

THE EAST SHEEN-CHENGANNUR TRUST

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MR JOHN ANNIVERSARY

It's the 25th anniversary of the passing of Mr. T. J. John who inspired Kay Mattin to start the East Sheen Chengannur Trust. He was born in 1926 and being the son of a Doctor, was given a good education. But sadly he contracted polio at the age of 17 during his college days in Bangalore. It was a miraculous escape from the deadly disease then but he was left handicapped in one of his legs. That made him understand disabilities and made him all the more determined to succeed and help others who were in a similar position in India.

He wanted to help the needy in and around Chengannur and so formed the Indo-American Club in 1952. Over the years he worked with several organizations including Action in Distress and Help the Aged.

He had a self taught command of the English language and a flare for writing. Though he had never been on an aircraft, through correspondence, he won friends all over the world including Kay Mattin. Jacob, his son, says `Now we are like an extended family with wonderful friends especially in the U.K., reaching out to many here.`

The work Mr John and Kay Mattin started goes on through their sons and the generosity of our supporters mainly in the UK.



SEWING MACHINES FOR BLIND SCHOOL

Jacob had a letter from the Mission to the Blind (based a short distance away) which read as follows: `We are an inter denominational missionary organization working among the blind people in India. Our aim is to give the blind an opportunity on our residential programme to learn tailoring, computer skills and various crafts such as soap & umbrella making. We are in need of 5 computers and 5 sewing machines. So I request you to grant some sewing machines for this purpose`

We provided them with 4 ordinary sewing machines each costing about £50 and one heavy duty machine to stitch items like bags which cost about £88 pounds. The new (but well tried design!) machines are shown in the photo.

SCHOOL BAG DISTRIBUTION

We received a request to assist a local school where many of the poor children could not afford the equipment they were required to buy. We gave out 35 good quality school bags, a water bottle, two books and a pencil each, plus a small toy. The elected member of the Kerala state assembly was present on the occasion to present the first bag and there were a lot of smiling faces as the children received their presents.

Other items children have to provide for themselves are school uniform, shoes, lunch box, umbrella and rain mac. In current prices these can cost a family over £40 – a huge often unattainable amount for many.

HOUSE BUILDING PROJECT

It is getting more expensive to build complete houses and Jacob gets a lot of requests for partial help with finishing off houses so recently we've been helping a lot more families in this way. Two families approached us for some blocks for walls and also sheeting for their roof. It cost us about £200 each

Rekha makes a living by making soap from a mix and selling it in the community. Her husband Biju, a tile layer, broke his leg so can't do much work now. They have 3 children in school plus their aged parents living in this house (photo on right) which only had a partial roof.



Sreeraman and Vijayamma have 2 girls and a boy. They too are in the process of making a house. . They currently live in the shack shown on the left. They have requested 1000 hollow cement blocks for the walls.

These are government funded houses but they give only about £2000 and expect them to make a large house in line with their plan which would easily cost about £5000. If they don't follow their exact layout the Govt. doesn't give them the next instalment so often they get stuck with the construction and approach us for help

ANOTHER SUPPORTER VISITS CHENGANNUR

At the beginning of the year Juliet Chaplin MBE visited Chengannur. She's sent a brief account of her stay with Jacob our Project Manager:

"I've been sponsoring through the Trust for many years and in January 2014 made my fifth visit to Chengannur where as usual my friend Sheila and I stayed with Jacob and family.

We spent a wonderful half-day when Jacob took us around to meet some of the families being helped by the Trust. First, Sabin and Siji Varghese and their parents Annamma and Baby, whom I sponsor. Baby is bedridden and Annamma cares for him full-time, but Sabin (15) and Siji (9) are both doing well at school and Sunday school. They are both musical and also good at drawing. We were made very welcome and met other members of the family.

Next we visited Santhosh, whose house was financed mainly through donations from friends and family of the late Gordon Brewin, whom I had known for many years.

Lastly we went to a village where we were flagged down by a man; he turned out to be Johnson who's family the Trust have helped. He set off on his motor-bike to guide us to Susan's house. She is a young widow whose husband succumbed to cancer a few months ago; she has two sons, the younger of whom is under two years old. The Trust is helping to finance a house for her, and she's delighted with it. Fortunately Johnson and his family live nearby and are helping her.

All these people, with so little financially, are cheerful, generous and determined to make the best of their lives. We also met four children whose father was killed very recently in a fall. They are now being sponsored through the Trust. Jacob works very hard for the Trust, and it is always such a pleasure to stay with him and his family at the Indo-American Club."

HELPING FAMILIES TOWARDS SELF SUFFICIENCY

In our projects we try as much as possible to give aid that is of ongoing use, such as education, housing, water wells etc. We recently helped Yesudasan and his wife Lizzy to buy a cow by paying 50% of the cost. He has promised to give us the first born calf so that we can hand it to another family in due course. He has the cow insured so that is good protection for him and our `investment`.



One of our longest running projects is the provision of goats and recently we spent £30 to buy Mini Bose a female goat.

These animals provide milk and a little income so are well looked after.



LEWIN COLLECTION

At a recent family get together 4 generations of the Lewin family made a collection for the Trust to use to help children who were not so fortunate as their family. They also decided that they wouldn't send any Christmas cards to friends and relations but would, instead donate the money normally spent on cards & postage. This resulted in a £200 donation to our emergency fund. A very nice gesture!

CHENGANNUR DRUMMERS!

Jacob sent this interesting message; `When I was at Rekha's house about 10 Kms away from here, I heard a nice rhythmic sound coming from a hut nearby. I asked Rekha's father what it was and he told it was just a bunch of boys making noise and drumming and they could go on till everyone goes to bed! I was curious and so went to the shack to find about 5 boys sitting around drumming on whatever they could find like a discarded gas stove, broken doors and windows and empty pans.

They seem to be keen on music which was evident. They go out to sing xmas carols and wanted to improve to do some shows but never have the money to buy proper instruments. I said I would like to help them and so asked for a recommendation letter from their school master and yesterday they came with that. They wanted a triple drum, a side drum, symbols, mouth organ (probably because I showed them I could play at home here!) and quoted about £50 in all. I thought they were a talented bunch and could make a small income for themselves as such bands are often called out to join processions for a payment. I had a tough time taking a snap of them as it was a tiny shack and they were very cramped inside.`



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