

Friends of Jagadhri

Communications c/o Rev. Doreen Riddell, 50/4 Admiral Crescent, Flagstaff, HAMILTON 3210. Email: doreenr@vodafone.co.nz

FORTY-SIXTH NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2010

Visitor had special reason for Jagadhri trip

Frances Morton, an Auckland journalist, recently visited North India to learn more about her great aunt, Mary Salmond, one of our pioneer missionaries. Frances writes:

My mother always had a few old photographs framed and displayed. One was a sepia photo of a stern-looking woman sitting with a rod-straight back wearing a beautifully embroidered sari - Great Aunt Mary.

Mary Salmond was born in Queenstown in 1887. She died in Dunedin in 1976 and was well known to many in the church for her work as Principal of the Presbyterian Women's Training Institute.

But I was always interested in what Mary had done before that – the reason she was wearing a sari. In 1916, aged 29, Mary had packed in her teaching job in Invercargill and travelled to India to work as a missionary in the Punjab. She stayed there until ill-health forced her to come home in 1925.

Last winter my mother and I spent two days at the Presbyterian archives in Dunedin reading through the piles of letters Mary had sent back home. I searched the Internet for information about the places where Mary worked and visited but I found it hard to see where she could have fitted in.

I had to go there. I persuaded my boyfriend to come with me and we left New Zealand at the end of April – before the summer heat set in. Well, that was the idea. Summer came early this year in India and we arrived to 45 degree days.



Mary Salmond with her helpers in Jagadhri



Frances Morton with Kamla and David Singh

I knew the journey from Delhi to Jagadhri was a distance of about 200km so figured that since we left just after breakfast we would surely be in Jagadhri by lunch. Battling bumpy roads, clogged traffic, and a flat tyre we arrived seven and a half hours later.

As I stared out the car window I thought that if I squinted to block out the overhead power lines and huge trucks barrelling down the road the view was not much different from what Mary would have seen nearly 100 years ago. Oxen pulled carts. Peasants harvested wheat by hand. Women in saris and men in dhoti walked along the edge of the road to mud brick huts.

Compared to the tourist hot-spots we had visited so far on our India trip Jagadhri felt like an average city in the heart of India. The rickshaw drivers watched silently as we wandered by, rather than pointing and shouting at us to climb aboard.

Of course Jagadhri has changed a lot from when it was Mary's home. The population has exploded and it is now a big, bustling urban centre. The three schools where Mary taught have gone, replaced by St Thomas School. Michael and I were fortunate to be welcomed into the home of Kamla and David Singh. Mrs Singh has worked for 40 years at St Thomas School, the last sixteen as Principal.

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The most visible link between Mary's letters and Jagadhri today was the bungalow where Mary lived in the Jagadhri Christian Hospital complex, just down the road from the school. Hospital Director Dr Cecil Harrison and his wife Dr Nayana Harrison took us on a fascinating tour of the grounds and we were served a delicious feast the nursing students had cooked in their nutrition lesson.

From Jagadhri we headed to the mountains, just as the missionaries did to escape the oppressive summer heat. At 2500m above the dusty, polluted plains the air was much clearer and cooler. We huffed up the steep hill from our guesthouse and sat outside the Landour Language Centre watching monkeys swinging in the pine trees and chatting with American students studying Urdu just as Mary had. In Landour, a beautiful old town clinging to sheer hillsides,



The old bungalow in the Christian Hospital grounds where Mary Salmond lived.

IN MEMORIAM

We give thanks for the lives of two former missionaries to India who were also founding Trustees of Friends of Jagadhri.

Lorraine Saunders 1909 – 2010

After training as a teacher Lorraine travelled to Jagadhri in 1935 and served the church in North India with devotion and enthusiasm for 36 years. She is honoured for her faithful work among the village people, assisting in huge refugee camps after the partition of India and later publishing and distributing Christian Literature. Lorraine will always be remembered with joy and thanksgiving for her faith and vision and for her commitment to work in many different ways to make known the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Dr George Chisholm 1928 – 2010

Along with his wife Nerolei and their family, George worked at Christian Hospital Jagadhri from 1963 -1967. After their first furlough George became Medical Superintendent of the Landour Community Hospital, Mussoorie. On returning to New Zealand in 1971 George worked as a GP in Christchurch and played a full and active part in the life of the church, including being a member of Council for Mission for many years.

Publishers

This, the forty-sixth newsletter of Friends of Jagadhri, is published by the trustees: Margaret Bear, Richard Lawrence, Alan Leadley, Peter Mirams, Doreen Riddell, Elaine Riddell and June Welten.

I could imagine Mary merrily trudging up and down to lessons. 'I feel that the keen clear air of Landour, and the many other workers I shall meet here and my studies in the language school are going to mean health and happiness for me in the next five months,' she wrote.

Shimla is another hill station in the Himalayas that was a popular retreat for the missionaries. The town was the summer seat of the British Government so is full of grand old buildings. In Mary's letters she writes about touring small villages nearby.

One day she packed a picnic and hiked the 13km from Shimla to the delightfully-named Wildflower Hall, once the residence of Lord Kitchener. The original building burnt down and has been replaced with a grand hotel. We had a wonderful time enjoying a silver-service meal on the terrace, thinking about Mary lunching in the same spot and gazing at the mighty snow capped mountains. And just for a moment, it felt like time overlapped.

Thanks for your Donations

Thank you for your continuing generous support. We are currently raising funds towards a \$20,000 Haematology Counter for the hospital, and for continuing to help needy students receive an excellent education at St Thomas School. In the past 5 months \$14,825 has been received as donations.

In July the interest earned on the St Thomas School Scholarship Fund, \$3505, was forwarded along with the annual grants of \$10,000 each towards the salaries of the Principal for the St Thomas School and the Director of Christian Hospital

Both Mrs Kamla Singh, Principal of St Thomas School, and Dr Cecil Harrison, Director of Christian Hospital, thank you most sincerely for your prayerful remembrance and financial support.

Please note that the Global Mission Office has been relocated to Wellington. The Very Rev Pamela Tankersley is the new Convenor. All donations should now be remitted through Global Mission, PCANZ, PO Box 9049, Wellington 6141. Your receipts will enable you to claim a tax rebate. Friends of Jagadhri will continue to disburse the funds.

Mailing List

Thank you for informing us of changes to the mailing list and suggesting names and addresses of new 'friends'. We invite you to share your newsletter with others and to print extracts in your church bulletin or magazine.

Prayer Circle

We invite all readers to join a prayer circle every morning for the people of Jagadhri and Yamunanagar. Please pray especially for Kamla and David Singh, Drs Cecil and Nayana Harrison, the Rev George Lazar at Jagadhri and the Rev Victor Samuel at Yamunanagar in all their varied responsibilities. Kamla has a major additional responsibility as she holds the power of attorney for the Diocesan property in the Jagadhri area and often has to deal with legal matters.

New Trustees

Naomi Howell has retired from being a trustee from October. We thank her for commitment for the past eight years and welcome Elaine Riddell and June Welten as new trustees.