

# FRIENDS OF MANJUSHREE VIDYAPITH SCHOOL & ORPHANAGE

Newsletter No. 13 December 2017



## Dear Friends

Just a couple of weeks ago, Leo and I took the long, bumpy, dusty, winding mountain road down from our second home in the high Himalayas of Northeast India. It was painful to leave the 'family' – the children, our fine past-pupils, the dedicated teachers, the 'aunties' and other non-teaching staff, the monks – and our beloved boss-monk, founder and principal Lama Thupten Phuntsok. This was my tenth visit to Manjushree home and likely to be my last. The challenges of the journey, the altitude and weakness in my own health have finally got the better of me. FMVSO, however, will continue – managed from our kitchen table at Wallbridge Farm. My fellow trustees will continue to make regular visits and I shall remain in contact with students and staff so we will be able to update you regularly.



Modern technology has made communication with the Manjushree family so very much easier. The internet and power situation is still as bad as ever but there is now 3G of sorts in Tawang so we are able to keep in touch through Whats App and Facebook.

The remoteness of the location was emphasised yet again by the terrible condition of the road, due to exceptionally heavy monsoon rains this year. The journey up involved a total of 16 hours in a jeep, at an average speed of less than 20 mph.

## THE PAST PUPILS

The highlight of our visit was the presence, and evident involvement, of a large number of past pupils. They organised, for the first time, the Foundation Day celebrations and what an excellent job they made of it. **They demonstrated clearly their sincerity, their maturity, and their determination to play key roles in the next chapter of Manjushree.**

They announced that they had opened a bank account solely for the purpose of supporting Manjushree; all past pupils have committed to contribute regularly, according to their means, and regular contributions are already being made. It was particularly heart-warming to see the love, care and concern of the past pupils for their younger brothers and sisters and the respect the younger ones show for the seniors. The younger children continue to delight and tug at the heart strings; they now have the benefit of role models to help guide their future. All 29 past pupils are either in gainful employment or pursuing further studies. Two of them are teaching at Manjushree and another two are teaching in local schools.

**Looking at these very impressive young people, I felt an immense sense of pride in what you, the FMVSO donors, have helped to achieve over the past 12 years. Manjushree produces well rounded, balanced and caring young people who would be the envy of many schools in the UK. They are extremely aware of, and enormously grateful for, the opportunity your generosity has given them.**



Past Pupils and guests at Foundation Day

## OUR COMMITMENT

### Education

FMVSO currently covers all Further Education costs (apart from a couple of students whose costs are covered by individual sponsorship). We are supporting 23 students in college including 9 post-graduates who are studying for Masters, Bachelor of Education or Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service. Average cost per student is £60 per month **FMVSO contributes £16,000 per year.**

Apart from the academic route there are other opportunities available to the Manjushree children. There are already a dozen or so boys in monk training at Mysore Gyumed Tantric Monastery in south India. They are free to leave the monastic life at any time if they so choose. In spring 2017 some of the older student monks took the opportunity to return home to Manjushree, for a holiday.

The girls who chose to join a nunnery in Nepal are happily settled and doing well. It is common practice within the culture of the region for at least one boy, and often a girl from a family, to choose to take the monastic path.

Several boys have opted for the Indian army. Other boys are taking coaching for entrance exam for army schools. Two have already been accepted and started this term at an excellent school in Assam where they will have the opportunity to train to be officers. For the less academic but more practical there is the option of a non-degree nursing course. 10 of the Manjushree girls are now training in Mangalore. Rinchin, who is deaf and dumb has gone to Nepal where he is being trained in Tibetan painting. I run an art club when at Manjushree and many of the children are very talented – Tibetan painting could provide a future for those who are less able academically.



Manjushree provides education for the children up to 14/15; they then attend secondary school in the nearby village of Bomba. Once they pass Xth grade they go on to Tawang High School for their final 2 years of school. Sadly science teaching there is weak so Lama Thupten has found another option for those students wishing to study science. Under a government scheme, 5 of our more able students are now at boarding school in South India studying science for XIIth grade (A level).

### Food

The children are well-fed and their health is generally good. The food is plain and wholesome, with the occasional treat of fish or meat – and cake on special occasions. Food costs continue to rise and the requirement is over £3,000 per month, of which FMVSO are contributing at least two thirds on a regular basis – **FMVSO contributes £26,000 per year.**

**My fellow trustees David, Grainne and Rory join me in sending you love, thanks, and warm wishes for good health, peace and happiness in the year ahead.**

***Dí Gallagher*** (FMVSO Trustee)

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**No expenses are deducted and our trips are entirely self-funded. All donations to FMVSO go direct to Manjushree to support the children.**



*There was big excitement in March this year - His Holiness Dalai Lama stopped at Manjushree and spent time with the children.*