



VELLORE NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF VELLORE CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL (QLD)

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(Qld FOV is a branch of the Australian Board of the Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital)

Dear Friends,

Again this year I had the great privilege of being able to visit CMC Vellore. It was an opportunity to meet old friends, make many new ones and especially see some of the newer programs of this great institution. I find a visit to CMC always demanding, exciting, challenging and inspirational. Visitors are always made welcome, even with the increasing number of people from many countries who have some link with CMC itself or with one of its many specialties. I found the people in the Directorate who deal with Elective students, Volunteers and Observers very helpful. Good accommodation is provided in Alumni House or in Big Bungalow, both on the College Campus. These places are used by people attending conferences and seminars throughout the year as well as by overseas visitors so booking well beforehand is essential.

Kindly note the date of the 2012 Vellore Dinner

Saturday 19 May (from 6-6.30pm)

This popular dinner will again be held in the Emmanuel Uniting Church Hall, 249 South Pine Road, Enoggera.

Speakers: Dr Swetha S Philip, Vellore Ophthalmologist & Rev Brian Lee
(See "About the Dinner Speakers" on page 2)

The planned program includes Indian entertainment and a quality Indian buffet meal. **Tickets (adults \$45, concession \$30) are available from Ian Kerr 3372 5970 or Brian Lee 3351 3272.** An application form is included in this Newsletter for addresses in or near Brisbane. Do get your tickets early to avoid disappointment since numbers are limited.

ABOUT THE DINNER SPEAKERS

- **Dr Swetha Philip** did her undergrad and post-grad training at CMC Vellore. As an Ophthalmologist she is currently doing a one year Fellowship with Professor Julian Cole in the Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane, to gain further experience in Paediatric Ophthalmology. She is of the Batch of '93 (for those who understand CMC language).
- **Rev Brian Lee** – as the Editor of Newsletter I now have to write about myself. I am a long-time member of Friends of Vellore. From 1994 I have visited CMC 11 times, the latest visit in February this year. I am looking forward to the opportunity of the Indian Dinner to share something from this experience.

WEB SITES

The Australian web site with local and Vellore news has recently been re-designed: [**www.australianfov.net.au**](http://www.australianfov.net.au)

The Vellore and USA sites, and their linked sites, are also great sources of information about CMC, its programs and personnel.

[**www.cmch-vellore.edu**](http://www.cmch-vellore.edu) or [**www.vellorecmc.org**](http://www.vellorecmc.org)

THE CROSS ON THE HILL

On a hill overlooking the new Chittoor Campus there is a large stone Cross next to a CSI Church. This Cross has a story.

The date on the Cross is 1938. I was told that it used to be in the CMC Vellore Chapel and when that Chapel was rebuilt in 1938 it was taken by bullock-cart to this hill and left lying on the ground. It seems no one knew what to do with it.

In 2008 when CMC was acquiring the land seen from this hill, the Cross was re-erected and is treasured here as a link with the Founder, Dr Ida Scudder.



A VISIT TO THE CHITTOOR CAMPUS



had suggested that CMC cooperate with the AP Government and set up a medical training college and all that goes with it. He proposed one of several larger cities in the State, all a long way from Vellore. He was reminded of the commitment of CMC to the poor of India, and to the many with no access to quality medical care. He then offered this large tract of land near Chittoor which certainly meets that criterion. It is also conveniently near to CMC.

Our first stop was Easter Hill, a steep climb up a rough road and as yet incomplete stairs, to a CSI Church with views across the new CMC Campus

Our guide was Mr Prince, the Chittoor project's Business Manager and an enthusiast for it.

A small out-patient clinic (which can be seen under the sign above, and the interior to the right) was opened on 7 November last year. One of its small rooms is the temporary Chapel until the new one, already started, is completed. Full use is



made of computers and other IT equipment so that instant communication is possible with all the CMC Vellore specialist resources. Any diagnosis at the Chittoor clinic can readily be checked by the relevant staff at Vellore. The necessary fencing of the land to prevent encroachment is well under way. "Fence" is a rather weak word to use for the wall of made-on-the-spot nearly two metre high concrete pillars and concrete slabs which will surround the 300 acre (120 ha) site.

In a previous Newsletter I wrote a little about this challenging development.

On 8 February I went with two English visitors 40kms or so along the road to the north from Vellore, at some point crossing the State border into Andhra Pradesh. We were told that the previous Chief Minister (Premier) of Andhra Pradesh

THE PLANNED RETREAT CENTRE AT YELAGIRI

Many years ago, at the request of the then Director of CMC, the Australian Board contributed money to purchase land at Yelagiri, the intended site for a Retreat Centre for CMC staff and students.

Over the years attention, and enthusiasm, has centred on other projects which were seen to be of more immediate need.



For some, this dream of a dedicated retreat centre always available for use by CMC has not gone away.

I took the opportunity during my February visit to Vellore to get to see the Yelagiri site. The Director, Dr Suranjan Bhattacharji, provided me with a copy of the architect's plans for the Centre and the Rev Malhia Joshua, Senior Chaplain (seen here holding a copy of the architect's plans), was my guide. Even though some money is

now available for the Retreat Centre, building can't commence until all the negotiations with local authorities regarding land use are complete and in India, as in most of the world, this can be a lengthy process.

Yelagiri (also spelt Elagiri) has a small community mainly of retirees and holiday makers who appreciate the coolness of a place 1400m above sea level. Most of the 90km road from Vellore is quite flat and on the 4 lane, soon to be 6 lane, National Highway from Chennai to Bangalore. The last 10kms or so, off the Highway, is a steep climb with 14 hairpin bends.

Malhia spoke of the many retreats organised mostly by the Chaplaincy Department over the years. These involve students, teachers and both Junior and Senior Hospital staff. Retreats are open to and are attended by people of all faiths and of none. They are not seen as evangelistic opportunities but are appreciated for all that a "Retreat" can offer people whose lives are invariably busy and who constantly work under pressure.

The Chaplains find it is difficult and expensive now to book suitable places for retreats. Nearby centres have the added risk for very busy people with mobile phones when they find they "just have to get back to the (office, ward, theatre, desk) for something urgent that has come up".

The Yelagiri site is just a bare paddock now but the need for a Retreat Centre is there, the plans are there, some money is there and work is being done to carry this project forward.

COLLEGE OF NURSING – AND MORE TO COME



When four of us from Brisbane visited Vellore just two years ago, there was a big sign in the grounds of the new College of Nursing - CONSTRUCTION WORK IN PROGRESS. In a way it still is. The College complex and Chapel are complete and in use by the 700 nurses now in training. On one side of the College grounds is a row of units

for some of CMC's medical staff. Between them and the College are white lines marking the site of the nurses' hostel buildings. The ground-breaking ceremony was held on 20 January with Council members, Administrators and student representatives present. The plan is for twin blocks to house a total of 850 undergraduate and postgraduate students.

I was told that negotiations with the authorities for permission to use this land for its intended purpose are virtually complete and soon the building work will begin.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Reflecting on CMC's journey through 2011, Dr Suranjan Bhattacharji wrote in the "CMC Newsline":



"Throughout the past year we, as a community, have experienced the presence of the Divine in our midst, not only in our daily life and work but also in the fulfilment of long cherished dreams such as the sanctioning of the new medical, nursing and allied health courses and increase in seats; the opportunity to influence national medical education policy; the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals' final assessment; the growth in our research and in our work in Vellore and in Chittoor. And so our journey and our struggle to be faithful to the calling of our Master and the vision of our founder, Dr Ida Scudder, and the many leaders after her, continues."

The appointment of Dr Sunil Chandy, a Cardiologist at CMC, as Dr Suanjan's successor was announced at the January Council meeting. Dr Chandy will take up this position in September.

THE CMC ARCHIVES

In the 111 years of the life of the College and associated Hospitals many records no doubt have been lost but there are still many historically important photos and files which have been safely stored.

A room near the College Library has now been set apart for archival material. Many old photos have already

been copied and placed on display boards with easy to read labels.

Dr Reena George who has had responsibility for the Archives added to her other work said they would love the voluntary services of a qualified Archivist just to get them started in the right direction as they begin to get this collection in order and as they continue to collect and store archival material.



DISTANCE EDUCATION

The wide and expanding use of I T facilities throughout India will no doubt lead to ever increasing opportunities in Distance Education which is now a significant part of CMC's teaching programs.

In December at the Distance Education Convocation, 202 doctors from different parts of the country - private practitioners, government doctors and fresh graduates doing their rural service - received their post-graduate diplomas in a variety of specialties.

The CMC Newsline reported that "the Distant Education courses have had a positive impact on general practitioners and public sector doctors in three aspects – professional competence, ethical values and culture of patient care. Training and empowering doctors through distance education, without dislocating them from their places of work, has been a truly transformative tool."

POLIO IN INDIA – GONE FOR GOOD?

In an article in “The Australian” newspaper this January it was reported that on 13 January, 2011 in West Bengal there was the last case of a positive diagnosis of polio in India. One year free of any new case is seen as an important and encouraging milestone. Only when there has not been a new case for three years will India be declared polio free. Even then vaccination will have to continue because polio is still occurring in some of India’s near neighbours, also in Nigeria.

During the 1980s, in a leaflet widely distributed by the Australian Board for Vellore as part of its publicity were some health statistics for India and these included the phrase: “500 new cases of polio are reported each day”. Government estimates for 1995 show at least 100,000 cases per year. It was then that a massive vaccination program was finally put into action as



the World Health Organisation, World Rotary and the Indian Government worked together for this. More recently the Gates Foundation has added its resources to the world wide fight against polio.

While rejoicing in this medical achievement, it needs to be remembered that all those with a disability from polio will almost certainly have to deal with it for the rest of their lives.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO GIVE TO CMC VELLORE

The Queensland Friends of Vellore were able to contribute \$60,000 to the Australian Board for the year ending June, 2011. Donations for the year, including Person to Person donations, were \$29,902. Street stalls and other sales brought in a net amount of \$20,110, with a further net amount from the Indian Dinner of \$2758. Bank interest was \$2368. The only expenditure item apart from the cost of running the Street Stalls and the Dinner was \$1622 for postage, stationery and the Newsletter.

Many people have contributed to this fine effort through gifts of money and goods for sale and much hard work.

USED STAMPS FOR VELLORE

In February I was able to take a few kilos of used stamps and give them to the Rehabilitation Institute where they are treated, sorted and packaged by some of the long term patients. Proceeds from the sale of used stamps benefit those patients.

There are 80 beds in the Rehabilitation Institute and others come as day patients to receive treatment including physiotherapy and occupational therapy. The growing intensity of Indian traffic and consequent growing accident rate is the source of many of the injuries dealt with in this Institute.

STREET STALL NEWS

Many thanks to new volunteers, and to those wonderful people who continue their many years of stall work. In recent months more than \$1500 a month has come just from these two stalls.

Each of the Toowong and Tank Street stalls happen once a month. New helpers are always welcome. Continuing needs include:

- Suitable items for sale
- Help with transporting the goods
- Workers at the stalls
 - regularly or now and again as you are able.

If you, or someone you know, can help in this, kindly contact Mrs Claire Mainstone (3371 1332).

DEATH OF STREET STALL VETERAN

Mrs Marion Jones was a faithful contributer to and worker on the Brisbane Vellore street stalls for more than 40 years. Even after she had to give up working on the monthly stalls, through her knitting skills she continued to help this good work.

Marion's funeral was held in the St Peter Chanel Catholic Church at The Gap on 30 December and a number of those who worked with her on the stalls were able to be present..

Regards, Brian Lee (Newsletter Editor).

QLD FRIENDS OF VELLORE OFFICE BEARERS

Chairman: Mrs Cathy Chandani, 24 Mathews St, Bethania 4205 (ph 0412391353)

Vice Chairman: Rev John Hooper, 74 Meynell St, Salisbury 4107 (ph 3701 0017)

Hon. Secretary: Mrs Gwenda Spencer, 22 Elgata St, The Gap 4061 (ph 3300 1542)

Hon. Treasurer: Mr Richard Caitens, 107 Northgate Rd Northgate 4013 (ph 3266 1962)

Stalls Co-ordinator: Mrs Claire Mainstone, 37 Fifth Av, St Lucia, 4067 (ph 3371 1332)

Publicity Officer &

Newsletter Editor: Rev Brian Lee, 19 Glencloy Street, Ferny Grove 4055 (ph 3351 3272)