



Summer NEWSLETTER

August 2023

Dear friends and supporters,

I am delighted to be able to send our latest newsletter, and share some news and photos of recent activity in Darjeeling. There has been some great progress in the construction work at the Kripasaran Buddhist Mission, and we are now very close indeed to having completed that work. That is a huge milestone for us, and sees the successful culmination of a commitment we made nearly 10 years ago to provide the funds for the Home to be rebuilt. 100 boys and girls are now cared for in safe and comfortable living conditions which allow them to make the most of their education and grow into resilient and mature young people. We'll be sharing a special news bulletin in the autumn to look back over the project since it began, and celebrate the impact that your generous support over many years has allowed us to make.

In the meantime, we continue to take pride in the achievements and progress of the children and young people we support, and this newsletter contains some lovely stories of their successes. In the last month, we have also welcomed Alok Rai to our team as Project Support Officer, working with Aashwin in Darjeeling. His arrival increases our capacity in India and our ability to support children and their families.

Finally, we have had some great fundraising success lately with the post-covid return of our annual Golf Day in Yorkshire, and we have some more events coming up which we would love for you to be involved with.

I hope you enjoy reading our latest news. A huge thank you as always for your continued support, which is changing young lives for the better thousands of miles away.



Katie Carr, Chair

EXCITING TIMES AT THE KBM CHILDREN'S HOME

It is late summer 2023 and, as the monsoon rains envelop the town of Darjeeling in mists and downpours are frequent events, construction work at the Children's Home is finally coming to a close. Luckily, the structural work to provide a new kitchen and storeroom, an office, and accommodation for Pema Bhante (the monk in charge) was all finished before the rains began, so now activities are concentrating on fitting out and completing internal tasks.

In addition to construction of buildings, a new security fence has been erected next to a public footpath to ensure that the children are kept safe from intruders, and the open parts of the site will be landscaped to provide a sitting and recreation area for the young people. There are other benefits too, as new computers are on order to allow the older students to develop their IT skills.

The activities room where the new computers will be placed will be fitted out with new shelving and desks to create a comfortable working environment. Whilst the building work is going on, other activities continue. DCT funds the employment of two supervisors to support Pema Bhante and help him with the Home's administration. They have also made a huge difference in ensuring that dormitories and bathrooms are kept tidy and clean, that children do their homework, and that there is someone for the children to come to if they have a problem.



EXCITING TIMES AT THE KBM CHILDREN'S HOME

The health and well-being of the young people is regularly monitored as DCT funds regular visits by the doctor and nurses, together with eye camps and dental camps which are held twice a year. At the most recent eye camp, 32 children and young people were provided with glasses, which will be a huge help for them both in daily life and at school.



Other aspects of life are not neglected. There are weekly yoga classes which are popular with both boys and girls; the girls enjoy the weekend vocational training class in needlework skills; and maths tuition has helped some of the older students who were struggling with their studies in this subject. All funded by DCT's supporters!

DCT's thanks go to the United Nations Women's Guild, the Hope Foundation and the carol singers of Arlesheim, Switzerland and, of course, all the people who have supported this project over the last 10 years! We will issue a special newsletter in early autumn to show where we started and what has been achieved with everyone's help - you have all been amazing in keeping faith with the idea that one day DCT will have helped provide a safe and secure home for 100 children and young people.
Thank you!



Marilyn Adams, Trustee

STAYING DRY IN THE RAINS

Gifting Umbrellas

As the monsoon season graces the beautiful landscape of Darjeeling, we consider ourselves fortunate that this year, the region has been spared from major landslides, unlike some other parts of India. The clouds and sun play a mesmerising game of hide and seek, painting the hills in vibrant colours. Amidst the beauty of nature, we remain vigilant, believing that precaution is always better than cure. During the peak monsoon season, we took extra care of our sponsored children by distributing high-quality umbrellas to shield them from the rains. Witnessing the joy on their faces as they received these umbrellas was truly heartwarming.



Ramlal Dhura Visit

Situated on hilly terrain next to Singtam Tea Garden, Ramlal Dhura is a small and close-knit community with 65 houses. Home to approximately 42 children, six of whom are currently sponsored by DCT, this is an area so isolated that even many of the local people in the main town of Darjeeling are not aware of it. Project Manager Aashwin made a special visit to the village to distribute umbrellas and other rain gear that will be invaluable in keeping the children dry and healthy through the monsoon, which usually continues until September, and sometimes even beyond.



MONSOON MEHENDI

Punam Beauty Parlour

At Punam Beauty Parlour, our trainee beauticians have been learning the technique of applying mehendi (also commonly known as henna).

The history of mehendi in India stretches back to the 12th century, and Indian weddings are incomplete without it. Interestingly, mehendi also has an important role to play during the rainy season in the Darjeeling Hills. Not only is it believed to bring good luck but, thanks to its antibacterial and antimicrobial properties, mehendi also helps to prevent skin issues and other bugs that enjoy the damp monsoon conditions. The scent and coolness of mehendi also reduce stress and this is one of the reasons why it is considered to be extremely important.

The peak of the monsoon season, 'Sawan', is the fifth month of the Hindu calendar - as this is a very special month for many Hindus to worship Lord Shiva, the application of mehendi may also have a religious significance.

There are lots of beautiful Sawan mehendi designs available. Mandala mehendi designs are a popular choice - meaning 'circle' in Sanskrit, these designs are intricate and beautiful, and can be seen as artistic representations of a perfect universe. Mehendi symbols are often incorporated to add extra meanings to a design; some popular symbols include the lotus flower, the Om symbol, and the shankha (conch shell). Mehendi animals are a fun and playful way that some women use to add a touch of personality to their mehendi design. Some popular animals include elephants, peacocks, and lions.

I think you'll agree that our trainee beauticians are coming along fantastically in their practice of this beautiful traditional decorative technique.



RECRUITMENT

ALOK RAI - PROJECT ASSISTANT



Thanks to Aashwin's amazing skills in forging connections with individuals keen to help our cause, and the associated hard work he has put in, our projects have seen remarkable success over the last two years. As we take on more exciting ventures, the workload has grown, and we are now very happy to welcome Alok Rai onto our team as Project Assistant.

Alok joined DCT in July 2023 with the strong desire to work alongside Aashwin and provide invaluable assistance in DCT's important projects. With a knack for keeping computer records and a natural talent for dealing with sponsored children, Alok ensures that project data is efficiently organised and readily accessible while making a meaningful impact on the lives of the children. Beyond his professional role, Alok dedicates his free time to riding his Royal Enfield motorbike with the Darjeeling Enfielders Club, actively collecting donations and helping those in need, showcasing his commitment to social causes.

Meanwhile, in the UK, we will be launching a recruitment campaign to find a new Chair for DCT. Look out for more details in September, and please consider applying if you think you have the skills and experience to join our fantastic Board and be part of making a difference to children's lives.

PROJECTS IN DARJEELING

Education

In education, we are delighted to share the success of many young adults who have completed their schooling (class 12) with good results. Under the guidance of Mr. Pradhan, our dedicated career counsellor, they have chosen their respective fields of study from a wide array of college degrees. Some have also embarked on a journey to become beauticians, while a new batch is eagerly preparing to start their Hotel Management course this mid-August.



Food and Craft Institute (FCI)



The previous batch of Hotel Management students is currently undergoing real-time industrial training at the esteemed Radisson Hotel in a metropolitan city of India - Mysore. For many of these young adults, this is their first time leaving the hills of Darjeeling, and we continue to provide them with pocket expenses and advice to thrive in the city. The journey from the tea gardens of Darjeeling to the cities is an eye-opener for them, and as they venture for a better life, their parents are proud of them and hopeful for a better future.

Health & Well-being

We have successfully eliminated cases of scabies during the rainy season at KBM, and our children there now have a dedicated space for their clothes. Regular visits by doctors and nurses have significantly improved the health and hygiene of the children, and we are also nurturing their physical and mental well-being through yoga classes.



PROJECTS IN DARJEELING

Maths Tuition

Meanwhile, the children are learning maths from their teacher and have shown significant improvement in their understanding of the subject.



Nursing



The four nursing students have been working hard and some have even started their practical work in hospitals. They celebrated Nurse Day this year by demonstrating their presenting and acting skills, and rejoiced with their seniors and friends.

Other News

Vocational training at the children's home also includes knitting, sewing and crochet, which are favourite activities for some of the girls, as they get to showcase their creative crafting skills.

As we progress into the second half of 2023, we are excited to work on upcoming projects that will further benefit our children, both at KBM and outside.



We extend our gratitude to each one of you for being a part of Darjeeling Children's Trust and for contributing to our mission. Together, we are making a significant difference in the lives of these children and their families, empowering them to build a brighter future.



NOTABLE SUCCESSES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Our trust takes immense pride in having children who have excelled in various fields.

Sania Ansar

Sania has been awarded as the topper of Higher Secondary Board exams in her final year of her school, St Teresa's. A really incredible achievement!



Ashwini Tamang

In extra co-curricular activities, Ashwini of Class 12 has been crowned Miss Darjeeling in the recent district-wide beauty pageant contest.



Diwakar Karki

Diwakar represented the state in a national badminton ranking tournament held in Guwahati, finishing with an impressive all-India under-17s ranking of number 5.



Sohan Chettri

Sohan also competed in a national badminton ranking tournament in Kolkata, making it all the way through to the third round. Congratulations on a determined performance!



DARJEELING CUP

Forty-four golfers clubbed together to enjoy another successful charity golf day.

The event was held at Pontefract and District Golf Club on 23rd June, whereupon we were blessed with fantastic weather conditions and a course in great condition.

Special congratulations to Jim Fisher, our Darjeeling Cup '23 winner for the third time, on his fantastic round with no fewer than five birdies, and well done to Steve Bethel for an amazing hole-in-one (our first ever!) at the tough 7th par 3.

I'm delighted to report that we had five mixed doubles pairs in the competition – another first.

Taking into account donations towards the day as well as Gift Aid, the event achieved net fundraising for DCT of £5433 – a wonderful contribution that will make a huge impact to the lives of children in Darjeeling.

Some of the highlights:-

Hole-in-one & shot of the day: Steve Bethel
(7th sponsored by Damian Nelson)

Nearest Pin 14th: Graham Nash
(Sponsored by Dace Print Ltd)

Nearest Pin 17th: John Bagshaw
(Sponsored by Margaret & Stephen Wildridge)

Longest Drive 18th: Andrew Johnson
(sponsored by Phil Bradshaw)

Team 1st Place with 93 points:
Mark Needham, Glenn Coburn, Paul Bailey, Rob Oadley

Laughing Buddha: Jack Amery

Darjeeling Cup Winner with 40 points: Jim Fisher

A special thanks to Sue Gavins and all other helpers for their enthusiastic support.

Look forward to seeing you all in 2024!



UPCOMING EVENTS - SAVE THE DATE!

Stay up to date at: darjeelingchildrenstrust DarjChildTrust darjchildtrust

* SEPTEMBER *

10K FOR £10K

Following our successful event in 2021, we are busy coming up with creative ways to raise funds for our exciting '10k for £10k' this autumn! Hugh is on a mission to connect with 100 people to join him on a scenic walk. Brave new trustees, Matt and Jen, are in training to run 10k, and Aashwin will be riding his motorbike along the challenging mountainous dirt roads to Sikkim (over 70km from Darjeeling). **We invite you to cover 10km using any method you prefer, be it running, walking, cycling, or any other imaginative way you can think of!** Together, we can conquer 10km and achieve our shared goal of reaching a £10,000 fundraising target to support our future work.



* SUNDAY 26th NOVEMBER *

ONLINE CELEBRATION

To celebrate the successful completion of our ambitious Children's Home construction project, join us for a short online programme that will connect us directly with the Delhi architect behind the wonderful bespoke design, our Project Manager in Darjeeling, and the some of the children whose lives have been transformed by their fabulous new accommodation. Trustee Marilyn will also present an overview of this inspirational project, which has spanned an eventful decade. Ensure you mark your calendars to be part of this special event!

Event starts at 2:00PM

SAVE THE DATE

**26
11
23**

CHILDREN'S HOME COMPLETION

UPCOMING EVENTS - SAVE THE DATE!

Stay up to date at: darjeelingchildrenstrust DarjChildTrust darjchildtrust

* 6th AUGUST- LATE DECEMBER *

LONDON TO SINGAPORE EXPEDITION

First tackled by two Land Rover teams from Oxford and Cambridge in 1955, London to Singapore is the 'original' overland journey.

Now, you can join Tom Waring and his crew of three travelling in two Land Rover Defender 110's as they cover approximately 14,500 very demanding miles, often via remote regions and on poor roads, on a route that takes them through 21 countries from the UK to reach the finish line in Singapore, hopefully before December 25th.

The Expedition's purpose is to raise significant funds for children's charities that the crew are visiting en-route, one of which is DCT!

Join the Land Rover crews' incredible journey at: london2singapore.com
or via their Instagram @[london2singaporeexpedition](https://www.instagram.com/london2singaporeexpedition)

* JANUARY 2024 *

THE GORAS RICKSHAW RUN

Join London-based Mitchell Dickens and his friend Adam Green on an incredible journey. From Fort Kochi in southern India to Gangtok (via Darjeeling), they're embarking on an epic 3500km auto-rickshaw ride!

Mitchell, who trained as a teacher and has taught in Nepal, later found his true path as a painter and decorator. When the pair learnt of DCT's plan to repaint the Children's Home, they reset their original fundraising goal of £1-2k up to £5400 to achieve this mission.



Follow their adventure and get involved at: www.thegorasrickshawrun.com

Visit their fundraising page at: www.justgiving.com/team/thegorasrickshawrun