddess” fire engines. The ex-military machines have been shipped to Sri Lanka this month and will be given to the town of Berewula near Galle to replace those fire engines lost in the tsunami.



Bill Hampson with Cllr Mace in Liverpool

Inaugural Epiphany Lecture sets the standard

The Epiphany Trust’s dedication to bring about a fairer world is practiced not only through aid and development initiatives, but also by supporting Christian political education. With this aim in mind, the Trust joined forces with Stonyhurst College in Lancashire to organise the first ‘Epiphany Lecture’.

The beautifully set Catholic college, dating back to 1593, played host to Mary Jo Bane – a leading academic, and Harvard professor of social policy, welfare and public management in the US. Considered one of the worlds leading experts in the field of Christian faith and social action, Professor Bane eloquently delivered a lecture focussed on the importance of religious freedom and bringing faith into politics.

The audience of 100 were inspired and challenged throughout the day by her discussions on a wide range of current moral dilemmas such as abortion, stem cell research and euthanasia.



Continued from Page 1

constantly under threat from the SPDC, (State Peace and Development Council – Burma’s merciless ruling military junta) yet faithfully continue working to ensure that the next generation can have a greater understanding of their history, their rights and future prospects. The recruitment of 15 more teachers for this new academic year means that the school roll for the 7-16 year olds will increase from 97 to over 200 students.

Whilst the teachers are hugely dedicated, they understandably lack training. Many have only had the most basic of schooling themselves, and the fact that schools can only afford to pay its teachers 5000 Baht (£70) per YEAR is in itself a big

obstacle to the recruitment of qualified staff. One positive new initiative for the schools is that the Karen Teachers Working Group has recently opened a teacher training college in the area. The College now looks to us for funding in order to fully implement its work.

Many of the students live too far away to go home at night, and live in the school dormitories where they have to provide their own food. In





the monsoon season last year, one of the dormitories was washed away, after the river rose far higher than normal. Thankfully the students had been moved to higher ground and no one was hurt. The dormitory has since been reconstructed in a different part of the village. The expansion of the school will take in students from nearby villages who previously haven't had a school to attend. Most will be boarders and new facilities have been built for them.

Health is a major issue at the school and throughout the region. Food is of insufficient quantity and quality which is without doubt affecting the children's physical and mental development. The school education committee recently calculated that it would cost 5B (7p) per student per day to provide a good, nutritious lunch, which would serve as the children's main meal of the day. Water is also an issue in the

village. It is currently taken from the river and needs to be boiled before being drunk. A new system to pipe water from a stream, even though that involves boiling the water, is expected to provide a much healthier option.

The Karen Education Department recently estimated that there are approximately 30,000 youngsters in Burma who need help from organisations such as ourselves. Thanks to our supporters we are planning to play our part.

Brian Leitch

Volunteering

There are opportunities across the spectrum of our projects for you to get involved. Spend some time in The Arc in Romania, or with street children in Sri Lanka, or join the 2 week fund-raising expedition climbing the Carpathian Mountains next summer.

We can easily tailor time with us around personal preference and other commitments you may have. For students we can also put together an excellent volunteer Gap Year for you. Contact the office to discuss a whole range of areas in which you can help.

A Year in the Arc

I had first visited Romania in 2004 on a music tour with Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra. Eleven months later, after completing my music degree, I was on a plane heading back to Romania, to work on the Epiphany Trust's pilot project *The Arc*.

I had just one week to settle in the house before the arrival of four young people from an orphanage in Lugoj. A very timid Ana Maria, an excited Adam and Codruta, and a nervous Darie arrived in Sinaia on 17th September 2005. This was going to be a huge change to their lives. All four had been abandoned as infants and had never known life outside institutional care.

The start was hard – as it is with any new project or task. The four young adults were accompanied by an educator from the orphanage. I had ten days to learn as much as I could from her. My biggest problem was that I spoke no Romanian and she no English. Yet with help from the manager, we coped. My first task was to gain the trust of the four young adults and to teach life skills – step by step. Skills such as how to wash and groom themselves were of paramount importance. Other skills to be taught were how to set a table,

how to clean and how to keep a house tidy. We take these things for granted, but they were very alien to these young people when they first arrived at The Arc.

Due to their disabilities, a lot of repetition was needed in order for them to remember a routine yet after the first two months, everything seemed to slot into place. The four gradually became self sufficient and began doing most things for themselves.

Looking back to those early months, there are many fond memories which stick in my mind. Codruta was in amazement at the fact that she could have a shower to herself and stay in there as long as she liked with her own shampoo. They were all so used to sharing showers in the orphanage and having a maximum of 5 minutes in there. When Darie discovered the plug to the bath for the first time he squealed with excitement as



he ran the taps and filled up the bath. Although he had been several times to a small swimming pool, he had never had a bath in 19 years! Ana Maria was a delight to look after and she taught me Romanian. One of her birthday presents from *Epiphany* was a framed picture of her taken on an early aid visit to the orphanage when she was just 3 years old. She had never seen a photo of herself as a small child before, and 7 months later it still remains on her bedside and is her most treasured possession.



Adam has loved television all his life, yet at the orphanage there is one TV between twenty children. It didn't take long to notice that he was extremely short-sighted yet did not have glasses. This we rectified. The fact that he could now watch TV and properly see the screen for the first time made him very happy. When we got a video and DVD player in the house he was over the moon.

By the time I came to leave *The Arc* and Romania at the start of July

2006, the four young adults were fully equipped to look after their own home. They set the table, washed and dressed themselves, made and changed their own beds. They can Hoover, polish, iron and clean bathrooms meticulously. They look after the gardens, take out the rubbish, and help with the daily shopping and cooking. Not only do they do these jobs well, but they also enjoy helping, and take great pride in looking after their own home.

The progress they have made in just a year is remarkable and our next step is to now help them find employment.

The experience I had in Romania was truly remarkable, and the love and affection which the four young adults gave me cannot be put into words. The experience will remain with me forever, and I will take every opportunity to visit them as they continue to grow and develop. They are now a big part of my life.

by Sharon Noon



Continued from back page



Often in our culture we interpret this verse as “the poor will always be there... an unalterable fact”. In India I realised that this interpretation was the farthest from Jesus’ mind. I believe he was in fact making an assumption about the future social location of his disciples, that they would help the poor because that’s where they would be, living, eating, working alongside the most disadvantaged of people.

The “Helping Hands Trust” live and work amongst some of the poorest people in the world. The positive impact that they have on the local community is nothing short of remarkable, considering the limited resources they have to operate with. The Trust hopes to continue supporting their excellent work in the coming years.

Bill Hampson

Burma Update

Over the last six months the Epiphany Trust has been able to increase the number of schools that it funds in Burma. Through the generous support of a new donor, we have been able to sponsor two new schools and secure the finances of one of our schools that was previously under funded. These developments will ensure that approximately 75 children get a better education and also, importantly, good quality meals and health checks.

We are looking to support more schools on the Thai/Burma border and to offer increased support to the schools that we currently fund. If you would like to discuss supporting a school then please contact the office.

Coffee Afternoon for Sri Lanka

The pupils of year 5 at Brown Edge Primary school near Stoke-on-Trent made the most of the July's sunny weather by organising after-school drinks & refreshments for parents and teachers. The event was organised in aid of the Trust's endeavour to ship a container across to Sri Lanka later this year. The container will carry a varied load; including bikes, tables, fishing nets and school equipment.

Thanks to the efforts of the 9 year olds £270 was raised, which will go a long way towards equipping three schools in the Galle Province with new materials like pens, pencils, paper and text books... still in terribly short supply since the Indian Ocean tsunami.

A special thank you goes out to Andrew Hields who helped organise the event, and to all the children at Brown Edge Primary whose enthusiasm to help the people of Sri Lanka has been a pleasure to see.



Branching Out...

Epiphany has always believed in the philosophy of empowering individuals in their native countries to establish and maintain projects as the most effective use of our resources. This led to the Romanian branch of Child Action International being created three years ago. Influenced by its success, and our growing commitment in the sub-continent, we are now following suit in Sri Lanka.

The article on page 14 ("Kandy- For the Kids") describes only one of director Debbie Edirisinghe's plans. C.A.I. Sri Lanka will co-ordinate our deliveries of aid, run our child rehabilitation centres, and monitor the micro-credit business regeneration project.

Camp Romania's 15th year

No "Generation-X" here



Some young people might prefer a holiday in Zante, Ibiza or Malia to a trip to an orphanage - staying in less than 3-star accommodation with a dozen or so boisterous Romanian orphans. But out there are hundreds of our young people, ready, willing and extremely able. They put a lie to this so called 'Generation X' with their ipods and MP3 players seemingly glued to their ears. This summer a group of 20 youngsters took part in The Epiphany Trust's 15th Camp Romania. For 2 weeks in August they gave up the comforts of home, to travel to the west of Romania where for one week they organised activities for children in the Lugoj orphanage, then a further week was spent taking them on holiday to Sinaia, a mountain resort in the south. These children although living in an orphanage often have parents, but parents too poor to look after them or on court orders for fear of parental

abuse. For nearly all, this was their first ever holiday.

Since the graphic scenes of squalid Romanian orphanages were broadcast to the world in 1990, young people have been at the forefront of helping these abandoned children. Well over 300 UK youngsters have now taken part in Camp Romania's 15 year history. No sign there of the selfishness of the supposed 'Generation X'.

The aim of Camp Romania is always to provide new life experiences for the children of Lugoj. Throughout the stay in the institution our young people took ownership of the project, organising a mini Olympics, with sack and 3 legged races the highlight. They created a Chinese



Dragon and completed the week with a "Festival de Moda" – a fashion show to those of us who don't speak Romanian – not to mention the face painting, hair braiding, bracelet

making and nail varnishing. The bonds of friendship created in this period were very strong. Once in Sinaia the children were given their first taste of a host of pastimes we all take for granted – from eating ice cream, or visiting a Salt Mine to just wandering around town with £2 in your pocket to spend.

The feedback from the returning groups this year, as always, was extremely positive and some amazing experiences were had – the benefits of the trip are truly mutual, both English and Romanians gaining much from the fortnight. Most are surprised

at how the language barrier is such a minor hindrance. Many from Lugoj speak broken English but are happy just showing their ‘guests’ around their home, their dormitory and their prized possessions of maybe a book, a tape or something they have made. All they want is family, friendship, time, and of course, love.

The young people financed their own trip and the cost of an orphan’s holiday through fund raisers such as bag packs, cake sales, garden parties, talks, and sponsored events.

For details of next years Camp Romania please contact the office.

Cold Mountain Challenge 2007



The ‘Challenge’ is being set once more. You can help raise funds for Epiphany’s ‘Arc’ project by being sponsored to pit your hiking skills and stamina against the best the Carpathian Mountains have to offer. Based in Sinaia for one week in June 2007, participants will be surrounded by some of Europe’s most stunning scenery whilst scaling the summits of ‘Omu Peak’ and the ‘Caraiman’ that

stand at an impressive 2500m high.

The ‘Cold Mountain Challenge’, named after the Hollywood film set in the same dramatic landscape, will incorporate visits to the Trust’s pilot half-way house project and some of the famous sights of this much-loved part of Romania.

No prior mountaineering experience is required. Please contact Gill at the office for more details.

Kandy - for the kids!

The plight of the homeless is a poignant problem all around the world, but nowhere is the situation more critical than on the city streets of Sri Lanka. In some of the country's largest cities like Colombo, Dambulla and Kandy, whole families are 'living rough' and barely managing to survive, often earning just enough money to eat by sweeping the streets.



Epiphany Trust is now attempting to combat some of these problems through the recently formed *Child Action Sri Lanka*. A new centre to teach, feed and clothe youngsters from the streets has been created in the heart of Kandy – Sri Lanka's 7th city.

Considering the venture is still in its infancy, the results so far have been stunning. Within weeks of opening and to the present, the facility is being used to capacity.

Here is a breakdown of our new project:

- 30-40 street children attend the centre after school every day where they are fed and clothed.
- The children play games, read stories, are taught arts & crafts and are given help with their studies.
- The youngest from these families are brought into the crèche and are also fed, cleaned and cared for.
- Unemployed mothers are being given training in order to find future employment.
- An annual camp will take place where many of these children can experience the feeling of going on holiday for the first time.
- The health of the children is assessed by qualified paediatricians.
- At Christmas, hampers of necessities are handed out on the city streets.
- Various schemes are currently being explored with the aim of giving self-dependency to the next generation of this community.

Ways to Support the Trust:

Donations to Epiphany are always welcomed and can be made via any of the following methods:

By Post:

Please send cheques to the address on the back of this newsletter.

By phone:

We can process credit card donations over the phone on 01925 220999.

Online:

Go to our website (www.epiphany.org.uk) and click on the 'Just Giving' secure payment icon.

Standing Order:

The most effective method of supporting the Trust as it provides us with a greater ability to plan future projects.

The Trust can claim a further 28% on any of the above donation methods if you sign a gift aid declaration form.

Remember Our Work

Please consider remembering the projects of the Epiphany Trust by leaving a legacy. Leaflets with guidance about the process are available on request from the office.

Donate to the Trustfor FREE!!

We have recently discovered a way that you can support Epiphany Trust projects with just a couple of clicks of a mouse. This is through shopping online using a scheme called Affinity Shopper.

When you make a purchase, we generate commission on every transaction you make. As it is the merchant who donates a percentage of your spend back to us, the good news is that it doesn't cost you anything!

There are more than 750 retailers who have adopted this system and are diverse as Tesco, B&Q, PC World, GoTravel Insurance, Harrods, KLM & HMV.

Please help us by using this fantastic system. Simply go to www.4rcharity.co.uk/epiphany, click on your desired retailer, then shop normally. It's that easy!!



A “Helping Hand” in South India

Most of our response to the Indian Ocean tsunami has been directed toward Sri Lanka where we have had a long-standing relationship with our partners.

Shortly after the tsunami, however, The Trust received an email from a small Indian charity called “Helping Hands Trust”. Desperate for help in an already impoverished society, they made a plea for assistance at this catastrophic time.

After discussion with our Trustees, an initial grant of £1,000 was made. Just weeks later Bill Hampson was invited to speak at their conference in Watrap, Southern India.

What he witnessed during the 2 week visit was poverty of biblical

proportions. Many were limbless, mental handicap was common and one lady had leprosy that had eaten away her mouth and stolen her

speech. In one church, 80% of the congregation worked in the fields for 40 rupees (50 pence) per day... half that for women. 20 pence pays for just one meal of rice and a thin vegetable curry.

Bill wrote

on his return home: “As I met with those from Helping Hands Trust, saw their projects, and spoke at their conference, I realised the real meaning in Christ’s words: “The poor you will always have with you and you can help them whenever you want, but you won’t always have me.”

Continued on page 10



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