



UPDATE

Spring 2024

Editorial:

This spring newsletter is our favourite to compile, coming, as it does, in the wake of our annual visit to Hope. Once again, we were heartened to see how well all is, with the smiling, happy faces of the children and the devoted commitment of all staff to the mission of Hope and the welfare of the children.

Occasional staff changes are inevitable but are managed with forethought and sensitivity to ensure a seamless transition and we witnessed this at first hand during our visit.

We also witnessed a highly inspiring visit to Hope by Paralympian and native of Mytholmroyd, Karen Darke – article follows – and it was very moving to see the impact of her visit and achievements on the children. She truly has found her new calling as a motivational speaker.

As we left, the annual Founder's Day was celebrated in style and, as usual, everyone has now settled down to hard work as the end of the school year and exam season approaches. We're sure it'll be all worth it when the results come out. Good luck, everyone!

From One Legend to Another;

In November, our esteemed founder John Veitch visited Hope and was chief guest at a Charity Lunch held in his honour. It was attended by staff, children, guests and all the older settled children and their families and was a marvellous occasion, both for John and for all who attended. John is the first legend, followed closely by Sarika, a much loved and highly appreciated member of staff who has served millions of cups of tea and kept the premises spick and span for 13 years. Sarika retires next month so we bid her a fond farewell and wish her a very happy retirement!





Dance at Hope

Regular followers of Hope will be aware of the importance of dance to the children of Hope and how prominently it features in all their celebrations and indeed, in their daily lives. Their talented displays need a talented and inspiring teacher. The following article is written by the talented and inspiring **Soumya Bhagyan Pillai**, their devoted teacher. We are eternally grateful to Soumya for her long-standing commitment to dance at Hope.

About Me, Soumya Bhagyan Pillai:

I first stepped into Hope Community Village when I was a teenage schoolgirl. I had been learning dance from my early childhood and came as a dance teacher with the aim of unfolding the dancing skills of the children living at Hope. It was my uncle who first heard about Hope from the village director. For me who only teaches children living with their biological family, it was my very first experience associating with an organization where children who are not able to live in their biological families are taken care of by many others. But what surprised me is that in Hope Community Village, children are provided with unconditional love, support and resources for their development which is often far more than the families outside. So, there started my journey with Hope community village; it has continued for the past 13 years and also I wish to continue this forever!

Yes, I am a paid professional teacher and performer and I am paid for my services in Hope Community Village, but there is something more which has always forced me to continue working here even though I needed to cancel many of the dance classes I used to take earlier because of my busy schedules. And that is none other than the happiness and smiles I see in the little faces when I teach them new dance steps. Also, the love they give to me even we have only have a short time to spend together.

Many of the children I taught are now gone away for their higher studies, but still the bonds are unbreakable which they prove through their love and concern given to me when we see each other occasionally. During these long years, I choreographed many of the dance performances with different children and in all these programs what I noticed is the improvisation of children. And throughout these years, I have been fortunate in developing many little dancers who have stepped into dance when they were just 3 or 4 years of age, and are now at the level of professional dancers.

As for my own career, I am a professional dancer and a postgraduate in **Bharatanatyam**. I do stage performances both inside and outside India. In addition, I am a film artist and am currently doing cinema and television serials.

Frankly speaking, I don't have any other personal interests rather than dance. I always love to dance, perform on stage, teach dance and also continue learning new dance forms. Sometimes I think that I am born to dance, not for any other things!



New Boots:

Football features as a highly popular sport with the children of Hope and new boots are always welcome. Our grateful thanks to Carol Cross, Stockport, who regularly collects boots from her local primary school to send to Hope. Here, the children show off the latest consignment of boots. Thanks, Carol!

A Very Inspirational Visitor!

In January, the children and staff of Hope were blessed to receive a visit from Dr. Karen Darke, MBE. It was a visit with a difference as, 31 years ago, Karen was paralysed from the chest down in a climbing accident. She had always been a very active, outdoor person and to be told that she would never be able to walk, run, climb or cycle again was devastating for her.

Most people would have given up, but not Karen and she became driven to resume all her previous activities. Within 12 months, she was competing in marathons and what she has done since has been truly inspirational. Far too long to list here, check out her achievements on: <https://youtu.be/fbKrYo393rc>.

She has also started her own company – Karen Darke Coaching and does motivational speaking worldwide. She was recently invited to give a presentation at a conference in Goa representing the Voice of Differently Abled People. Hearing that, 30 years ago, the founder of Hope Community Village, John Veitch, had cycled from Hope to Goa to raise funds to purchase the present site, Karen, never one to pass up a challenge, decided to do the journey in reverse on her handcycle. This she did in extreme heat and very precarious traffic and road conditions. She was very ably assisted by her good friend Glyn Stanworth. It's worth mentioning here that Karen is unable to regulate her body temperature from the chest down, making travelling in 32-degree heat very difficult.

Karen and Glyn completed the journey in 12 days, covering 750 kms and arrived at Hope to a rapturous welcome from staff and children. They were escorted for the last couple of miles by the older children on their bikes as outriders.

The visit and presentation by Karen was truly inspirational for everyone and included details of her most daring exploit – scaling El Capitan in USA – a sheer rockface which took 4 days, sleeping in a hammock fastened to the rockface.

In conclusion she told the children that, if she could climb mountains with her broken body, what challenges and mountains could they overcome in their lives?

Volunteer, Shirley Vincent, conducted an art competition based on Karen's exploits and Karen herself judged the competition and distributed prizes. A truly memorable day!

Thanks to **Alan Brooks**, friend of Karen since her childhood, for the above article.



Karen Darke arrives at Hope to a warm reception.



EasyFundraising Milestone:

Regular supporters will be aware of EasyFundraising as a painless and easy way to raise funds for Hope. Thanks to those supporters who use the EasyFundraising portal for shopping, we have last month reached the marvellous milestone of **£5,000!** Thanks to all our shoppers and please consider signing up if you regularly shop on line. All except Ryanair and Amazon make contributions!! Check it out at easyfundraising.org.uk



Founder's Day – a snapshot of the day!

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