

## **DR GRAHAM'S HOMES, KALIMPONG**

**Thursday, 29 April 2010**

Once again, hearty (and very warm) greetings from Kalimpong. Although it has been warm here, it has been even warmer in Delhi – 42/43/44 Celsius!!! The school was uncannily quiet last Friday, as there was a local strike by teaching staff over the decision to re-locate the Librarian Certificate College from Kalimpong to Siliguri. Consequently, there would be no day scholars. On such days, as at weekends, the boarding students are 'confined to barracks', i.e. they have to stay at their various Cottages. During weekdays the students have their breakfast in their Cottages, with lunch and dinner being taken at the Dining Room (Central Kitchen) on the main school campus. At weekends all meals are eaten in their Cottages.

Part of Friday was spent at St Augustine's School (SAS), Kalimpong where the boys were competing in the Class 10 and Class 12 Inter-Schools Basketball Tournament. Class 10 were beaten in the semi-final by Goethals School, who subsequently lost to SAS in the final. Whilst at SAS I also visited the nearby St Teresa's Church, established in 1929 (the year when most of the United Free Church came back into the Church of Scotland – yes, I know, another useless piece of information!). Like many of our churches back home, it was locked. However, I was able to get a key from the Parish Priest and a young Deacon kindly showed me around. On the same site there is the John XXIII Minor Seminary, where at present there are 22 students studying for the Priesthood. After lunch, back home, I visited Murray Cottage, Assam Cottage and Heathland Cottage, where I was bribed into having a game of football. From there it was down to Ronaldshay Park – for more football. Later that afternoon, we had three little female visitors in the form of Shannon and sisters Sable and Dichenla, who proudly showed us a little dance they had made up – and earning themselves a lollipop! Just before dinner Philip and Eleanor had invited some students up after their dance practice for the Miss Crossroads Competition. Around 16 girls, along with their teacher Miss Michelle came and ate Samosas and drank lemonade. On Saturday morning it was a return journey to SAS, as our Class 12 boys were playing St Joseph's School, North Point, Darjeeling in the final. North Point were a very impressive team and came out worthy winners. Maybe it was that our boys had an off-day! However, one of our players, Dean, won the award for the most promising player. On Saturday evening, I joined the boys at Murray Cottage for a quick rehearsal of the hymns they would be singing in the Chapel on Sunday morning. The boys sang very well on Sunday, as did all the students – they are all so very tolerant of me, and I still think that they are thinking, "Who is this eejit fae Kelsae?"

Philip left for Kolkata (Calcutta) on Sunday morning – anything to skip the Sunday service – for a Board meeting. And so I treated Eleanor and our two Gap Students – Kyle (Kelso) and Sarah (Selkirk) to lunch at the Silver Oaks in Kalimpong! On Monday there was a Book Fair at the school.

I purchased around 24 books for the Hospital (SMC) as a personal gift from 'Uncle Tom' to SMC. I took four classes on Monday – 49, 47, 53 and 51 students – and a lovely Class 12 student (Phun Tsok) learned me some Tibetan – "Gayla-da-toe-daily" . . . Good morning, Sir. He hopes to go to a university in the UK. I said to him, "Come to Scotland!" The new Home Science teacher spoke to me and said, "We must make scones together" – the best offer I've had since I came here!!! And I'll be doing just that after Assembly on Friday with Class 12 – boys and girls. I've even

bought the butter and the Jam – though they'll be nothing like the scones Ann Laing makes. I've now learned the following: "Namaste" (Hello) in Nepali and Hindi; "Kemonatcho?" (How are you?); and as I said to a lovely Class 11 girl in Korean, "Sarangay, Natasha!" (I love you Natasha!). I think I heard her say, "Sarangay, Tom!!!"

I continue to be humbled and overcome by the lovely comments from many of the students, though I'm sure they would shower similar comments and praise on anyone who takes the time of day with them. "You will be here for my birthday, Sir? No! Then we shall have a treat before you go home." "Sir, you will come back again, won't you?" And as I was leaving the Dining Room after Dinner, "Sweet dreams, Sir."

Power cuts continue at all sorts of times and often it is difficult to get an internet dialling connection to send e-mails. That's one of the reasons why I've not been 'Swype-ing'. I'm typing this in darkness, but with help of some candles and a gas tilley lamp! Hence the many mistakes. This past week has seen thunder and lightning (and heavy rain) every night, and some afternoons. The rain was particularly fierce this morning (Thursday). On Wednesday morning at the Senior Assembly, I was able to introduce into my talk the baptismal candle, knitted bootees and the lovely 'Ednam stole', made by the kids at Ednam some 16 years ago. Later that morning I had to supervise a Class 10 in the Library. Some of the girls came up to me and said how much they had enjoyed the Assembly. "Oh Sir, the socks are so cute." So I gave Premika the bootees and Sandyha the candle. Later in the day, Premika said to me, "Sir, when I get married and have a baby, I will give it the socks you gave me. And maybe we will come across to Scotland to see you." In the afternoon it was into Kalimpong and to the Macfarlane Memorial Church for a Service of Ordination of Presbyters and Deacons. The School Chaplain, Henry Simon, a History teacher was being ordained as a Deacon. The service began just after 1430 hrs and finished just before 1700 hrs. Most of the service was in Nepali, though some of it was in English, and although the hymns were in Nepali, we (Philip, Eleanor and myself) were able to join in with 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow', 'Blessed Assurance' and 'Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire'. The church choir sang (in Nepali), 'O for a thousand tongues to sing', thankfully to the rousing tune 'Lyngham'. The choir of DGH also sang – a mixed version of 'I Believe' and 'Ave Maria . . . wonderful! We all stood to say 'The Nicene Creed', after which we celebrated Holy Communion . . . by 'Intinction' – I hope you're suitably impressed!!!! The church was full – many of them men and many of them young men – and the singing was just like being at the British Legion on a Saturday night – exquisite!

Assemblies continue to go down well (I think) both in the Chapel and at the Kindergarten. Today I wore my Superman T-shirt – or rather my Super Indian T-Shirt – and yes, there was a message in all of that!

Then it was off to the Library with the laptop to finish off my sermon (yes, it is finished), as I'm preaching and concelebrating Holy Communion this Sunday at the Macfarlane Memorial Church in the town (Episcopal, and part of the Church of North India). The sermon is now in the hands of the School Bursar, a member and Elder at the church, who will give it to the Translator/Interpreter. Sitting in the Library and minding my own business, a Class 10 student, Karma, came up and said, "May I sit with you Sir?" And he did, along with few others. Completing the sermon came to a temporary halt as I proceeded to show them from the laptop, the photos I had been taking. "Sir, you look so nice in your robes." Today, I had been invited by the Aunty and Uncle of Murray Cottage to come for some tea at 1100 hrs, which I did. Bit it wasn't only tea – it was pineapple juice, momos and chilli sauce, watermelon, grapes, apple and mangoes – and part of the deal must have been that I had to pray with them before I left! I visited the hospital (SMC) in the afternoon. I'm happy to

report that re-decoration work has started, though I fear I'll be back in Kelso before I can see the finished product. There may be a challenge football match on Saturday afternoon between Fraser Hostel and Willingdon Cottage (senior boys), and I've been asked to referee it. One of the patients, a lovely and very intelligent Class 12 boy (Reo) said that he hoped to be out of hospital for the match. He also asked, "Sir, when do you go home?" I told him in around three weeks. "But Sir, you must stay longer!" On walking home for lunch, two Class 7 boys caught up with me . . . "Sir, you will come back again, won't you? You see, when you leave we will all be so emotional." God bless them.

I'm bracing myself tomorrow (Friday) for a number of classes as a number of teachers will be out of school at 'The Crossroads Festival'. I really do look forward to the morning assemblies in the Chapel and at Kindergarten, where little Shirley, Glenda, Andrew and Harshit insist on climbing on to you and giving you kisses and hugs! When I get back, I'll teach you all the songs they have taught me: "Telephone to Jesus" and "1-2-3, Jesus loves me".

Saturday sees the Cottage Garden Competition, and as I said earlier, I'll be AWOL on Sunday, preaching at the Macfarlane Memorial Church, where Dr (Daddy) Graham will have preached. It's now 2200 hrs and there is still no power, so I suppose it's off to bed – but not before checking e-mails etc . . . and just maybe a teeny-weeny nightcap!

Next week, I'm hoping to take off for three days with Philip and Eleanor to Sikkim in the north, close to the Chinese border.

Again, please be assured of my love and my prayers. And thanks to the generosity of the folk at KN&E in sponsoring Kevin and Claire, we will have made a difference!

May he continue to hold you all in the palm of His hand . . . until we meet again.

Love and God's blessings to you all.

Tom xx