



2009 Newsletter

**UK Committee for Dr. Graham's Homes,
Kalimpong, India**

FROM THE CHAIRMAN – John G Webster

Dear Friends,

I write this message en-route to the Annual London Curry Lunch. It allows me to express the great gratitude of the UK Committee to Anna Panter and the Ladies' Committee who organise this joyful annual luncheon reunion. An average of £6,000 is raised, which is a large contribution towards our efforts in raising over £220,000 annually, for the work of Dr Graham's Homes. Perhaps, you would like to join us at the lunch next year.

In two days time, along with 17 others, I will depart for the annual "3 K's" Tour. For many this will be their first visit to India and after having seen the work and worth of Dr Graham's Homes many respond in very real terms. "I didn't know India was like this"! It is a common and positive response and I often quote the Chinese proverb "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". Perhaps you, or someone known to you, might like to be a part of the November, 2010 tour. It is a holiday and much more!

I advise that our Treasurer, Christine McLeod has tendered her resignation to be effective from 2nd March 2010, or earlier. From a short list of promising candidates and following an interview process, we have selected Mr. Morris Thomson, as our Treasurer. At this stage I would like to acknowledge with much gratitude the professionalism Christine brought to the role during her term of office. She has strived to establish an efficiently run organisation and was of particular help when, as a stopgap measure, she took on the roles of both Sponsorship Secretary and Treasurer. At this point we simply want to record our appreciation of all Christine has done and will at later date express our indebtedness more tangibly.

Jim Simpson has enthusiastically embraced the job of Sponsorship Secretary and we are delighted to have him on the team. His report appears below.

Philip Gibson, appointed Chief Executive Officer at the Homes in April and financed by our Committee, has already made considerable headway and you

can read his news update in this letter. The Committee are most grateful for all his work and insights.

I hope you will enjoy the many and varied contributions to this Newsletter and that you will be encouraged to continue your very real interest in the work of the Homes. We are grateful to the Vice Chairman, Ken Hammond, for agreeing to compile and edit this year's Newsletter and to all those who have contributed articles.

A very peace filled Christmas to you all and, as always, along with my Committee and the Children of Kalimpong, we would like to say thank you to each one of you, who by your donations and prayers enable the work of Dr Graham's Homes among the underprivileged to continue.

Do please get in touch with any queries you may have. I can be contacted on 01770 700 747 or at johnwebster@talktalk.net - **John G Webster**

FROM THE EDITOR - Ken Hammond

At the time of writing this, the economy in the UK is still in recession and the scribes are already creating tabloid space to mark the winter of discontent! It maybe dark and gloomy out there, but I trust this Newsletter, a collection of articles from many contributors, brings some cheer to you!

I have chosen the red poinsettia plant for the cover of this 2009 Newsletter. Not only is it vibrantly beautiful and seasonal, but also to OGB's (ex students) of Dr. Graham's Homes, it is known as the 'Going Home Day' flower. Its bloom heralds the annual two month long winter break that brings fevered joy to hundreds of students who descend to the plains of Kolkata and Assam to spend holidays with parents and loved ones. Typically, sponsored students join their parents or are found families in Kolkata or in the tea gardens of the Dooars and Assam, to spend their holidays with. A few unplaced students remain behind. The school provides comfort and security and gifts from sponsors and friends, go a long way to making the child's holiday as homely as is possible.

Among the articles in this Newsletter is a request from Barrie Sayers, a sponsor and UK Committee member, who is interested in visiting India in

early 2011 to take kids on a seaside holiday. Should Barrie's idea generate sufficient interest, we will consider approaching the Kolkata BOM and School CEO to seek their support. Needless to say, safety and security of the children are paramount in such a venture requiring appropriate checks and safeguards to be in place before it becomes a reality.

There is an inspirational account from Janice Small, a retired postmistress from Arran, of her Lands End to John O'Groats bike journey, and the various other ways she has gone about to raise funds for the Homes.

The Homes CEO Philip Gibson, with overall responsibility for turning around the welfare and academic qualities of students under a three-year excellence plan, provides insight into the progress and challenges in executing his plan. Shireen Gomez, one of Phillip's final year students, also gives us a taste of student life in her article.

As an OGB myself, I would like to thank all sponsors and friends of the Homes for your enormous contribution in helping the school continue its quest to help the less privileged find dignity and respect.

LETTER FROM KALIMPONG – Philip Gibson, CEO Dr Graham's Homes.

It was a great pleasure for me to receive a request from Ken Hammond to write an account of what has been happening in the Homes since I arrived as Chief Executive in the middle of April.

The Kolkata Board asked me to lead a recovery plan for DGH, supported by funding from the UK Committee. Under a new management team of SL Banerjee, Headmaster, David Foning, Bursar and I, we are committed to a number of improvements in education, childcare, finance, administration and infrastructure management.

We began in April to create a new learning environment by restoring an air of calm and security to the school compound. We have removed all vehicles from the school area; taxis are no longer permitted beyond Graham House; only authorised vehicles are parked behind the Jarvie Hall and the food vendors have been removed completely from the compound. The compound

now resembles a school rather than a bazaar and I believe that everyone approves of these environmental changes. Members of Staff have all been issued with ID tags and manual staffs are dressed in uniform shirts. So we now know who is legitimately on the campus and who is not. New security gates have been erected at Graham House and below Ahava and the main gate is closed and opened only to legitimate traffic by security staff. All of this is about keeping our young people safe in an area, which had been notoriously open to everyone for years. We are not seeking to create Fortress DGH but rather to regain management control of the environment in which 1360 children daily live, work and play.

Under the banner of The Quest for Excellence we have an ambitious plan to extend the curriculum during the next academic year to include a variety of learning opportunities linked to the core curriculum along with coaching classes for senior boarders in selected subjects. Apart from opening up new horizons for our young people, we hope to develop a competitive edge on other schools in the Darjeeling Hills as we move towards our goal of creating an excellent learning community.



Philip Gibson with some of his senior pupils.

On the boarding front, we have introduced daily cottage breakfasts and cottage meals at weekends. Many of you will either laud or deplore our decision to abandon morning and evening prep for a trial period. I think however that we now have boarders who arrive in the morning, relaxed, fed

and awake and in a proper frame of mind for learning. Discipline has improved across the school and at the same time I believe that our young people are happier and more relaxed within a strict but consistent approach to discipline in which physical assault and humiliation by adults are completely banned.

We have introduced new morning assembly arrangements with all juniors and seniors attending chapel assembly on two days per week per section. This has gone down very well with parents of day scholars who view this as an important step towards integration of day scholars and boarders.

I remain optimistic about the green shoots of recovery, which I think I can discern. We still have a very long way to go in a very challenging economic environment but I personally, remain highly committed to our sponsored children who receive not only an education but also a lifetime opportunity otherwise denied to them. This is made possible only through the generosity of so many of you, for which my many, many thanks.

Finally many thanks also to all of you for your personal good wishes to me and Eleanor. I count it a great privilege to be here at DGH and assure you of my continuing commitment to the children who are here still because of the foresight, dedication and love of John and Katherine Graham more than a century ago. With the very best wishes to you all – **Philip Gibson**

SPONSORSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT, 2009 – James Simpson

I would like to preface my Report by saying how much I am enjoying working for The Homes, through the Charity, and importantly how much I appreciate the support I continue to receive from Committee and Sponsors alike as I get up to speed with my tasks.

At the time of writing this, my wife and I are setting off on a “working holiday” to find out more about Dr Graham's Homes and the way in which sponsorship of our children impacts upon The Homes. Although, we have been to The Homes before, and are privileged to have family links, since my appointment I have been working very much at arms length from the true centre of our operations. It is time to rectify that and to see how my time can

be spent more effectively and in closer harmony with that of the sponsorship operation that is carried out from my opposite number's office in Kalimpong.

The economic climate continues to bite and its impact will continue to affect our approach to sponsorship for many years to come, indeed possibly for all time. To ensure we maintain a sustainable future we need to align our sponsorship strategy to meet the challenges of the current economic climate and promote all aspects of child sponsorships, whether it is part or full sponsorship. We continue to encourage new groups ("Friends of Kalimpong") to form and contribute to a common fund to support one or even more children. We already have a number of such groups and they are all very dedicated and successfully operating across the country. Other established organisations such as schools, churches and guilds also generate sponsorships through fund-raising events. In October alone over £3,000 has been raised through a soup and sandwich lunch, a coffee morning and even an ice-cream sales-after-school-ends-on-a-Friday, contributing towards some of the annual support needed for seven specific children!

I would like to share some key indicators of the UK Committee's operations: Currently, the UK charity supports the sponsorship of some 212 children; there are some one hundred and eighty different Sponsors, both individuals and groups, providing either part or full sponsorship. Through the charity, the school receives some £220,000 annually in sponsorship and gift money. The picture is continually changing as either children or sponsors drop out. Today we could quite readily take on some thirty or more sponsors who would make that vital and immediate difference to our position. Nor do we value any less our Correspondents who fulfill a vital role in keeping in touch with the children, particularly important to those without sponsors, so equally more Correspondents are always welcome.

Finally, I continue in my own first year mission of being in touch with all of our Sponsors and Correspondents, personally, at least once during my first year; I'm doing quite well I think on that score but do ask anyone with whom I have not as yet exchanged letter, 'phone-call or e-mail to contact me to chat, to exchange views or to ask specifically about their supported child.

COMMITTEE NEWS:

Since the issue of the 2008 Newsletter, the UK Committee has welcomed several new members to the Committee. We featured the following in our earlier Annual Report:

Anne Hoggan – Committee Secretary
James Simpson – Sponsorship Secretary
Lesley Walker – Committee Member
Aileen Fraser – Committee Member
Margaretta Purtill – Committee Member

In addition, we are delighted to welcome the following new members:

Barrie Sayers – Committee Member: Barrie spent his career working as a banker in the Far East and retired to England nearly 20 years ago. He is married to an 'army-daughter' whom he met whilst posted in Hong Kong. Barrie was introduced to Dr. Graham's Homes through the Daily Telegraph's Christmas coverage of Charities in 1998 and has been a sponsor ever since.

Nina Toller – Committee Member: Nina was born in Kolkata and moved to a boarding school to Ireland at the age of 16. She went on to study at Exeter University where she met her husband. Nina has two sons and spends a fair amount of time in Kolkata. She is a Justice of Peace and sits on the City of London Bench and on the family panel. She has been very actively involved with the Ladies Committee in London in raising funds for the Homes.

David Willis – Committee Member: David is a chartered surveyor for the London Metropolitan Police Service, managing its property portfolio. He is from Hertfordshire and personal interests include good friends, cooking, books, photography, period architecture, country walks and more recently his bicycle (check his article later!). David came across DGH through The Daily Telegraph in 2005 and its article on the Christmas sponsorship appeal programme.

Morris Thomson – Treasurer: Morris is a 59 year-old chartered accountant who has only recently taken over the role of Treasurer for the charity. He has extensive experience in accounts preparation, audit, accounts examination and reporting. Previously, Morris has acted as Treasurer of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society and is currently an elder of Cramond Kirk. His interests include music and singing in the church choir.

PROJECTS:

The late Bess MacDiarmid, a member in one of our recent November Tours, arranged for her Church members to donate their Smartie tube annual collection to a little road-side Workshop for the Blind, situated within the compound of Dr Graham's Homes. Over £1,000 was donated and the premises have now been rebuilt and running water installed. Members of future tours will doubtless make purchases of their products!

NEWSLETTER FEATURES:

A Trip to the Edinburgh AGM and a Twisted Arm – David Willis

The dawn express to Edinburgh pulled into Stevenage railway station one Friday June morning. Although a modern electric train, the train exuded all the power and strength of its steam predecessors that had thundered out of Kings Cross, heading to the Scottish borders. Four and half-hours later I arrived at Edinburgh Waverley. I was able to pop up to Edinburgh for the AGM of the UK Committee of Dr Graham's Homes, and return later the same day; a far quicker journey than with steam!

This was to be my first contact with other Homes supporters and in particular those who worked in the Committee. I arrived at St George's West Church in good time to mingle and exchange pleasantries with a few others until the Executive Committee had finished its business and the AGM could start in earnest. Although John Webster had said they were trying to make the AGM as interesting as possible, I was not sure what to expect. Having attended a few in my time, I knew AGMs to be very business-like and quite dry and dusty. Well not this one!

The 'fun bit' started after the formal AGM business had concluded. The highlight was a slide presentation about The Homes. Well, I often enjoy it when people give a personal perspective on an experience; it brings something that might be a little remote alive in a very special way. As a sponsor I had been associated with DGH long enough to appreciate that The Homes was a rather special place with special attachments for so many people. But I did not appreciate quite how special and personal DGH could be until lunchtime on that Friday in June.

Very quickly I learnt two things. Many in the room directly related to the talk and the photos in a personal way that I was really not expecting. I experienced the presentation from the outside whereas for so many others it was personal. That was one surprise for me; another was the sense of bond that so many in the room shared, akin to being part of an extended family, because the common thread was DGH. Despite being the newcomer, I quickly got sucked into this sense of belonging. When the presentation was over I was introduced to people who talked to me as if they had known me for a lot longer than just an hour or so.

During the course of all of this, the Bengal Bike Event was spoken of more than once. I knew of it, of course, but that was all. Cycling across India and up into the foothills of the Himalayas struck me as being very impressive and only for those who were fit and hardy! I told John this and his reply was something like "But this will be my third time and I am 70 (sorry John, I don't think that was a state secret - *JW is 76 actually! Ed*). Come with us, David, you can do it"; and Ken Hammond encouraged with "Look, if I can do it then you can. You'll have fun." That might be true, I thought, and nobody in the room looked like a Tour de France competitor, well at least not one in this year's competition, but....cycling for seven days, 500 miles, sea level to 5,000ft. Oh please, I couldn't do that! At home I am nagged about going to the gym and I say I get my exercise working in a 30 storey office building and walking up the escalators on the Underground. The Bike Event is really serious business.

Well, those were my thoughts as John and Ken very gently and persuasively, but nevertheless persistently, twisted my arm, and I know that will be the least painful bit of the whole experience. Once I'd said, "OK then", in a bit of rush as if I did not quite believe what I was saying, John beamed and immediately started telling people. I knew I was rapidly crossing the point of no return!

A little later on the train going back home, I contemplated on what I had committed to and during the course of the next 4 1/2 hours, experienced several highs (not related to the scenery) and just as many lows. I mustered

up much enthusiasm and felt equally overcome with much doubt and anxiety.

Over the following days I re-enforced John's approach so that I felt 100% bound up to the event. I too started telling people in the office, and to friends and family. Everyone was surprised, and many were quite enthusiastic with their encouragement. I remember, though, that some just looked incredulous – well I have never done anything like this before, but I just smiled and spoke confidently about the trip and what it will mean.

So, I have got seven months to prepare for this, I thought. Well, that's plenty of time. I can do this, can't I? (To be continued)

LIFE IN ELLIOTT COTTAGE - Shireen Gomes, Student, Class XII

Nestling in the slopes of a thickly wooded Deolo Hill and over-looking the town of Kalimpong, stands Dr Graham's Homes. The school was founded on 24th September 1900 – a date that means everything to the very many children who have passed out from the school in the one hundred and nine years of its existence.

On the 8th November 1900, the foundation stone for the first cottage, Woodburn, was laid. Today there are six girls' cottages and ten cottages for the boys; a further three cottages house the smaller children and there are two hostels for the Classes XI and XII boys.

Life in Dr Graham's is like a dream come true for me. I entered the school for the first time on 21st March 2001 and was sent to Elliott Cottage; a day that I'll never forget. I soon realised DGH was all about co-operation, having fun, helping each other, studying with friends and much more.

Two matrons whom we call "Aunty" look after us, like parents, until we leave school. Cottages are our second home and Elliott has about thirty-eight girls with Aunties Janet Foning and Rebecca Manion looking after us. Making new friends isn't difficult because girls are very frank and make a new person feel at home so that they are not homesick. We have our fair share of highs and lows, but in times of trouble we all support each other.



The Governor of West Bengal and members of staff and students welcoming committee on the steps of the School Chapel. The Governor was on a recent visit to the region.

Our first day in cottage, after the winter holidays, is all about holiday gossip and excited talk. Soon, the days pass by leading up-to our Cottage Garden Competition. Every day, after school, we work in the gardens, pulling out each and every weed! The Basketball and Throw-ball competitions are next and if not involved, we cheer the players and help boost their performance. We have our Half-Yearly Examinations next - It's said that studying with a friend is better than studying alone and we have that environment at our cottages! After the examination we enjoy ten days of summer holidays. Some students go home and others remain in the Cottages, which seem to be more fun with fewer girls! Girls staying behind have picnics, help in cottage cooking, go for evening walks or visit the farm or the Dhobi Ghat (laundry).

The swimming season follows the holidays and on Saturdays we have cottage swimming where everyone joins in the fun in the pool! Senior girls teach the juniors to swim and prepare for the swimming competition in September. Meanwhile we have other games like table tennis, badminton and the Mountbatten competition, where each cottage puts up an act (a play written and acted in Hindi) and answer general knowledge questions. On Saturdays

and Sundays we use the break to rest from schoolwork; some of us help our Auntie in cooking, while a few wash their clothes (prefer washing it ourselves). On Sundays we go to church in the morning. After the service we return to the cottages, change into working clothes and do "Thorough"; i.e. rubbing up and polishing clean the whole cottage!

As winter approaches it's the time for guavas, a local fruit delicacy! We go down to the Estates to pluck the guavas and although we can ask the Dajies (gardeners) we prefer to raid them from the trees! Always tastes sweeter from raiding but usually we end up with more bruises than guavas!

Finally, it is time for the most feared event the "Final Examinations"! Auntie sits with the junior girls and helps them study so they are fully prepared to do well. The senior girls study early mornings and late nights, to put in the extra effort needed to pass the exams. After the final exams we have the school Carol Service where school leavers receive bibles. Most of them break down thinking how fast their school days have passed!

Cottage life is really fun. It teaches us to tackle every kind of problem. I bless the day I came to Elliott Cottage!

11-yr-old to perform in Hyderabad!

Prayash Biswakarma won the Kolkata leg of a worldwide violin competition organized by Lions International. The Class VI student from Dr Graham's Homes is now en-route to the national leg of the competition at Hyderabad, where the winner will represent the country in Sydney, Australia for the grand finale of the Global Music Competition. He won the leg with his rendition of Henryk Wieniawski's, Polanaise Brillante.

Prayash won the right to represent the north Bengal and Sikkim region after he had been adjudged the best among the 21 other young violinists who had taken part in the Siliguri-leg of the competition on October 10, playing two pieces — Spring and Summer, of his favourite composer, Vivaldi.

We congratulate Prayash on his wonderful achievement and wish him success at the Hyderabad finals on 6/12/09.

Cycling for Dr. Graham's Homes – Janice Small

Ten years ago my sport of choice was golf but when my mother became ill I switched to cycling. The flexibility allowed me the freedom to cycle, and from modest challenges I found myself taking part in long distance charity rides. In 2007, I read John Webster's article, in the local Arran paper, about the 'Bike Bengal' cycle ride and uttered the words my husband so dreads to hear 'I could do that'! Despite family reservations, I found myself with nine other committed people cycling from Kolkata to Kalimpong, India, in February 2008. It was an experience of a lifetime and one that I will always cherish.

When I heard another 'Bike Bengal' was planned for 2010 I knew I had to go! My stepson Richard, intrigued with my last journey, decided to join too and is making great strides with his fund raising. I quickly realised that raising the promised £1,000 would be much harder second time around. In 2008, the week before I left for Kolkata, I had retired and just sold my Post office business. As a retirement present many customers donated towards my cycle fund but this time it would be different. Arran is a small, extremely generous community but I was reluctant to ask again for donations. Other methods had to be employed!

I decided upon a Lands End (LE) to John O'Groats (JOG) cycling journey and use the 981-mile trip to make money for 'Bike Bengal' but not to advertise it on Arran. I settled for the western route in England and took the easterly route across Scotland and onto JOG. My husband would meet me at JOG and I sent my bike by carrier, flew to Newquay then by train to Penzance, my first base. I had dismissed talk of what could go wrong, what could happen to a woman on her own but the closer it came to leaving the more these thoughts intruded. Now I questioned the wisdom of this long journey. I buried those thoughts by saying 'it won't happen to me, and it didn't'. I had a sign on my bike stating "Land's End to John O'Groats – Please support Dr Graham's Homes". From day one I started collecting money. Donations came from 'the Cornwall Grannies', four ladies who excitedly, were just finishing JOG-LE. They wished me well and donated; next was Nick who stopped his car and asked why I was doing this trip. I had just left Lands End, anxious but excited, and couldn't give him a coherent answer but amazingly he donated £10 and so it continued for the remaining 981 miles. The street-sweeper, the young

garage lad, people at traffic-lights and roundabouts all handing me change; even the landlady who donated her charges, friends and family and so on. I made just over £500, a terrific start to the promised £1,000. Each part of the country was different – the rolling fields of Cornwall and Devon, the beautiful Wye Valley, the industrialised Midlands, mighty Shap, the lushness of south west Scotland the spectacular loch views of central Scotland, the remoteness of Strathnaver and the moorlands of Caithness and Sutherland.

In Scotland, family and friends joined me for parts of the trip and it was good to have company. I reached JOG at mid-day on a beautiful, sunny June day. Murray, my husband was there to meet me; I had loved every moment of my trip and felt elation and sadness. I cycled slower and slower the closer I got to JOG not wanting my journey to end. All the planning and training had made for a very successful trip but most importantly was financially rewarding for DGH. It felt strangely wrong to climb into the car and travel, so quickly, back the route I had cycled.



Back home, I turned my attention to local fund raising, including car boot sales and bag packing in the local supermarket. With help from family and friends we made a staggering £707! The Brodick Highland Games was on the village agenda and the Games committee waived their charges for my stall! John Webster and Aileen Fraser turned up to support and Murray and my grandchildren were on hand to help me raise a further £240!

I have found this type of fund raising very enjoyable – giving a service or selling goods – rather than asking directly for a donation. This is especially useful when you are collecting for DGH repeatedly over a short period of time. To date, many of us continue to fund raise and hopefully we, the 20 Bike Bengal Cyclists 2010, can break the £46,000 raised in 2008!

From an 'Old' Girl! – Margaretta Purtill

I was admitted to the Homes as a five year old in 1950. That was a long time ago, but my memories tend to be guided by nostalgia to seek out and enjoy things that remain familiar even after all these years. It is only natural to feel that our batch lived through the 'good old times', but I would like to feel I have kept an open mind and am not critical of change. I am so happy to note there are several aspects of the Homes that have NOT changed, in particular Dr. Graham's 'dream' that the institution would be staffed more and more by OGBs (old Girls & Boys). And there are those who frequently return to breathe again the atmosphere of the compound – the cottages, the classrooms, the playing fields, and popular picnic spots.

What is the reason for this unique attachment that makes so many return? Could it be that cradled in the shadow of the Mount Kanchenjunga, we lived our formative years as one large family and where enduring relationships were born? Indeed, for many, the Homes were the only home they knew. Today, some of the basic values of life that I learned at school continue to guide me. Values like:

- Discipline, which taught us the importance of routine, punctuality and the value of time.
- Dignity of labour, so that one could put one's hand to anything requiring attention.
- Participation in healthy competition while knowing how to win or lose gracefully.

These were true values gleaned not only from the Chapel, but also from the cottage, the classroom and playing fields.

In 2005, I was present for the Homes Birthday Celebrations at which the Chief Guest was H.E. Lynpo Jigmy Thinley (Class of 1970, former School Captain). He is currently the Prime Minister of Bhutan, heading the first elected

government of his country. While congratulating and rejoicing with him on his achievement, I would refer to a passage from his key speech at the celebrations: "I pay tribute to my mentors who were directly associated with my education in this great school. Out of many, I will name but a few: Miss Ann Colquhoun, (Kindergarten teacher) and Miss Jean Burns (cottage aunty & housemother). Staffs of all departments that make up this institution – many of who have sadly died but their spirit and deeds live on. The late Dr Jim Minto and Mr Bernard Brooks who, as the Principal and Headmaster, demonstrated how any organization should be run and can be run. Gifted with tremendous charisma, communication skills and true leadership qualities, they were giants among educators and made a fantastic team. Their team spirit was most exemplary and has served as an inspiration in my life. Some refer to their period as the golden era of the Homes. The Reverend John Webster, for the good shepherd that he still is and the cheerful classes that he conducted".

What a wonderful compliment! It so aptly defined certain images and thoughts for OGBs, worldwide, that we were also able to experience and share in his grateful acknowledgement and tribute to our teachers and mentors.

During my visit, I had the honour to open the new Thorburn Cottage. Inevitably my thoughts went back to when, as a five year old, I entered the original Thorburn Cottage clutching the hand of the then House Mother (Aunty Cracknell). Now, clutching the hands of two five year olds, I walked them through the main door that will probably be their home for the next 10 or so years! What a flood of memories passed through me!

Changes are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life truly meaningful. I think the question I am most frequently asked about the past is: 'What have you really learnt from your life at the Homes?' I reply without hesitation: 'That everyone can, and should make a difference'. I was able to change the way I think because I had the potential to do so. I was able to transform my darkness into light, poverty into prosperity, because it was my will to do so. My wish is that all OGBs that have passed through the school will look back with fond memories of their time with a view of perhaps

at some stage, giving something back to this wonderful institution and give thanks for all that they have been given and have been able to achieve with the help of the aunties, teachers and all the staff of Dr Graham's Homes. And make the school proud of its achievements and keep the vision of liberty and harmony a reality. There will come a time when I hope all OGBs will be able to ask themselves this question: "What have we done today for the Homes to make us feel proud"!



OGBs At the June AGM

Front: Vanda Goodwin, Rosie Minto, Florence Snell, Sonam Lhatoo, Sedhar Chozam
Back: Lesley Minto, Ken Hammond, Margaretta Purtil

OBITUARIES:

Wendy Grant: It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our Honorary Vice President Mrs. Wendy Grant, on 15th October 2009, at the age of 72. Wendy was the great granddaughter of Dr. John Anderson Graham, the founder of Dr. Graham's Homes, Kalimpong. She devoted a large part of her life to raising funds for Dr. Graham's Homes and worked tirelessly with the UK and the London Ladies Committees, organising the Christmas Cards, the Annual Curry Lunch, and in 1997, masterminded the inclusion of the Homes as one of the Daily Telegraph's featured charities which was a massive success and generated significant sums of money for the School. Our thoughts are with her husband Ian and her family at this time.

Remembering Bess: In March, we lost a very special friend in Bess MacDiarmid. She had been ill for some time. Our friendship extended to the mid sixties, when the MacDiarmids were neighbours. The Rev and Mrs.

MacDiarmid, Bess and brother Derry, were always a delight to visit and loved seeing the children. Bess was a teacher, and taught in Ross-shire schools, but like her brother was multi-talented. Her painting and sketching, as well as her talent as a needlewoman were exceptional. But her greatest talent was with people; her gentle nature and patience were exceptional - we miss her quiet ways and sound advice.



Lucia King Nursery in the 1930's and in 2008

Three years ago, Bess and two friends visited Kalimpong with John Webster's annual tour to the region. The friends were skilled quilters and, after visiting Lucia King, the school nursery, they returned home to Scotland and between them made 31 quilts – one for each child! What a fantastic gift!

Sue MacDiarmid, sister-in-law to Bess, has kindly organised the sale of Bess's artwork in the local craft shop in the village of North Kessock, called "Auroraborealis". At time of writing this, well over £300 has been collected and is to be donated to the Homes. Many thanks to Sue and Susan Phillips for their great effort! The Craft Shop is an excellent venue and well worth a visit on the seafront at North Kessock, Inverness-Shire. - **Sheila McNab**

FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

Cawdor Church – Nigel Graham. The World Church Team from Cawdor church, Nairnshire, has been very active in support of Dr Graham's Homes.

Some 30 members sponsor Harshil and Harshit Kerrat (aged 4 years) at The Homes. Three main fundraising events were held this year:

In May, Sue and Nigel Graham (grandson of Daddy Graham) opened their gardens at Househill, Nairn. Sue did a tremendous job of tidying up the garden and making it look lovely. In addition to about 130 guests, Nigel's 12-year-old Scottish terrier, Minke, was allowed to attend. Following her discovery of an empty cream carton, her normally black face became entirely white, to the amusement of all those present! The event raised £300.

A Celidh was held at the Croy Hall end September, at which 16 players from The Inverness Fiddlers played (without charge) wonderful reels and Scottish country-dances with a few square dances thrown in for good measure. About 100 people attended and during a wonderful evening, £700 was raised.



Cawdor Church

Early October, a Christmas card sale was held in the Cawdor Community Centre, a joint event with about 10 other national and local charities who made a donation for a cup of tea and a bun! This was a very worthwhile event, with about £150 being taken for Dr Graham's Homes.

Cawdor's World Church Team has worked hard and has had fun supporting Harshil and Harshit and look forward to arranging more events next year.

Highland Gatherings - Sheila McNab. On 20th June, a Sale of Works was held in Killearnan Church Hall, Muir of Ord near Inverness and £540 was raised. Thanks to all who helped to make such a great success on the day. Next year's fundraising will be announced in the New Year.

Dr. Graham's Homes (Greeting Cards) Ltd. – Fiona Cranston. The proceeds from card sales each year supports 7 children, known as the Christmas tree children. Now is the time for you to order the cards if you haven't done so already. Please contact Fiona Cranston, 01206 298434 or e-mail: fionacranston@yahoo.co.uk.

Annual Curry Lunch - London Ladies Committee. Held at St Columba's Church of Scotland, Pont Street, London on October 28th 2009. It was an enjoyable and fun occasion with guests greeted on arrival with a glass of wine. The next hour was spent meeting friends and others with a common interest in India and the Homes. There were interesting stalls including Help Tibet, selling jewellery and other fascinating items. We also had a stall selling our own Christmas Cards. Everybody sat down to a delicious Curry Lunch provided by a Mr. Rana who runs an excellent Nepalese restaurant in Putney.

The event is organised by the Ladies Committee in London. The members also organise their own individual fund raising events and on the 21st of October one of the group raised £1,200 at a Coffee Morning at her home in Surrey, which was a wonderful achievement.

Troon Friends of Kalimpong - Aileen Fraser. Our annual Coffee Morning was held in Troon Old Parish Church on Saturday, 3rd October. We had a very happy, busy morning with all the usual stalls and plenty of support in spite of the weather, a very wild morning but at least a little better than last year. This was our most successful Coffee Morning so far, including generous donations; our total raised has now reached £466. We are now looking forward to Gilmour MacLeod's next piano concert to be held in Troon Old Parish Church on Sunday, 28th February at 7.30p.m. For further details check the website or email aileenfraser2006@yahoo.co.uk

Arran Friends of Kalimpong – John G Webster. A recent annual Soup and Sandwich lunch, staffed entirely by those who have been on a November Tour, raised over £800. With a coffee morning planned in the New Year, more than sufficient will have been raised to support a child in Dr Graham's Homes for one year.

Edinburgh Curry Celidh – Vanda Fraser. The curry celidh this year was held in St. Geroges's West Church and despite it being Halloween night, some 135 guests turned up for a fun evening of Nepalese cuisine, raffles, singing and a celidh! The food was provided by Dharma, owner of the Khukri restaurant in Edinburgh who, with his team, gave up their generous time to cook and serve the meal at the celidh. A total of £3,000+ was raised in the course of the evening for Dr. Grahams' Homes.

Bengal Bike Ride February 2010 – John G Webster. No one is sure how it all began, except that my youngest son Johnnie, (the one who cycled round the entire coastal roads of Scotland and raised over £7,000 for the Homes), having visited Bhutan, and had the laudable idea of cycling from Thimpu to Kalimpong. Kolkata to Kalimpong was mooted and won the day. In 2006 nine of us raised over £20,000; in 2008 ten of us raised over £46,000. 20+ have signed on for the Bike Ride in February 2010 and should raise – who knows? Six from the 2008 event are returning and six of our management committee have also enlisted. A former Dooars tea-planter is coming from Zimbabwe! All contributions will be gratefully received. Cheques may be sent to individual cyclists or received by our Treasurer at www.justgiving.com/christine-mcleod Participants undertake to pay all expenses (approximately £1,000) and raise a minimum of £1,000 for Dr Graham's Homes.

Jars for Change – John G Webster. Launched at the beginning of 2009 Jars for Change has raised £346.80 + \$40. Please keep filling your jars and then start again! My own jar is now nearly full and I trust others throughout the land are in a similar state! Labels are available from John G. Webster.

Your small change can contribute to a big change in the life of a child.

We would be glad to hear of other fundraising efforts taking place throughout the UK for a future Newsletter – Ed.

Notice board:

For Sale:

"A Better Chance" – A DVD of life in Dr. Graham's Homes narrated by Felicity Kendall (1983) £10 including p&p

"A Century of Children" – A written account of the first 100 years of Dr. Graham's Homes by Simon Mainwaring (2000) £10 including p&p

Please send your order with cheque (made payable to "Dr. Graham's Homes") to The Treasurer, 21 Strathalmond Road, Edinburgh EH4 8HP

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE TO THE CHILDREN OF DR. GRAHAM'S HOMES.

Dates for Next Year:

AGM:

The Committee AGM and Social Gathering is scheduled for Wednesday, 26th May 2010, in Stockbridge Church and Halls, Edinburgh. As in 2009, we expect to include a talk / slideshow of the Homes following normal 'AGM business'. A light lunch will be available.

All sponsors, supporters and friends of Dr. Graham's Homes, Kalimpong are welcome to attend.

Please contact Anne Hogan, Secretary, on LOCHMORN@aol.com for further information.

Contact the Editor:

If you have any comments on this Newsletter or indeed have improvement ideas, please e-mail me on Kenham@Hotmail.co.uk.

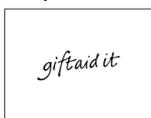
Donations:

The UK Committee is responsible for raising approximately £220,000 per annum for the majority of the supported children. If you wish to donate to the charity or indeed sponsor a child, please complete the form below and return to The Treasurer, 21 Strathalmond Road, Edinburgh EH4 8HP or donate online at www.drgrahamshomes.co.uk using the DONATE NOW button.

1	Sponsoring a Child – directly supporting a named child.	
2	Becoming a Friend of Kalimpong by making a regular subscription.	
3	Sending a Donation or Arranging a Legacy.	
4	Purchasing Christmas or other cards by including your name on our mailing list.	
5	Arranging or Attending Fund Raising Events.	
6	Visiting Kolkata, Kathmandu and Kalimpong with an organized Annual Tour in November	

I enclose a donation for Dr Graham's Homes of £.....

I do/do not require a receipt (*please delete as appropriate*)



Use gift aid and you can make your donation worth more. For every pound you give us we get an extra 25pence from the Inland Revenue. To qualify for gift aid you must pay an amount of Income or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax we reclaim on your donation in the tax year.

Just tick here.

Name..... Date.....

Address.....

Telephone.....e-mail.....