

MISSIONARY

HERALD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 1985 20p

VENTURING INTO BENGAL



Editorial Comment

MODERN technology has made it possible for us to see what other countries are like. The powerful medium of television constantly flashes impressions of the world before our eyes, focusing our attention on this need and that sensational happening. But they are always someone else's viewpoints. Film has to be edited and others decide what we should see.

Some things can only be known by actually going to another country. There is no substitute for the first-hand experience — the sights, and smells, the sounds, the heat and just entering into an atmosphere and culture which is different.

Ready to learn

This was the experience of nine young people, who, earlier this year, had the privilege of setting out on a 'Venture into Bengal'. They came from different parts of the British Isles and they set out with differing preconceptions and for varying reasons. But they all went to learn more of other countries and their people, to share fellowship with the Church and ready to be surprised.

There was, inevitably, some culture shock, moments of depression and times when they were overwhelmed by the immensity of the poverty and the problems facing so many. 'What can we do about it all?' There was a sense of helplessness. Yet the dignity of people living in great material poverty, their friendship and generous hospitality, the smiling faces of the children and, above all, the certainty of joy and oneness in Christ at the great sunrise service on Easter morning, are memories which will abide with the 'Venture' group for ever.

What is God saying?

No one returned to Britain unchanged. Each came back with a mind buzzing with questions and thoughts which needed to be sorted out. Some are spending time prayerfully wondering what God is saying to them through their experiences. It was a journey of a lifetime and the effects of it will go on spreading through them into the life and work of the churches at home.

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Angola	India	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	Jamaica	Trinidad
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A sign of great hope



Discrimination

There is a feeling among some Christians of discrimination and the setting up of businesses and the provision of capital were cited as specific examples of this. One Bangladesh Christian told me of his fear of personal violence and related the story of the Baptist Church at Narayangang, which, earlier in the year, had been destroyed allegedly by Muslim fundamentalists. This person felt a disillusionment with man and the full force of Jesus' words in John 8:12 struck home:

I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

The emphasis of many other Bangladesh Christians was on the victory that there is in Christ and this is borne out by the emphasis in modern Bengali hymns of being 'washed in the blood of Christ and I will fear no ill'. This spirit of confidence was manifested in the case

That's what the BMS – Sangha partnership is says Iwan Davies

The resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism has undoubted connotations for Christians. In a sense Islam gives the country its national identity and indeed Bangladesh claims to house the largest Moslem population in the world. This may be evidenced by the prolific number of mosques which are currently under construction or on the other hand this may reflect a political initiative especially since Bangladesh increasingly looks to the rich Arab oil states for financial aid.

THE Venturers into Bengal gained first hand experience of meeting fellow Christians who were citizens of Bangladesh. It is true to say that the internationalized Christian experience is the same world-wide and therefore it is only possible to comment on some of the external difficulties which I, as a member of the BMS party, gleaned in our comparatively short stay in Bangladesh.

The very structure of society in Bangladesh is Moslem and predominantly Shi'ite. Herein lay the rationale for the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, a fact in itself which led to bitter war of independence out of which the modern state of Bangladesh emerged in the early 1970's. So Bangladesh is a young nation and naturally is experiencing growing pains. In this context, the Christian community which forms no more than 0.3 per cent of the population of over 100 million finds itself.



Venture Party with Bangladeshi Christians

of a small village outside Ruhea. Here the Church had been blown down and the women's fellowship gave all of their money and reconstructed the Church themselves, the children laying the bricks, which formed part of the foundations of the church building.

Practical support

The great significance of the work of the BMS is the practical support it gives in all fields of human activity including church work, education, health, agriculture and engineering. The close co-operation with other Christian organizations emphasized not doctrinal niceties (orthodoxy), but rather the curing of the sick, the alleviation of suffering and injustice, which could be called orthopraxis:

*That we may care, as Thou hast cared,
For sick and lame, for deaf and blind,
And freely share, as Thou hast shared,
In all the sorrows of mankind.*

In this context a strong feature of Bangladesh society is what can only be described as 'the medicalization of life'. The number of medicine shops is prolific, and all medicines are available without a prescription of any kind. Indeed, even when a Bangladeshi consults a doctor often over six drugs will be prescribed, many of which are unnecessary. This could suggest an element of collusion between the doctors and the medicine shops or alternatively reflects the ignorance of the doctors in the analysis of symptoms. The medicine is looked upon as 'western magic' and costs



easily 200 taka (£6) when the average monthly wage is only 600 taka.

Leprosy work

The medical work of the BMS is an important aspect of Christian witness. The work is often carried on amongst the very poor and dispossessed such as for example the mission to leprosy victims at the Wireless colony in Chittagong. The colony is largely made up of Bihari Muslims who sided with West Pakistan during the War of Independence and consequently they are largely ignored by the government.

In Chandraghona and Ruhea medical care is available without regard to recouping the cost of treatment. Both rich (who will pay in full) and poor alike stand together and await their turn for treatment. This emphasises the equality of all before God. This mode of behaviour is of great significance in a Muslim country because although in principle under Islam all men are equal

as servants of the one God, differences of sex and social status are certainly not ignored. Thus the subordinate role of women is greatly in evidence and here the work of BMS in conjunction with the YWCA provides some relief. One example is a paper-making project in a small village outside Barisal, which is open to all women irrespective of religion. This provides a life-saving income for deserted or widowed wives.

Partnership

The partnership between the BMS and the Bangladesh Baptist Sangha (BBS) is a sign of great hope. There is real autonomy and this is important in a country which is politically volatile and which at any time may expel foreign missionaries. The work done is multifarious and includes several social projects.

In a very real sense the lasting impression which I have of the Christian in Bangladesh is that of a 'suffering servant' and this is a fitting vocation for all Christians irrespective of nationality:

*I cannot tell how He will win the nations,
How He will claim this earthly heritage,
How satisfy the needs and aspirations of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory,
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown,
And some glad day His sun shall shine in splendour
When He the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.*



Taking a look at medical work

AFTER a whirlwind trip of three weeks, how does one start to convey impressions and images which are still so vivid yet unco-ordinated. Here are a few disjointed thoughts.

Many medicines are readily available to the general public, if they can afford to buy them. Antibiotics can be bought over the counter so, if you can only afford one tablet, you only buy one! This then leads to problems of resistant bacteria. (Everyone who has had a course of antibiotics from their GP is familiar with the emphasis placed on completing the course.) Potent steroids are also readily available and in some places are advertised as 'making your child grow strong and healthy', with the result that a mother will spend what money she has on these potentially dangerous drugs, rather than on nutritious food. The availability of steroids also causes problems with leprosy patients where steroids are used in the management of some complications of the treatment. Patients are aware of this and buy their own, but then use them inappropriately, causing further problems in the long term management.

No privacy

It was interesting to visit the Christian hospital at Chandraghona after already having visited the government teaching hospital at Barisal. Compared with British hospitals there was a lack of privacy and a degree of overcrowding but this was much more noticeable in Barisal than in Chandraghona. In neither hospital were relatives sleeping and cooking around the patients, as one reads about in some less developed countries. The equipment in both hospitals was basic but effective and made one wonder how much money is wanted in the NHS.

The new Leprosy Hospital at Chandraghona is very impressive and long overdue. The old hospital is

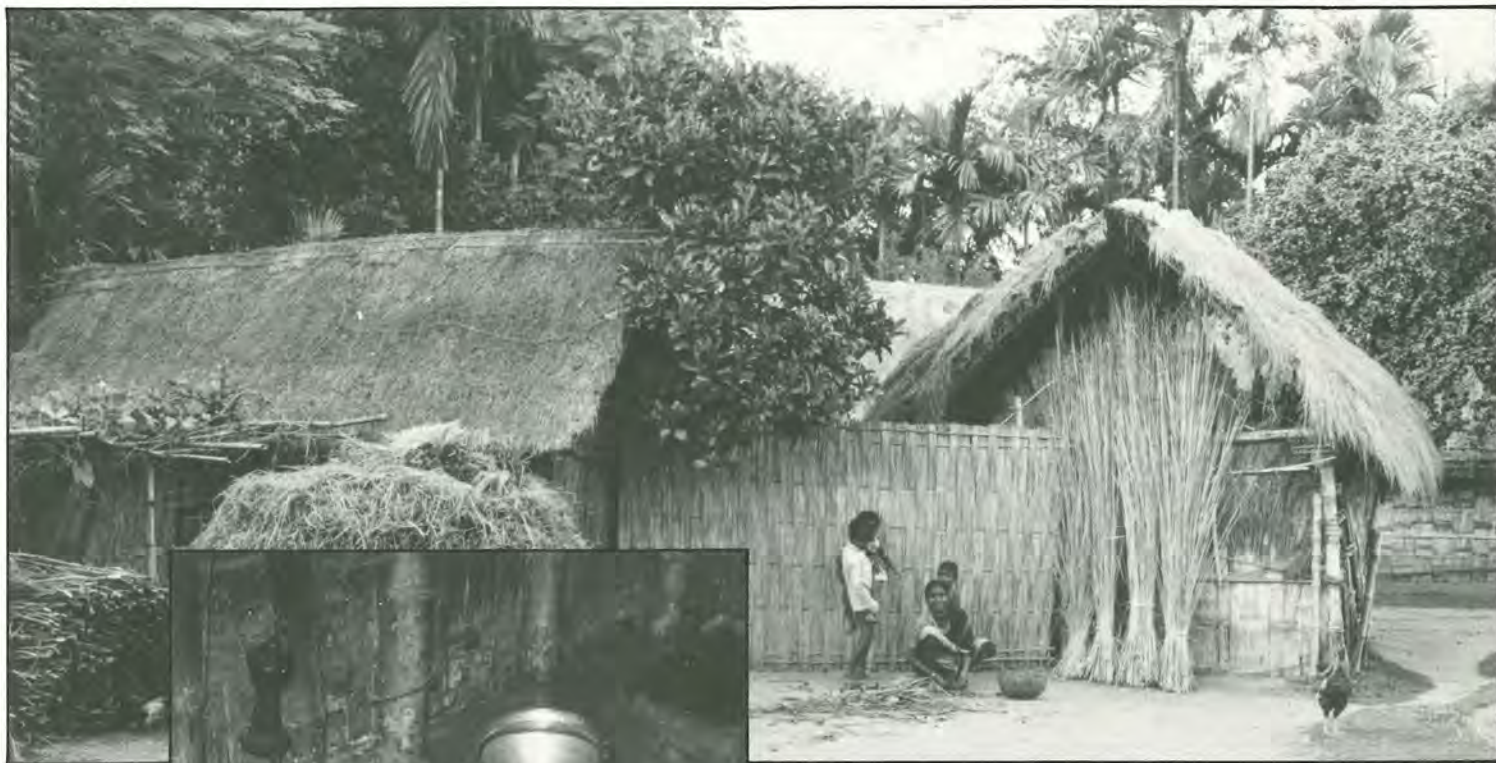
housed in several separate buildings on the top of a hill and the physiotherapy department consists of a table on the verandah! One can only begin to imagine the problems the staff must have during the monsoons! The new hospital is very light and spacious, with four male wards and one female ward, all in one building. Leprosy is not normally more common in males but, due to the culture, men tend to present themselves for treatment more often than ladies. The funding for the hospital came from Holland, through the Leprosy Mission, and there is an operating theatre, laboratory and physiotherapy department, in addition to the wards.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition is a big problem. We saw a two and a half year old child who, since the birth of her younger brother, had been fed only rice water. The mother, however, was obviously disappointed when all she was given at the clinic was milk powder. She did not regard this as medicine!

It was in the rural clinics, both around Chandraghona and Ruhea, that the real need became apparent. National doctors seem to have no incentive to work in these areas, preferring the more developed places. The clinics run by Suzanne Roberts and Sue Headlam attract patients from considerable distances. Because of this, they cannot be asked to come back the following week for further investigations – anything which needs doing has to be done there and then. The results of tests must be available immediately in order that treatment can be started. It was interesting to learn that a small charge is normally made for medicines, as it is part of their culture to consider that things are worthless if they are free – how different to the attitude in Britain, where people object to paying £2 for their NHS prescription.

by Dr J M Prentice



Clay ovens

A fervour of

Unfinished buildings

In travelling around one gains the impression of a fervour of building activity which is carried out to no regulated standard nor which is the subject of close scrutiny by the planning authority. The result, in the city particularly, is a curious combination of house types and sizes dependent on the needs or whims of the individual owner. Many houses are constructed or extended as their owners obtain the capital to finance the building and it is a common sight to see concrete uprights with the reinforcement rods projecting from the top. This serves two purposes — the owner can extend upwards as and when required and, in the meantime, he escapes paying tax on what is, technically, an unfinished building (and which may remain so).

Building and repair goes on apace before the commencement of the wet season, especially as mud bricks are usually sunbaked. In rural areas it is usual for houses to be constructed of timber with walls of mud brick and daub or woven bamboo panels. Roofs would either be of thatch or tin. These houses tend to be set on a raised earth

ON my return home from Bangladesh I prevented two starlings from completing a nest in my house roof. Their bewilderment over the next day was a poignant reminder of the plight of many whom I saw in Bangladesh and Calcutta who have no secure home in which to settle and raise a family.

About 90 per cent of houses in Bangladesh are owned by the people who live in them (many occupied by more than one family unit). In economic terms, as Bangladesh is a poor although developing country, a relatively low proportion of its gross domestic product is invested in housing although the Government states one of its objectives as being the provision of housing for its citizens. This is no mean task as Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries on Earth, the population of Dhaka alone being expected to increase from three to ten million in the next ten years.

Private housing development is encouraged and public or state provision occurs through construction or development of residential plots. A letter, printed in a national newspaper during our visit, outlines the writer's view of the current situation in Dhaka for the 'common people'. He complains of a chronic shortage of rentable housing enabling private landlords to fix high rents due to demand and the lack of competition. Available state housing remains, basically, the preserve of Government employees. I was informed that the 'common people' were not the destitute or poor but rather those who can afford to rent, but find this difficult at the inflated rent prices. I was told that a foreigner, in competition with a Bangladeshi is more likely to succeed in securing rented accommodation for two reasons: the ability to pay the rent asked and that a Bangladeshi landlord gains status by having a foreign tenant and knows that his property will be cared for.



John McArthur reports on housing

building activity

base to help avoid water inflow during the monsoons. Grainstores and haystacks can be seen constructed on small stilts for the same purpose.

Houses range from the sublime (pukka houses with all mod cons including air conditioning) to horrifying (makeshift lean-to's against walls in the city or squat hovels no more than 6 x 8 feet alongside the railway track). Drains and sewers, where they exist, are open, providing a breeding ground for mosquitoes and disease. Animals and poultry are free to scavenge while naked children, as malnourished and diseased-ridden as their desperately poor parents, play in the dirt and squalor as railway trains carry tourists amongst others, rhythmically by. And

yet more than one person in the group commented on the dignity which many of the poor showed, despite their desperately poor state. Many of them are displaced refugees, many exchange life in a poor, rural area for life in an urban environment which, from our viewpoint, could hardly be said to be an improvement in circumstance.

Prone to destruction

Insubstantial housing is prone to destruction either by fire or storm. It happened by hailstorm during our visit and of course, more disastrously, due to nature's cyclonic forces soon after our return home. Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries and the results of people building their homes on low lying, flat, alluvial delta land have been well chronicled and displayed on our television screens.

The substantial, pukka buildings in which I stayed during my visit could resist such disasters better than the more insubstantial, poorer quality housing. However, even those pukka houses (none of which were deluxe by any standard) could be said to be other than functional: cool terazza floors throughout the house feel welcomed under the feet swollen from the heat: toilets will either be squat or 'throne' type; showers, fed from roof cisterns, can deliver water heated by the sun; ceiling fans set at high speed can keep your skin dry for as long as you can stand under them; gauze window blinds help keep out the mosquitoes,

wrought-iron grills help keep out other unwelcome visitors; tik-tikis (buff coloured lizards) devour some of the remaining mosquitoes although even the most careful precautions cannot totally prevent the nuisance of ants or cockroaches (especially in the shower).

Apart from the privilege of staying in the home of a Bangladeshi pastor I would like to recount several other experiences I had of housing during my visit.

Christian families

During our visit to Barisal, in the south, the group was split in order to visit two of the 'paras' or communities, consisting mainly of Christian families. Whilst our group wended its way along sometimes precarious footpaths — we were warned not to step on snakes in the dark — we passed small, timber houses set amidst the lush greenery of various fruit trees and bushes — pawpaw, lychee and jackfruit to name but a few. Some families were having their usual evening meal prepared on the traditional outdoor mud stove. The layout of the para was difficult to judge because of the numerous pukurs (water holes) which continually forced us to change direction. The scooping-out of these water holes by hand allows houses to be built on a raised mud platform as well as providing a source of water, and often fish, year round. In William Para our group was

treated to a *ceilidh*, Bangladesh-style. While passing by we were invited in to 'see' one house. Once inside we were promptly served with food and tea, and in the cramped surrounding with timber walls covered by all sorts of pictures, we were treated to dancing, singing and instrument playing by our hosts young daughters. I also saw my first firefly as its turquoise tip blinked, while crawling across my face. We left the house in happy, tired and overfed state remembering to duck at the low doorway (I forgot once).

Another memory is of a brief rest in a Muslim home in Chittagong. Following a visit round a deprived area, inhabited mainly by Biharis (these people supported West Pakistan in the war of independence in 1970), we were to congregate at the house of Jamal, a former leprosy sufferer, who does an excellent public relations job for the leprosy clinic work in his locality. His home is in the middle of one of a number of long, terraced rows of houses, with access down a dusty, dirty track and entered by stepping over an open drain into an enclosed courtyard. Once inside, however, with the gate closed against the raucous clamour of children's voices, the coolness of shade from the blazing sun and the simple beauty of a home devoid of ornamentation is appreciated. This small house was kept so clean and tidy that the floor had a glazed look.

Village homes

A visit to the northern village of Fokirganj gave opportunity to see mud houses with thatched roofs, a kitchen

in process of construction, the almost empty *pukurs* awaiting rain, women threshing and winnowing in house forecourts, the tubewell handpump delivering safe drinking water, chickens scratching and goats gambolling under the leafy, green shade of fruit trees.

One of the village men showed us his home, consisting of two rooms one of which was now used to help protect his cattle. This was necessary due to repeated attacks by *dacoits*. It was explained that a family (in our terms an extended family) might have a number of dwellings round a central courtyard. His families' homes were built on his own land close to his fields in which he would eventually be buried.

Finally there is the groups' 'home in the air', a temporary one provided by *Bangladesh Biman*, the national airline. However, even though *Biman* lived up to its advertised, excellent service it does not begin to compare with the home which God has prepared for His children.

Remember the birds I dispossessed of their home to be? The scriptures say that God allows even sparrows and swallows to find shelter. For ourselves, rather than merely waiting for the day when we discover how lovely God's places are and sharing them with our brothers and sisters who have not enjoyed the comfortable conditions most of us enjoy, what can we do to improve their lot now?

THE drive and incentive to develop and improve has been in man throughout history. The cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 ('Fill the earth and subdue it') makes clear the desirability of development. The west's narrow interpretation of it, seeing it as primarily producing as much as possible, has led to many problems yet we would be unlikely to doubt the desirability of economic growth when considering a country like Bangladesh.

My preconception of the economic state of Bangladesh was of a desperately poor nation, largely dependant on foreign aid for its survival. Although an aspect of truth, our visit showed that this was by no means the whole truth. Perhaps the thing that struck me most was the incredible diversity of the nation's economic state. The luxurious Sheraton hotel, in Dhaka with beggars not more than fifty yards away from it was perhaps the most blatant example. Then there was the extraordinary sight of a small one room house in a village in which eleven people slept. The house did not even possess a bed, yet in the corner of the room, running off a car battery, was a stereo cassette/radio.

It is easy to be judgemental about such things, yet if I were in the same position, and had enough money, such a source of music would have been extremely desirable. However, it indicated very clearly that development is seen primarily as following the west. It was sad to hear one young Bengali describe Bangladesh as a 'rubbish country'. He couldn't understand why we had visited it. His main reason for seeing it as 'rubbish' appeared to be lack of extravagant



Development in Bangladesh

Showing God's care



by **Steve Munday**

motor cars, good houses and other signs of western economic development. I wanted to tell him that, in many ways, like the tremendous hospitality of the people, Bangladesh was richer than Britain. Yet the economic development of Britain had allowed me to make any sort of comparison at all.

Travelling through the country I was greatly struck by the fertility of much of the land – not great dry barren areas, but green fields and plentiful water. Brickworks also littered the countryside (useful for road

construction). But perhaps the overwhelming impression was of people everywhere and anywhere. It was impossible to go somewhere where there were no people. Wandering around some of the narrow back streets of Dhaka I was amazed to see people, especially children, crammed in every corner. I suddenly felt that all foreign 'help' could do little in the face of such a vast sea of humanity. Any real movement would have to come from the people themselves.

Yet this is Bangladesh's greatest resource – people. Surely it is here

that any future economic development must lie. If ever there were a clear case of a country calling for Schumacher's intermediate technology to develop the potential of the people, it must be Bangladesh. Yet it seems unlikely to happen. The west has set the pattern for world economic development, and others follow. We learnt of a new textile factory that is to start production soon, very similar in mould to those in Korea. Many women will be employed, working long hours to produce cheap cloth and being paid 30 or 40 pence a day for doing so. It is easy to feel appalled, yet that money earned is a good deal better than nothing. Certainly, this new factory might point the way to Bangladesh developing along similar lines to Korea.

But, what of all this from a Christian standpoint? Theories of economic development often link the rise of non-conformist Christianity in Europe with the Industrial Revolution. Certainly the Islamic and Hindu way of thought accepting things as they are, as they have been ordained to be, is not one likely to lead to much innovation and development. We heard from some missionaries of the dissatisfaction of many Muslims with the fruit of their religion. As we believe Christ is the only answer to man's true needs, then perhaps the nation of Bangladesh may only develop in a fruitful fashion if it is under Christ's guidance. There is certainly no doubt that the most impressive pieces of economic development that we saw in the country were projects originating from Christian organisations. Perhaps for myself that was one of the best parts of the trip – Christians showing God's care for every aspect of people's lives.



WHILST education in Bangladesh is supposed to be compulsory at primary level, it is almost impossible to enforce. With over 80 per cent of its nearly 100,000 people living in villages, providing free education became a mammoth task.

Some areas may have a school in the largest village, but this means that children from other nearby communities will have to walk anything from two to five miles to get to school. The footpaths are often only baked mud tracks raised four or five feet above the low lying paddy fields. Walking becomes impossible when the land floods due to monsoon rains or other naturally occurring calamities. Consequently, 90 per cent of the population is illiterate.

Village schools

The Bangladesh Baptist Sangha have about 60 village schools. These are often held in the same building that houses the church. A fee of between 50p and £1.50 is charged per child per year. Primary school teachers will have had no special training other than completing matriculation. They earn about £20 a month. Children learn a variety of subjects including English, which they start at six in the first year.

The school is divided into five classes. Each pupil has to pass at the end of each year in order to go up into the next class, otherwise the year is repeated. There are seven teachers, each teaching every subject, but they move around the classes.

Class 1 has 160 children with two teachers

Class 2 has 111	
3	80
4	81
5	70

The numbers fall away as the children get older because the boys are needed to work in the fields and the girls often marry at eleven or twelve. This school has an incentive scheme to keep the children within the education process and gives prizes for good attendance to both child and parents. If seven days schooling are missed in one month then parents are threatened with the removal of the child's name from the school roll.

High Schools

We were warmly welcomed at both the Boys' and Girls' Baptist Mission High School at Barisal. At both we were presented with flowers and greeted with songs, and at the Girls' School a dance of welcome was performed for us. These schools were founded in 1914 and many of the Baptist leaders in Bangladesh studied there.

The fees at the schools are 100T (about £3) per month for tuition and board. About 20 per cent of schools are on free places. The subjects studied are similar to those at Chandraghona but include geography, history, economics, PE and elective science as well.

At all the schools we were stared at with big, curious brown eyes and were the cause of many a giggle. We were

Increasing Education in by E.V.

told that before coming to school the children would have had a rice meal and a bath.

School starts at 10.45 am with everyone lining up for the raising of the Bangladesh flag and singing the national anthem.

The high schools cater for the children up to matriculation, so these teachers are highly qualified and will have studied for a degree. Their salaries are about £70 per month. There are twelve staff at the boys' school, five are Christians, three Muslim and four Hindu.

There are 475 pupils altogether. 125 are boarders. They sleep side by side on wooden trestle beds about two feet apart. But Bangladeshis are used to having little personal space — it is part of the culture. They come from a mixture of religious backgrounds as the school has a very good reputation.

Sisir Halder, the headmaster and also the Sunday School superintendent at the Baptist Church, proudly showed us round. He told us that in last year's matriculation secondary school certificate in the humanities section, nine out of ten passed and in the science section, 16 out of 19 had passed.



W.E.L. . . . spells 'welcome'

g literacy

Bangladesh

Webb

We were impressed by the discipline, behaviour and good manners of the girls at the High School. We were shown round by the headmistress, Lila Halidar, and introduced to her staff.

It was delightful to visit the school attached to the YWCA in Barisal and to be greeted in English by each class. A class of 30 aged about eight years old recited 'Here we go round the mulberry bush' —

Dis is dee way we clean our teef on a cold and fwosti mornin.

We wondered when they had ever seen a cold and frosty morning!

Chandraghona

The school at Chandraghona was started by BMS, but was taken over by the government in 1965. It is housed on the top of the hill behind the hospital in a series of rather dark and gloomy classrooms in a single storey concrete block.

There are 502 children on the roll coming from a three mile radius. Besides working on the land the families also work at the big Karnaphuli paper mill and the local bazaar. The headmistress felt that 75 per cent of the children wanted to learn. The subjects covered are: Bengali, maths, English, social studies, science, religion, art and craft.



Blind school

The most exciting piece of education we saw in Bangladesh was the work of the blind school. At the other institutions the learning was being done by rote. There seemed to be very little thinking and working things out for themselves. No apparatus was being used with the little children, and no learning by playing. But at the blind school we saw blind girls learning to count by using small blocks which would clip together, learning to dance by holding the ankles of the teacher and feeling where she placed her feet, learning to read and write using Braille techniques and learning to spin and weave in the workshops. It was amazing what they were able to accomplish.

The work was started by Veronica Campbell with five girls in 1977 as a result of many requests for education for blind girls. So the first two are coming up for matriculation. There are 61 girls at the school, which is housed in a beautiful set of buildings provided by funds from the Christoffel Blinden Mission of West Germany. The blindness is caused by many factors, cataracts, vitamin deficiencies, damage of the optic nerve, but the saddest case we found was that of an older girl who had had acid thrown into her face by the man she had refused to marry.

Part of the work at the school is the Braille printing press, which produces the only Braille text books for the matriculation courses in the whole of the country.

Comments from those who have a longer and wider experience of education in Bangladesh than I suggest that the standard is not very high throughout Bangladesh. But in a country that has progressed 200 years in 50, it is gratifying to see so much effort going to increase the literacy of the population. On July 1st, the country entered the third five year plan. Today, less than 26 per cent of the population are numerate and literate and 75 per cent are completely illiterate. Present enrolment at school is 38 per cent for 6-10 age. The aim in the next five years is to increase this to 70 per cent and to ensure that the children complete five years of schooling. It is good to realise that the Bangladesh Baptist Sangha will be playing a part in achieving this goal. Let us pray that the work that the Social Institutions board of the Sangha is doing in the schools, may go forward in the strength of Christ, and that through the examples of Christian teachers many may not only gain knowledge but also the knowledge of Christ and his gospel.

AMAR PET KHARAP



What the missionaries thought

*President Ershad, President Ershad
lend us your Biman
All along down along out along lee.
For we want to see Bangladesh if we
can,
With:*

*Iwan Davies, Malcolm Evans, John
McArthur, Alison Measurer, Steve
Munday, Janet Prentice, Margaret
Smithyman, Roy Treadaway,
Elizabeth Webb . . .*

*Old Auntie Sue Le Quesne and all
Old Auntie Sue Le Quesne and all.*

And so they came the intrepid travellers, venturing into the Hill Tracts, and we the intrepid hostesses awaited their arrival with . . . trepidation! After all it is not every day that we are called upon to provide hospitality for ten brave British Baptists. We had just decided to fortify ourselves with a cup of tea when the unmistakable sound of the Hospital mini-bus was heard bouncing its way over the last few yards of our well-worn red brick road. We took a deep breath and rushed out to welcome our visitors. And there they were, the young and the not so young, the known and the yet to be known falling out of the vehicle. Some were looking rather red having no doubt spent a little too long in the powerful tropical sun; others were white as sheets, almost ghostly in their pallor, a result probably of a very hard British winter,

tiredness, a rough ride up from Chittagong and the inevitable problem *Amar pet kharap*. It had taken them less than a week in Bangladesh to learn that particular Bengali phrase, which so graphically describes an upset stomach!

The socks

They had much to teach us – even those of us who thought we knew it all! On the first night one of the party produced a jar of meat tenderiser and started mixing it with water. We watched amazed as she dabbed this mixture onto her mosquito bites assuring us that this remedy had been highly recommended in a traveller's guide that she had read. Then there were the socks. At first we thought he had just made a mistake, but when his rather motherly hostess pointed out that one sock was fluorescent green and the other a vivid red she was soon told that this was intentional – in fact the latest fashion. It's a comforting thought for some of our Leprosy patients, who often need to wear odd socks and odd shoes on their often odd feet.

It was only March, but already it was hot – not of course as hot as it would be in May, but nevertheless hot. It was the time of the year when the initiated seldom go far without a little plastic bottle of drinking water. A trip to the local paper mill had been arranged and

the group returned sweaty and exhausted. 'Water, water,' the ladies gasped as they staggered through the door. We downed tools, rushed to the fridge and grabbed bottles of cold, boiled water. They drank gratefully until they were rehydrated and able to tell us a little about their visit. Water had never tasted so good before.

Roast potatoes

Chandraghona was one of the first ports of call and so we were surprised at the group's enthusiasm for home-cooking. Obviously the novelty of Bengali food had worn off. One of us was a little shaken by the hug and kiss she received as dinner went on the table. (They had yet to learn some of the cultural taboos of Bangladesh.) 'What was that for?' she exclaimed. 'Roast potatoes!' came the reply, and needless to say there was not one left in the dish that night.

They spent three days with us and we came to know them all. On the last night we had planned a Barbeque – the usual Chandraghona affair with the bicycle spokes skewering the meat. Home-made hamburgers, and barbequed chicken pieces brought a sparkle to many eyes and no-one mentioned *Amar pet kharap* at all. Chandraghona tradition called for a song to mark what was after all a unique occasion. We opened this article with the first verse to the familiar tune of *Old Uncle Tom Cobby* and here is another verse, copyright of course:

*At Chandraghona there was plenty to
do.*

*All along, down along out along lee.
But some of us saw far too much of
the loo.*

With

*Iwan Davies, Malcolm Evans, John
McArthur, Alison Measures, Steve
Munday, Janet Prentice, Margaret
Smithyman, Roy Treadaway,
Elizabeth Webb.*

*Old Auntie Sue Le Quesne and all
Old Auntie Sue Le Quesne and all.*

Perhaps we will see another group next year and we look forward to that. If you think that you might like to come yourself then there is one Bengali phrase you can start practising now . . . *Amar pet* . . .

'IT'S Thursday, so it must be Chittagong.' During our visit to Bangladesh we were anxious to see as much of the country as possible. As a consequence, much of our time was spent in transit — by air, land and water.

We had our first taste of Bangladesh at Heathrow, flying out on Biman — Bangladesh food and canned Bengali music. Advertising itself as 'Your home in the Air', we often looked forward to those brief air-conditioned flights that took us around the country.

The rivers

Other journeys were taken on the overnight boat to Barisal, called the *Rocket*. The steamer ports were alive with boats — launches crammed to overflowing with goods and passengers; small sailing boats with huge patchwork sails weighed down to the waterline. We were fortunate enough to sleep in some cockroach infested cabins, having first carefully picked our way between sleeping passengers, sandwiched 3rd class on the open decks and also avoiding the goats tethered to the hand rails. Rivers are still the arteries of the country's life.

If the rivers teem with boats, the streets are awash with cycle rickshaws. It is said that there are over 50,000 in Dhaka. Always available at every corner, a ride will cost a few *taka* (a *taka* is about 3p). The first experience is terrifying, and we were never quite reconciled to the sight of a bus bearing down on our rickshaw, to swerve and avoid it by inches.

Buses were always a source of amazement, never empty, usually with people hanging onto the sides and roof and lumbering along on often bald tyres. It was a worrying sight, especially as the main road to the airport was periodically punctuated with their burnt out shells.

Trains

Possibly the most interesting journey we undertook was the train ride to what must have been Chittagong. (After all, it was Thursday.) We travelled first class, which was very comfortable, with fans to keep us cool. At that point a comparison of BR (Bangladesh Railways) and BR finishes

An essential part of our experience

— beggars wandering down the carriages, followed by people selling drinks and goods, including such items as plastic chilli trees (for further details, see Mrs Elizabeth Webb). At the stations, tradesmen and beggars would come to the open windows of the trackside, hawking their wares, seemingly careless of other trains. Even when stopped temporarily in the countryside, groups would cluster around selling water-melon or bananas. Railways are not only of use to rail-passengers. Often being the shortest route between two points, they are extensively used by pedestrians, wandering up and down the lines, in both town and country. A very strange sight to us, especially when viewed from a train.

Of necessity, we only visited places which were comparatively accessible. Our schedule did not permit us to do otherwise. But we sampled some minor difficulties. Visiting Ruhea meant a ten mile ride along a road so cracked and pot-holed that it took nearly an hour to drive along.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of travel in Bangladesh is the juxtapositions of method. You may fly

with an airline into a modern airport, step outside to rickshaws and 'baby-taxis' — a type of van, built around a motor scooter. When in the north, within minutes of the airport you find the bullock cart is a principal means of transportation. Goods are seen being taken to airports or steamer terminals piled up high on hand-pulled carts often twenty or more drums of oil.

In retrospect, we were fortunate. We made all our connections and most journeys ran approximately to time. By using many forms of transport, we were able to see different aspects of the life of the country. Never was this more obvious than with our experiences of the 'coolies'. Fighting for the right to carry our bags — normally against our wishes — their tenacity was almost as awesome as their ability — carrying trunks and cases on their heads that we could scarcely lift from the ground.

We are told that travel broadens the mind. In Bangladesh the means of travel were often as educational as the places we visited. It was an essential, and unavoidable part of our experience of Bangladesh.

Malcolm Evans talks about travelling in Bangladesh





NEW PRINCIPAL FOR SELLY OAK

THE new principal of St Andrew's Hall missionary training college at Selly Oak, Birmingham, has been named. He is BMS missionary David Grainger.

The Rev David Grainger — at present principal of Paraná Baptist Theological College, Curitiba in Brazil — will succeed the Rev Dan Beeby in September.

Before studying at the Northern Baptist College and Manchester University David Grainger worked as a personnel manager in industry. He has served in Brazil since 1972 and met his wife Elidia whilst working at Maringa in the north-west of Paraná state. They have two children, Cynthia aged 7 and William aged 3.

David returned to the Northern Baptist College and Manchester University for one year in 1979 in order to study for an MA degree.

St Andrew's Hall is one of four missionary colleges comprising the Department of Mission of the Selly Oak Colleges. It is sponsored by the Baptist Missionary Society, the United Reformed Church and the Council for World Mission.

David Grainger's considerable missionary experience as well as academic ability will be shared with future BMS missionaries since most of them spend some time training at St Andrew's before going overseas. There they not only have an opportunity to receive lectures in missionary and Biblical studies, to learn about car maintenance, the care of health in the tropics, first aid and other practical subjects, but also to meet students from all over the world. In one year it was estimated that at some time there had been students from 40 different countries studying at the college.



David and Elidia Grainger

Missionary asked to leave

BMS missionary Joan Smith has had to leave India. Up until July Joan was the nursing superintendent and acting director of the hospital at Udayagiri in Orissa. But at the beginning of July she was given notice that her resident's permit would not be renewed.

She was told in a letter from the superintendent of police and the district registration office: 'The Government of India have been pleased to express inability to agree for your further stay in

India. You are therefore requested to leave the country within one month's time and wind up your affairs here.'

No reason was given for the non-renewal of her resident's permit and an appeal has been lodged. The Rev Neil McVicar, BMS Overseas Representative in Asia has been to Delhi to make enquiries in conjunction with the Church of North India. Missionaries from other societies have also been asked to leave India.

Teachers for the Blind



Shefali Topna

Shefali Topna (left) and Monju Sammadar visited Mission House in July on their way back to Bangladesh. They both work at the School for Blind at Dhaka.

They have been in Britain on a study course arranged by the College of the Teachers of the Blind. In particular they have been studying braille reading for the late blind and braille reading and number work for juniors.

Based in Liverpool at St Vincent's School for the Blind and the Royal School for the Blind at Wavertree, they have been able to visit many of the schools and colleges for the blind in Britain.

They have not returned to Dhaka empty handed either. The Liverpool schools have presented them with three Perkins and one Stainsby braille machines.

Would you like to visit Mission House?

WE are planning two Open Days, when folk from the churches can meet staff members and see some of the resources available. Come along and get some of your questions answered on —

Saturday 7 December, 1985 — 10.30-12.30

Wednesday 9 April, 1986 — 2.00- 4.00

Please let the Promotion Team know if you or a party from your church are planning to come so that we can make proper arrangements to welcome you.



Morning assembly, Blind School, Dhaka

The beginnings of a new vision

BIG things frequently have small beginnings. This may have been one of those occasions. For the first time, church leaders, whose churches have links with the BMS, have met together and talked about special links which could be established between them.

The meeting took place in the sweltering heat of Los Angeles during the Baptist World Alliance Congress, which was held at the beginning of July. Not every BMS partner church was able to be represented, but most were — from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Zaire, Angola and Trinidad. The Rev Dr W G Wickramasinghe from Sri Lanka was appointed chairman of the consultation.

Before the Congress, the Society had sounded out the churches about holding a special meeting to consider ways in which the churches could learn more about each other. This initiative had been welcomed by the leaders.

In Britain, Baptists are privileged to know a great deal about what is happening within other Baptist churches, but this privilege is not shared to any great extent by some of the partner churches of BMS in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and South America. Christians in Bangladesh know very little about Zaire or Trinidad. The reverse is also true.

Once discussion got underway, it was clear that people could see a number of advantages in estab-

lishing closer links. One person spoke about prayer support, which they could give each other. Another spoke about learning how other churches coped with problems, not as a big, powerful church with plenty of resources, but as a weak struggling church. Yet another suggested that in trying to reach certain ethnic groups with the Gospel within a particular country there could be specific help from Christians of the same ethnic group elsewhere. Others speculated about an exchange of personnel for longer or shorter periods — the interchange of 'missionaries'.

It was felt that over the next two years the churches should begin to learn more about each other. Information is going to be pre-

pared by the churches and circulated and for the moment the BMS is to co-ordinate this.

The churches will be sending greetings to each other at the time of their General Assemblies and an exchange of leaders will take place, with BMS help. In two years' time, if there has been a positive response, another, more structured meeting will take place at a suitable venue outside Britain. There was a realization by all present that we were on the edge of something significant — the beginnings of a shared vision in the global task of mission.

At the July meeting of the
BMS General Committee six
missionary candidates were
accepted for service
overseas

NEW MISSIONARY CANDIDATES



DAVID AND SUSAN JACKSON, from Doals Baptist Church, Rossendale, Lancashire are going to work in Brazil.



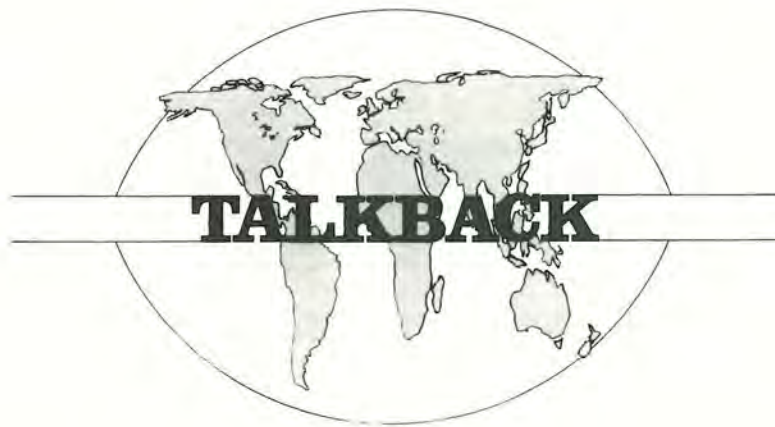
MISS ANNIE CHALKLEY, from Histon Baptist Church, Cambridge, has been accepted for service in Zaire.



JOANNE ALLEN is from Farnham Baptist Church. She has recently married another missionary candidate and with him will work in Zaire.



TIMOTHY AND ANGELA HINCHLIFFE are members of Britwell Baptist Church, Slough and will be going to serve in Nepal.



Christ's Unique Claim

From Viv and Margaret Stringer

WE noted with regret the publication of a letter from the Reverend Barry Vendy in the June issue of the *Herald*, which suggests that our thinking on mission should include 'appreciation of other world religions in their richness'. Can we then assume that such thinking is acceptable to the present BMS? This in spite of the repeated declarations of God in the Old Testament that His people are not to be associated in any way with the religions of the nations among whom they lived; in spite of the unique claim of Jesus Christ to be God and the only Way to the Father (John 14:6); in spite of Peter's claim that salvation is found in no-one else (Acts 4:12); in spite of Paul's statement that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)?

Surely we need to take the Biblical view of world religions, clearly stated in Ephesians 2:11 and 12: 'You who are Gentiles were separate from Christ, without hope and without God in the world.' We must take the view that all other religions leave man as they find him — 'without God'.

The reality of Christian mission is that all other religions are utterly bankrupt and it is our task to bring all men the riches of Christ in the Gospel.

If there is, as Rev Vendy suggests, such 'richness' in other world religions, what then is the purpose of the BMS?

MR & MRS VIV AND
MARGARET STRINGER

Abbey Hey, Manchester

Missionary Hymns

I MUST confess that I read with some alarm Barry Vendy's letter in the June edition of *Missionary Herald*.

Whilst I agree that many hymns still being sung today are 'dated' and sometimes say very little of consequence, I must question the apparent wish to include 'material that shows appreciation of other world religions in their richness'.

It is sad to see that the 'liberal theology' approach to Christian teaching seems to have gained a foothold within BMS.

D HUNTER

Redcar, Cleveland

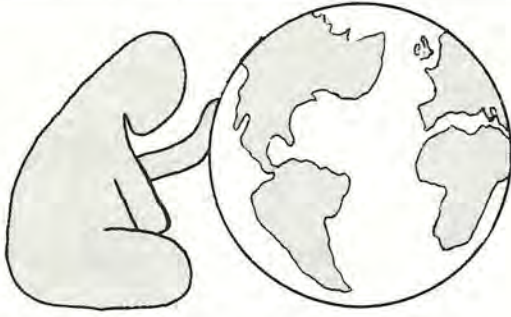
The opinions expressed in Talkback letters are those of the correspondents and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Baptist Missionary Society.

PICTURED on the right are missionaries and congregation at the missionary rally in Worcester which was the climax of the July General Committee meetings.

At the Committee the Rev Angus MacNeill renewed the appeal for more missionary candidates, and in particular he mentioned the need for

workers for Angola. He had recently returned from meeting the leaders of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Angola, where they asked when the Society was going to send the missionaries they had requested — a pastor to work at the Kibokolo Bible School and a carpenter/builder for construction work.





CALL TO

PRAYER

1784 - 1985

Zaire — Pimu, Bosondjo 1-7 September

PIMU has been described as a hole in the forest and it is certainly in a very isolated position. It is a four hour drive to the nearest centre of any size, Bosondjo. An air-strip is in the final stages of completion and should in the future help communications considerably.

In the village that has sprung up alongside the hospital to cater for the families of patients, a great deal of evangelistic work is taking place. We pray for that and for the total work of the church in Pimu and Bosondjo.

The Dead Sea was full of salt, but because it was polluted by other minerals, most of it was useless, weak and insipid. It could only be used by the local corporation, who threw it in the street. But pure salt was very different; it was precious in Israel; it could preserve; it could heal; it could give taste. Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth.'

Lord sometimes we lose our devotion, our zeal and our enthusiasm for life. We can no longer be counted among the pure in heart, or the merciful, or the peacemakers,

or the gentle, for we become bitter. We are neither use nor ornament to anyone. Open us to your renewing life, so that we may be bearers of glad tidings rather than sour grapes. Purify our life, Lord, so that we can help and heal. Lord of life and laughter, help us to be so alive with the good news of Jesus, that we can preserve what is wholesome, give taste to what is bland, heal what is infected, and give humour to what is joyless. Give us the confidence to proclaim from the rooftops the news that life is delicious, joyful and abundant. Deepen our life, Lord, so that we can live it to the full.
(with acknowledgements to the Council for World Mission)

Accepted Candidates Christians Abroad The International Fellowship 8-14 September

WE thank God for the increasing number of new missionary candidates coming forward. They all need a period of training and missionary orientation before they embark for their service overseas.

Some of them will be training at St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak. We pray for the Rev Dan Beeby as he enters into his last year as Principal, and for David Grainger who will be succeeding him next autumn.

We remember too Christians Abroad, who offer guidance to those who want to work overseas, and the International Fellowship linking Baptists at work overseas.

Bangladesh — Chittagong and the Hill Tracts 15-21 September

THE work at Chittagong is now centred in the new Union complex at Jamalkan Road, where the Pastoral Superintendent and Union Secretary live. The new dormitory quarter is a useful addition, where pastors coming in from the Hill Tracts can rest and have fellowship with their colleagues. This is an extremely beneficial opportunity for them, because they are all working in isolated places and what is a sensitive military area of the country.

We have no missionaries living in Chittagong at the moment, but we

pray for the continuing of the work of the 12 leprosy clinics run by para medical workers.

We pray for the church in Chittagong that they will be able more easily to accept Muslim converts into the Christian community. We pray also for the home Bible study groups in the town that they may continue to grow.

Remember the Rev Swehla Phru, Pastoral Superintendent for Chittagong and the Hill Tracts, and Mr Santal Bawm, Union Secretary.

China and Hong Kong 22-28 September

THE news from China continues to be exciting. The church there is very active and growing. Contacts with the wider world Christian family are growing and the BMS recently received a communication from a former area of work. For the first time since the 1950's the Society has written a letter to China. Let us pray that we in the west may understand how best to encourage and support the work in China.

In Hong Kong the people are hearing and responding to the Gospel.

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

Arrivals

Mr and Mrs C Eaton and family on 2 June from Butwal, Nepal.

Mr J Blakebrough on 4 June from Mbanza-Ngungu, Zaire.

Rev G and Mrs Myhill on 5 June from Nova Londrina, Brazil.

Mr and Mrs O Clark and family on 12 June from Kinshasa, Zaire.

Rev S and Mrs Christine and family on 14 June from Rondonopolis, Brazil.

Mr P Newns on 16 June from Pimu, Zaire.

Miss G Walker on 18 June from Jumla, Nepal.

Mr and Mrs D Davies and family on 28 June from Kinshasa, Zaire.

Departures

Rev D Punched on 9 June to Curitiba, Brazil.

Mr and Mrs D Stockley on 14 June to Potinga, Brazil for 6 months.

One Month Mid-First-Term Holidays

Mrs R Clinch on 18 June from Kinshasa, Zaire.

Miss S Shields on 22 June from Kinshasa, Zaire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies, and gifts sent anonymously (June 1985)

Legacies	£
Mrs E M Brown	230.87
Miss D M Clevely	150.00
Miss Dilys Richards Jones	40.00
Mrs E Kirkby	500.00
Miss Lilian Ruth Tilt	2,449.40
Mrs E M West	25.00

General Work

Anon: £2.00; Anon: £3.00; Anon: £10.00; Anon: £16.00; Anon: £10.00; FAE Aberdeen: £10.00; Anon: £10.00; Anon: £15.00; OAP: £5.00; Anon: £10.00; Cymro: £50.00.

Medical

Anon: £5.00.

Women's Project 'Going Places'

Anon: £5.00; Anon: £5.00.

Relief Work

ES: £10.00.

Bangladesh disaster

Anon: £10.00; Anon: £100.00.

Five Christian Schools and Your Child



These five schools provide a Christian Education with high academic standards and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Substantial bursaries are offered for the children of Ministers, missionaries and some lay people of the United Reformed Church and Congregational Churches.



CATERHAM – Surrey

Situated in 80 acres of the North Downs with easy access to the M25 (5 mins.), the centre of London (40 mins. by train) and Gatwick Airport (20 mins. by road), Caterham has boarding and day places for 250 boys in the Preparatory School (8-13) and 440 pupils in the Main School (13-18), including 170 in the Sixth Form when day girls are admitted. Founded in 1811 for the sons of ministers, now open to all but retains strong links with the URC.

Headmaster, Mr S. Rider Smith, MA, Caterham School, Harestone Valley, Caterham, Surrey CR3 6YA. Telephone (0883) 43028.

WENTWORTH MILTON MOUNT – Dorset

Places for 330 girls (11-18) of whom 170 are boarders. The school adjoins Boscombe Cliffs, Bournemouth, and has extensive grounds and buildings, new developments blending with the 19th century house to provide good facilities for a wide range of Arts and Science subjects. It offers a cultured and caring education.

Headmistress, Miss M. Vokins MA, Wentworth Milton Mount, College Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH5 2DY. Telephone (0202) 423266.



SILCOATES – West Yorkshire.

Boarding and Day places for 480 boys (7-18) and girls in the Sixth Form. The school and its excellent sporting facilities are set in extensive grounds within easy reach of the national motorway network. It provides the security of an ordered and happily disciplined life in which a pupil can develop his particular talents and enthusiasms along positive and creative lines.

Headmaster, Mr J. C. Baggaley, Silcoates School, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 0PD. Telephone (0924) 376915.

WALTHAMSTOW HALL Kent.

Boarding and Day places for more than 400 girls in the senior school (11-18) and 130 Junior School places. Founded in 1838, it now offers modern classrooms and well-equipped laboratories with a strong Sixth Form. Its education policy maintains a firm commitment to the Christian principles of its foundation.

Headmistress, Mrs J. S. Lang MA, Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UL. Telephone (0732) 451334.



ELTHAM COLLEGE London S.E.

Boarding and Day places for over 700 boys throughout the school as boarders (11-18) or day boys (7-18) with girls accepted into the Sixth Form as day pupils. An 18th century mansion standing in 25 acres of grounds and playing fields, Eltham offers a high standard of education combined with sound Christian principles and a caring approach.

Headmaster, Dr C. D. Waller, Eltham College, Grove Park Road, Mottingham, London SE9 4QF. Telephone 01-857-1455.

NOTICE BOARD

FILEY WEEK AT SKEGNESS

14-21 SEPTEMBER
Visit the BMS Exhibition.

See the range of information and literature available.

Meet 2 of our Home Staff.

Don't miss the opportunity to see and hear what God is doing abroad through the BMS and its partner churches.

A MISSIONARY DAY CONFERENCE

on Saturday 12 October
at the Northern Baptist College
Manchester
Booking forms are available from
Rev Roy Turvey, 8 Frenchwood Knoll
Preston, Lancs. PR1 4LE

BMS/LBMU AUTUMN MEETING

Incoming President Rev Fred Drake
Bloomsbury Baptist Church
London WC1
23 September 7.00 pm

A Tape Slide Set prepared by
Gill and Russell Ashley-Smith
following their visit to
Diptipur, India is
available from 1 September
1985.

'Diptipur - a Vision for Villages'

Catalogue No. S145

Obtainable from BMS

PRAYER GUIDE 1986

50p per copy

If ordered by 1 October - 45p

'FIRST THINGS FIRST'

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

at Roysdean, Bournemouth

15-17 November

Details are available from

Miss Susan Le Quesne

Further information about any of these notices can be
obtained from: Baptist Missionary Society,
93 Gloucester Place, London W1H 4AA.