

FRIENDS OF SMYRNA HOME

bringing hope to those in need

Summer Newsletter 2021

We hope you enjoy reading the latest news from India. Thank you for your support, encouragement and prayers for the needy folk in the Nilgiris.

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Who's Who at Smyrna?

Baktha Singh has been working at Smyrna over 30 years. He lives on site with his wife Vinola, a teacher. They have two sons Bennett and Brian.



He was born into a very orthodox Brahmin Hindu family originally from Hyderabad where his father served in the Indian army. When his father's wife died, the family moved to Ooty, and his father married Sussai Ammal, who although a Christian had to convert to Hinduism.

She also died leaving Baktha Singh, as the oldest child, to take charge of the household, where he started learning to cook, look after the home and his three siblings. Life was not easy as his mother had recommitted to her Christian faith and this led to many difficulties. Happily, before he died, his father became a Christian.

Baktha Singh was baptised at 15, but then sadly one of his brothers died aged 17 from kidney failure. His sister Glory worked with YWAM in Gujarat and knew a niece of Margit, the founder of Smyrna Home. She fell sick and her father donated a kidney, and during this time Baktha Singh met Margit and was invited to join the team at Smyrna Home.

He resigned from a government tourism job and initially was the book-keeper accountant. He now looks after the Guest House assisted by Vinola as well as the grounds and in fact anything that needs doing or organising. With so many away during the covid days he has often been running everything on his own. Whenever we visit, he is always there to welcome us and to look after whatever we need.

Child Sponsorship Programme

As we've seen in the news, the Covid 19 pandemic has hit India very hard. The situation in Ooty has not been as bad as in some of the larger cities but there have been many cases, schools have been closed and lockdowns imposed. The pandemic continues to affect the children who are being sponsored, by disrupting their schooling and, in some cases, causing severe hardship as parents are unable to work and support their family. In this situation, Smyrna is focusing on distributing food parcels to the families who are most in need and has been able to buy mobile phones for children who need them to take part in on-line school lessons.



One of the children who was very grateful to receive a phone is Joshua, a fifteen year old boy who has been sponsored through Friends of Smyrna Home for almost 10 years. He wrote a thank-you letter, to his sponsors saying:

"Thank you very much for your help to buy a mobile phone. It is very useful to my on-line classes. I am studying well ... We are praying for you and your family members. With lots of love and prayers ..."

New Minibus

The fitting out of the new 'Force Traveller' minibus has now been completed, with modifications which make it more suitable for its daily journey to transport the children and adults to and from the New World Centre where they can receive treatment. Groups from UK have enjoyed many happy journeys in the previous minibus and we're looking forward to the time when we can try out its successor.



Smyrna Home - New Ventures

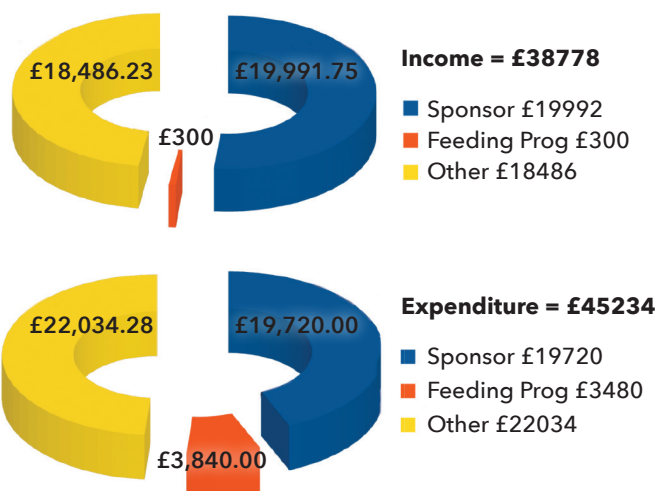
In the past two or three years, the Trustees at Smyrna Home have embarked on a number of new ventures to try to increase their local income and reduce their dependence on donations from overseas. The conversion of the old Bishop's house into a guest house is a fantastic example of this type of initiative and was generating a significant part of the Trust's income until Covid19 struck; hopefully this will only be a temporary interruption.

Other recent ventures have focused on raising income from better use of the Smyrna land for agricultural purposes and, in March 2021, a new chicken coop was completed. The first chicks for breeding were introduced to their new home in March and we heard at the end of April that they have started selling chickens.



Parts of the campus have been planted with fruit trees and 500 sq. metres with 8,000 strawberry plants. A corner shop has been opened at the entrance where all the Smyrna products are on sale.

Income and Expenditure Breakdown for the year to 31st March 2021



Notes:

The expenditure for the year was more than the income. This was due to contributions made for team salaries during Covid lockdown. This helps us reduce our reserves closer to the agreed minimum of 10k.