



**CHRISTMAS  
NEWSLETTER  
2020**



The new reality

## UK Committee Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, India

Charity Registered in Scotland SC 016341

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGES</b>
Christmas message from the Chair	4
Greetings from the Board of Management	6
The new School Managing Committee	8
GO and the International Committees	10
Sponsorship Report	12
Treasurer Report	16
Safeguarding	19
Committee News	20
Fundraising Reports	22
Aunty Theo Baker – an appreciation	24
Maintenance – an ongoing battle	28
UK Committee Directory	30
Kolkata – Kathmandu – Kalimpong 2021	31

### **AGM and Curry Lunch**

**The Royal Scots Club, 29 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh EH3 6QE**

**Wednesday 12 May 2021**

We invite all friends and supporters to join us for an informative day of fellowship in Edinburgh for the UK Committee Annual General Meeting & Curry lunch.

**Coffee served from 10.15 and AGM at 11**

**Curry Lunch at 12.45**

You are welcome to just turn up for the AGM, but please reserve your place for the lunch afterwards, with our Secretary, Frances Dent.

Email: [drgrahamsuksec@gmail.com](mailto:drgrahamsuksec@gmail.com) Tel: 01382 668700

Lunch cost £15 payable on the day.

## A Christmas message from the Chair



### **Greetings to Friends, Supporters and Donors**

As I write this introduction to the Christmas Newsletter in what has been a very difficult year for everyone, in many ways my first thought is that it finds you well and surviving the virus that has caused so much grief, sadness and difficulty throughout the World. For your UK Committee, like every organisation, 2020 has brought change and difficulty in equal measure as we have dealt with the challenges from Kolkata, Kalimpong and at Home.

Unfortunately, we lost four long-serving Trustees early in the year and I publicly record my sincere thanks to them for their help, dedication and support and I look forward to their continued support and friendship. In May we welcomed the newly appointed Sponsorship Secretaries, a double act, Ian and Anji Russell. I am sure most of you will have heard from them already as they hit the deck running and have already been in contact with many supporters and sponsors. They come to us with considerable experience and a keen interest in both the Homes as an institution and the Indian Sub-Continent as a new place to experience.

Just as Ian and Anji started, the devastation wrought by the virus in India was becoming apparent. In compliance with Indian Government directions, the school was virtually closed with almost all pupils being sent home to parents or guardians. Only orphans and teachers' children remained. Fortunately, there have been only minimal cases of Coronavirus in Kalimpong and none at the Homes. The Principal regularly reports to the Sponsorship Secretaries on the various happenings and that has allowed your Trustees to keep abreast of the situation.

Unfortunately, over the year many social events were cancelled. Our AGM in May was the first to fall victim, then the September Birthday Curry Lunch in Edinburgh and the London Reception in October. These events and the numerous talks, garden openings, coffee mornings and soup and sandwich lunches all fell victim. Cancelling these events both restricts interaction as social events but also has a detrimental effect on our overall fund-raising.

One event that did take place was the opening of the garden belonging to our Secretary Frances Dent and her husband John, in Dundee. This was very successful and I am very grateful to both Frances and John for what they did and for what they raised for the Homes.



One issue that has come up this year is Safeguarding and we are working with the Charity Regulator to ensure that we have the correct safeguards in place at the Homes. Your Trustees have appointed Anne Hoggan as Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Anne is in regular contact with her Safeguarding counterpart on the Board of Management in Kolkata. You can read Anne's report further on in this magazine.

Dr Gillian Hart, President of Dr Graham's Homes, resigned from the Board of Management in Kolkata and is succeeded by Mr Shane Calvert. Many of you will have met Gillian and Shane when they visited us in 2017 attending the AGM in Edinburgh and other gatherings. Dr Hart was a popular and hard working President, and an Educationalist with her own school in Kolkata. I know that she really appreciated the work and dedication of the many Homes' supporters in the UK. We wish Mr Calvert and the BOM well in the challenges they must face in the next few months.

2021 looks like being a very testing year for the Homes, with no re-opening date in sight, and continuing industrial unrest throughout India. Our committee is unable to meet face to face but we do meet regularly on Zoom. Our objective remains the same: to provide an education and board for disadvantaged Anglo-Indian children. The need is greater than ever, and our intention is to take on an additional twenty students in 2021. We can only achieve this with the continuing loyal encouragement of our supporters.

I hope that you, your family, friends and neighbours have kept well during these difficult times. It is always the case that in times of crises we learn what is important – strong families, strong committees and strong friendships.

Merry Christmas!

**Margaretta Purtill**  
**Chair, UK Committee**

## Changes on the Kolkata Board of Management



Dear friends and well-wishers of Dr Graham's Homes, it has been over a month since the new Board of Management was put in place. The first three weeks saw a number of emergency board meetings and hectic parleys. We had on our plate: the demand of the teachers for the 6th Pay and the demand of the employees for bonus. Hours were spent in fire fighting and we were able to avert a potential crisis, albeit for the time being.

In the first few weeks, the new Board of Management decided to include a representative of the International Committees and also a member of the Global Organisation of OGBs. This initiative was to allow for them to engage in and

contribute to the functioning of the institution since they share a strong interest and are committed to the promotion and advancement of Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong.

Another milestone was achieved when the newly constituted board resolved to formally establish a School Managing Committee, thereby ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice and can be active participants in managing the affairs of the Homes. The first SMC meeting was held on 2nd Nov 2020 on the campus and has already begun its work in earnest. There is an air of positivity and we are optimistic that this will translate to productivity on the ground. The different sub-committees have also begun to meet, important decisions have been taken and implementation is in progress.

We are confronting a crisis, but the task at hand is not insurmountable. We have embarked on an ambitious agenda for change and, with the cooperation of all, positive changes will be implemented because we are all pulling together in the same direction.

The crux of our problem lies in the finances, which have plunged into abysmal depths. We need to think of 'out-of-the-box' solutions. While suggestions are always welcome, it is the Board of Management who is entrusted with deciding which of the solutions are best suited for the welfare of the Homes.



The BOM needs time to examine where we are at the moment and to look at where we want to be in the next five years. This is the short term, for which goals will need to be identified. Long term goals are to be looked at, to examine where we would like to be when the Homes complete 150 years. In order to do that we must prioritise and prepare a blue print for the short and long term. Small, achievable targets must be aimed at, and measures to implement them have to be put in place.

As a team, the Board of Management will evaluate the situation honestly, rethink our strategies, accept our weaknesses, focus on our strengths and will consistently pursue our objectives with dedication and devotion.

We are conscious that quick-fixes will do more harm than good. A carefully selected, sustained and balanced intake of ideas and views can re-energise, and reinvigorate. It cannot be solely a top-down initiative — all the research about successful change tells us that the people carrying it out are vital to the process. Without their support, change gets subverted and diverted.

**Central to all of this, will and must remain, the children under our care. We must exist and survive because of them and for them.**

Dr Graham's Homes is part of our heritage: there is a certain romance and nostalgia about this 'Children's City' which must be kept alive. Mother Teresa said, "To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it". Your love, your support and God's blessings is the oil that will keep this flame, Dr Graham's Homes, burning.

Very soon, the Christmas season will be upon us and, despite the pandemic which has had an impact on all aspects of our lives, we can still fervently hope for a wonderful season filled with God's choicest blessings. The true meaning of Christmas is giving and sharing love, and reaching out to those who have touched our lives. It is a time to count our blessings and be grateful for them. You have all touched our lives in so many ways and on behalf of the members of the Board of Management, we thank you for being wonderful friends of Dr Graham's Homes.

May the magic of the Christmas season fill your home with joy and peace. Take care of yourselves, stay healthy and stay safe.

With all good wishes from the members of the Board of Management.

**Michael Shane Calvert**  
**President Board of Management**

## First Meeting of the new School Managing Committee

*This is an extract from the speech made by Praful Rao at the first meeting of the newly established School Managing Committee (SMC) on 2 November 2020 in Kalimpong. Praful provides continuity being a member of the Board of Management in Kolkata and a key player locally in Kalimpong.*



Some of us have been a part of DGH since we were born, for others DGH brushed across our lives later, and, to some of us, DGH is a recent happening – yet the thread that binds us is our deep concern for this 120 year old institution. I would especially like to thank

Mrs Jayshree Pradhan and Mr Sunimal Chakravarthi for having come all the way from Gangtok and Darjeeling to attend this meeting. But why did we decide to meet in person rather than have an online meeting? It is only because today we are writing a new page in the history of the Homes.

If you ask me where COVID-19 has hit the hardest, I think it is in the future of our children because I strongly believe that education, and education alone, is the key to unlocking all of our travails. And this is where DGH has always excelled – in providing a holistic, sound education. Young people, after spending just two years doing their class 11 and 12 in DGH proudly announce “I am an OGB!” and this connection between school and students is a unique bond which lasts forever.

At DGH, our priorities are well defined and clear – to provide quality education in a secure and healthy atmosphere. Unfortunately, we have had our ups and downs when things beyond our control came our way: the Earthquake in September 2011 caused so much damage to our old structures and recovery was a slow, painful process which even now is not complete. The chapel in particular is still in a mess. Then we had the 105-day strike which resulted in a loss of many students, and now the pandemic.





Although the tunnel seems long and deep, we have only one option. We have to tighten our belts, help and trust each other and climb out. How do we do this? By cutting down our overheads and costs, converting our liabilities into assets and, most importantly, exuding a stable, safe and peaceful environment where many more students will join our school next year.

Which school has so much land and so many buildings, and so much man power? Why are these our weaknesses rather than our strengths? With these assets, we should be competing with the best schools in the country, rather than teetering on the verge of bankruptcy.

With these thoughts in mind, we have come together to constitute for the first time a School Managing Committee (SMC) where members of the school faculty, HEA and certain respected individuals who are interested in our welfare, can gain an insight into and be a part of the participatory management of the daily functioning of the school. Together with the Board of Management we can help DGH get out of ventilator support and thrive once again.

I can assure you that the BOM is working day in and out to find ways to think 'outside the box' to find new ways of generating money or employment to take the school forward. I also assure you that all the money that DGH earns is yours and must be used only to provide better education, better pay and maintain the assets better.

I convey greetings, prayers and regards from President, Shane Calvert and all the Board Members for a successful first SMC meeting and my grateful thanks to all of you for your presence here today.

**Praful Rao (Wing Commander retired)**  
**Vice Chair BOM, member SMC and OGB**

## GO and the International Committees are working together



*In a major change in governance, GO and the International Committees are meeting regularly on Zoom and now both have representatives on the Homes' Board of Management. This report on an exciting new co-operation comes from Anirban Bhattacharyya, the GO Chair.*

I think it was John Lennon who once said "Life happens when you are busy making other plans". The pandemic proved to us all that we cannot take our lives and our time for granted. It upset how the world functioned, how people worked, how we interacted and even how we taught future generations. In short, it was Covid Chaos!

Dr Graham's Homes has had its fair share of challenges over the years. Political upheavals leading to a reduction in the number of students as boarders, and that trickled down to hurt the bottom line. And this pandemic added to our woes. If that wasn't enough, we saw the teachers going on strike asking for a pay hike. Dr Gillian Hart, as the BOM Chair, finished her term and stepped down in June 2020. News trickled out, rumours were fanned, and panic set in like wild fire across the OGB community worldwide. Supposedly, the Homes was shutting down! At GO, we realised that we could no longer be seated on the sidelines. It was time to dive in to the mud!

### **A new purpose**

GO was founded in 2014 at the Homes International Conference, responding to an appeal from Revd John Webster for OGBs to be more pro-active and increase their involvement with the school. This year, GO decided to shed its role of just being a fund-raising body that undertook cottage repairs, and to actively become involved to help revive the school.

We reached out to the International Committees and together we prepared a Business Plan to present to the BOM. The pandemic has helped us all realise that physical presence is no longer required - our first meeting in September 2020 took place on Zoom, across five time zones with the committees of Ireland, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand participating. These committees also agreed that the time was right to redefine their own roles beyond sponsorship and to become more action-orientated.

We had a meeting with the BOM where we suggested a joint Business Plan. This led to the unprecedented move by the BOM to invite a representative of GO and a representative of the International Committees to join the board. Since then GO and the International Committees have had multiple meetings and discussions and we are developing the Business Plan.

The level of involvement of the BOM members has been heartening and sub committees have been set up on the Board to mirror those that we have set up. Each International Committee will partner with a BOM sub-committee to focus on their particular area of concern or expertise.

The proposed plan details step by step actions that need to be taken to revive the Homes, examining the issues at hand and suggesting remedies and how they can be achieved. Rome wasn't built in a day, and we understand that the revival will take some time. Hopefully, the plan will help to lay down milestones towards a firm Five Year Plan where we will *plan* the work, and then *work* the plan.

### **Thank you**

All of us at GO are thankful for the overwhelming response from the International Committees. Never before in the history of the school, have all the International Committees worked together as one unit. This is 'lit' as today's younger generation would say! Daddy Graham always hoped that there would come a day when OGBs would return to play important roles of administration and governance at the school, where OGBs would truly go back to where they began. This is now happening.

### **The Future**

GO had declared 2020 to be the Year of the OGBs and had started raising funds for the school via many routes and programmes, including a Sponsored Bike Ride from Thimpu to Kalimpong. All programmes and events have been temporarily cancelled, but we will use available funds in 2021 and continue with the planned events when circumstances permit, including the Bike Ride.

I request you keep this incredible team of GO and International Committees in your prayers, and support our endeavour.

God Bless. Tashi Delek. Namaste

**Anirban Bhattacharyya**  
**GO Chair and OGB**

## Sponsorship Secretaries' Report



As we enter this season of Advent, we are reminded that it is a time of looking forward with great expectation to 'something' coming. All of us are certainly looking forward to the end of Covid-19 and a time when life might return to normal.

The true focus of Advent, however, is not about Covid. Looking forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus is what Advent is about, and of course His coming again. Over 2,000 years ago, God recognised the need of the world and sent Jesus to bring peace, hope, joy and light to all mankind.

120 years ago, a young minister from Scotland and his wife recognised the need to bring that same peace, hope, joy and light to Anglo-Indian children in Kalimpong, and so Dr Graham's Homes was born.

We have been Sponsorship Secretaries for just over 6 months now and sadly we have not yet been able to visit the Homes to see the work that this amazing man started. We do hope that by this time next year, however, we will have been able to see it all for ourselves and meet the children. In the meantime, we love seeing the photos and hearing stories that you send us about your family connections, visits, or time that you spent there as a child.



We have certainly been busy during these months and have enjoyed getting to grips with all the different issues, and there have been quite a few. It has not been the introduction to the job that we had expected! No matter how challenging it has been, it has also been very rewarding as we learn about both the children at the Homes and about the students who continue their education at college.

## Sponsored children

We are so grateful to all of you who support DGH either as sponsor, correspondent, donor or a good friend, for your love and care of these young lives. We are in great need of more sponsors and correspondents (someone who writes to a child but doesn't provide financially) to support the children, and so if you would be happy to undertake either of these roles, please do let us know. If you have a friend who might be interested, then we would be happy to send them further information.

Covid-19 has, without doubt, had a huge worldwide impact on everyone's lives during 2020 and the Homes in Kalimpong have not escaped this. The staff there has been working extremely hard to manage this very difficult situation and to try and minimise the effect it has on the sponsored children. We are happy to know that there have been no incidents of Covid-19 at the Homes, though there have been quite a few in Kalimpong itself.

At the request of their parents, many children went home in April, some more in July and a few more in October. As we write this in November, we know that out of the 148 sponsored children, only 15 remain at DGH. They are being cared for by their cottage parents and other staff members. We have contacted all sponsors and correspondents by email or letter during the last few months to let them know the whereabouts of the child/ren they sponsor or correspond with. However, we do know that some emails have not arrived where they were sent. Maybe the spam folders have been whisking them away - please accept our apologies if you have not received any information. We are always happy to receive emails or phone calls from you if you are unsure about what is happening.



## **Corresponding with the Children**

As many of you may know, corresponding with children at the Homes is now possible via email. You need to email the letter as an attachment - a word document or PDF - to us at our email address (or type the letter in the body of the email text if you are unfamiliar with attachments). This will then be sent from our email address to the Sponsorship Officer at the Homes who will print it for the child. Replies will come the same way via us. At no time does the child see your personal email address. This is very important and is in line with the DGH UK Safeguarding policy.

We are delighted to report that the Board of Management in Kolkata are working with the staff at the Homes to enable all the children, who are due to take their ICSE exams or their ISC exams next year, to return to school for extra tuition in preparation for their exams. As yet we do not have a comprehensive list of those returning, but we will let all sponsors and correspondents know as soon as we know more. Comprehensive plans are in place to ensure the children and the Homes stay safe from Covid-19 as the children return.

## **Sponsored students**

Whilst it has been difficult for the children at The Homes during Covid-19, it has also been especially difficult for those who entered their final year at DGH, hoping to do well in their exams in 2020, and looking forward to their new future as a student.



As in most countries, exams were severely disrupted and the hopes and dreams of so many young people were put on hold. We are so pleased to have been in regular contact with all, bar one, of those who left DGH this year. Several young people have managed to gain a



Five of our 2<sup>nd</sup> year college students

place at college and are already enrolled in on-line studies, waiting for their college to fully open. Some have decided to defer for a year and a couple are currently undecided. We are also in contact with 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students. It is a privilege to know these students who are so grateful for the opportunity that they were given by The Homes and their sponsors.



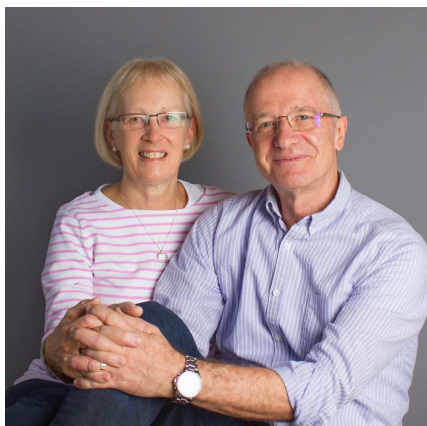
### **Getting funds to our students**

Changes made by the government about transferring money to India impacted us severely just as we were about to start a new partnership with Mission of Mercy India (MOMI) in Kolkata. They were ready to help with the transfer of money, and also to offer care and support to the students, but this had to be put on hold temporarily. Fortunately, we were able to pay college and accommodation fees, as well as pocket money, directly. When these changes in India have settled down, we will finally be able to share the care of the students with MOMI. The staff members of MOMI are geographically closer to them and so able to manage any needs more quickly than we can. However, as sponsorship secretaries we will still maintain close contact with all our students. We have grown very fond of these young people.

### **Safeguarding**

The importance of safeguarding is a strong focus in schools, charities, and any establishment where children are beneficiaries. Keeping safe those for whom we care is a top priority for Dr Graham's Homes. As part of the DGH UK Safeguarding sub-committee we have been working together with the UK Trustees, the Board of Management in Kolkata and Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong to strengthen the policies and practices concerning this important matter.

We are all totally committed to ensuring that the children remain safe and secure so that they can learn, thrive and fully benefit from all that the Homes in Kalimpong can offer them. We know that this would have been the greatest desire of Dr Graham, so many years ago.



Thank you again for your love and support as you share this commitment with us for the many children and young people in our care. We would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and good health and safety in the coming year.

**Ian and Anji Russell**  
**Joint Sponsorship Secretaries**

## Treasurer's Report



### **A year like no other**

When Harold Macmillan as Prime Minister was asked by an MP what he was most afraid of he replied "Events, dear boy, events". It is stating the obvious that the Coronavirus pandemic this year has changed so much of the way we work. While it is sad that neither I nor any of my colleagues have been able to go to Kalimpong this year, we have been in constant touch with the Board of Management and the Homes to ensure the welfare of our sponsored children. Many of them have had to remain at home during the pandemic and those that have remained at the Homes, are being well looked after.

The staff are conducting lessons on-line wherever possible and are committed to ensuring that the children reach their full potential. The Board of Management has undergone a measure of restructuring with the setting up of a number of sub committees and this brought a new energy to the governance of the Homes.

Despite the strictures caused by the pandemic, Maida and I continue to enjoy the interaction with our supporters and we greatly appreciate the support and generosity of so many people towards the Homes. It has been a particular pleasure to work with Ian and Anji Russell, our new Sponsorship Secretaries as together we seek to keep our finances on a sound footing.

### **Income dropping**

Our income for the nine months to 31 October 2020 is £178,000, consisting of:

Donations plus tax recovery - £46,000    Income from sponsorship - £89,000  
Fundraising events - £3,000    Legacies - £20,000    Investment income - £20,000

This is £50,000 less than the corresponding total last year of £228,000, mainly because of a drop of £18,000 in sponsorship income and £32,000 of 'one off' donations and legacies last year. While we greatly appreciate donations, from whatever source, our level of general monthly donations and sponsorship income is gradually diminishing.

As before, I ask that supporters do NOT send us additional sums of pocket money for the children. The sponsor payments which we make to the Homes include an allowance for pocket money, and additional sums beyond that are difficult to administer in both the UK and India, and can also lead to inequity between the children. Our policy is to treat any such additional sums as general donations rather than being attributed to any specific child.

### **Expenditure reduced, but annual deficit expected**

Our ordinary expenditure for the period has been £235,000, compared with £274,000 last year. The exchange rate has improved to around 92 rupees to the pound, compared with 88 last year. Our support for Extended Sponsorship students at this point in the year has reduced as we have experienced teething problems with a new model of support. Having entered into a partnership with Mission of Mercy India, who have extensive experience of working with this age group, we have then come up against practical administrative difficulties, not only because of the effect of restrictions on movement in Kolkata but also because the Indian government passed new legislation in September requiring foreign NGOs to channel money to India through new designated bank accounts. We are working hard to ensure that our students receive the support that they need.

As with most charities, our income is relatively fixed, but predicting income is tricky, and we expect to end the year with a deficit of around £80,000. In the short term such deficits are manageable, but we are in the business of providing long term support for the Homes and so we wish to reverse the trend.

### **Investments better than feared**

Stock market volatility continues, especially in the light of geopolitical uncertainties and the response to Coronavirus. As at 17 November, our portfolio was valued at £1,004,000 compared with £965,000 at 31 January, having recovered since the Coronavirus-inspired 'nosedive' at the end of March. We are guided by our stockbrokers Killik & Co and, on their advice, a number of sales and purchases were made in February (before the nosedive) and in August (after the start of the recovery) with a view to diversifying the portfolio; this has brought benefits, but we are well aware that what goes up can come down. The portfolio is of good quality and well diversified, and we adopt a prudent approach to investment. The yield on the portfolio is 2.5% and our investment policy is to achieve a balance of income and capital growth.

### **Your support is vital**

The amount we ask of our sponsors for full sponsorship of a child is £1,500 per annum (£1,200 per annum or £100 per month, plus Gift Aid). We fully accept that for some this amount will not be possible or appropriate, and our present level of reserves is able to top up the finance required to fulfil our commitment to the Homes.

### **Keeping the Homes running from day to day is not without its challenges**

The combined effects of Covid, the political situation in India in general and Kalimpong in particular, as well as poor infrastructure in the Hills, can make it difficult to get things done. We continue to work constructively with the Board of Management and the Homes' Senior Management Team to ensure that our sponsored children receive the best education possible, very much aware that our primary aim is to care for children at the Homes who would otherwise have very little chance in life.

A key element of our strategy is to increase our sponsorship income and your support in helping us to do this is vital.

**Jim Gibson**  
**Treasurer**



18 of the Class X and Class XII children returned to the Homes in late November to study and prepare for their exams next year (ICSE for Class X and ISC for Class XII). The transfer from Kolkata was very well planned to keep the children safe from the virus.

Before travel, tests for the virus were undertaken as well as many carefully planned procedures. On arrival, they quarantined in the school hospital for five days and were tested again before moving back to their cottages. All are in good spirits.

## **Our Safeguarding policy**



One of my Vice-Chair duties is to lead the Safeguarding Sub-committee. As you will be aware, Safeguarding is an important and necessary issue, both for the UK Committee and the Board of Management in India.

Being a Registered Scottish Charity, we are required by the Regulator (OSCR) to conform to strict criteria. The Safeguarding Team comprises the Sponsorship Secretaries, Trustees Aileen Fraser and Sir John Ball and myself. I am indebted to Ian and Anji Russell, Aileen and John for advice and excellent, good-natured teamwork.

We have ensured that all UK Trustees possess clearance document in Protection of Vulnerable Persons. All have participated in NSPCC on-line training for Charity Trustees.

Ian and Anji Russell have drafted an updated Joint Safeguarding Policy, a document which covers all aspects of Safeguarding for our Committee, for Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong and for the Board of Management in Kolkata. Senior staff at the school, and the BOM have been involved in preparing the document which includes Guidance for Visitors to the Homes. (Sadly, visiting the Homes is not in our diaries at present).

In recent weeks there have been changes within the Board of Management and we are pleased that Chairman, Shane Calvert, has appointed a Safeguarding Sub-committee. First optimistic steps have been taken for our two Sub-Committees to work co-operatively, including a future virtual joint meeting.

As we progress, we pray for clarity of purpose which will be of benefit to all, particularly the children at Dr Graham's Homes.

I wish to thank all Sponsors and Supporters for their continuing interest in the work we are doing.

**Anne Hoggan**  
**Vice Chair, UK Committee**

## Committee News



The year 2020 has been a different year for all of us! Normally the Trustees meet three times a year. This year we had our normal meeting in February at the Royal Scots Club in Edinburgh. Then the lockdown hit. Initially it seemed we could conduct our business by emails and phone calls but, as time went on, it became apparent we would need to adapt to meeting virtually; we have become expert at using Zoom.

Between May and November, we have met 15 times. These multiple meetings are partly due to our new practice of concentrating on only one or two topics at each meeting, but are also due to the many new situations which have arisen as a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic. It has been fortunate that modern technology has allowed us to hold emergency meetings at short notice without the time commitment and expense of travelling.

The Trustees have been very pleased to welcome Ian and Anji Russell, our new Joint Sponsorship Secretaries. They have made an excellent start under very difficult circumstances. Ian and Anji are not trustees but they are in attendance at almost all the Trustee Meetings and their expertise is invaluable to the Committee. Another new feature of the Committee is the formation of sub-committees. The Governance Working Group, chaired by Frank Dunn, has been meeting over the last year to review our constitution. The Safeguarding Sub-Committee was established in June 2020 under the chairmanship of Anne Hoggan. Anne is now our designated Safeguarding Trustee and is also our Vice-Chairman.



Board of Management Zoom meeting



We were sorry to lose four Trustees who stepped down earlier this year. James MacHardy and Alistair McCabe were long-serving trustees; Jenny Moore and Amanda Grant had served for shorter times. All four, however, are still very active in raising funds and we thank them for all their service and commitment. In particular, we thank Alistair for continuing to produce our newsletters.



The UK Committee has decided to change from being an unincorporated association to a company limited by guarantee. The reasons behind this are the changing nature of charity best practice, the increasing burden of legislation, the increasing risk attached to being a trustee without the protection of limited liability, and

the difficulty of knowing who our 'members' are. A new company is to be formed called Dr Graham's Homes Kalimpong UK and an application will then be made to OSCR for the granting of charitable status. Once this is obtained, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of our existing members will be called to approve a special resolution authorising, in principle, the winding up of the existing charity and the transfer of assets to the new company. It is intended to hold the EGM as soon as practicable, possibly in February 2021 and probably by Zoom. Further details regarding the EGM will be circulated in due course but in the meantime, I will be happy to answer any questions.

We had to cancel the 2020 AGM and Curry Lunch and also the London Reception planned for October. We hope that these events will be able to take place in 2021 and I look forward to meeting many of you on these occasions. We are always looking for interesting Homes stories and pictures for our newsletters, so do drop me a line at any time.

I hope that, in spite of the virus, you will have a happy and healthy Christmas.

**Frances Dent**  
**Committee Secretary**

## Fundraising Open Garden Event



Everything has been different in 2020, even the way that gardens open for charity!

We had arranged to open our Dundee garden as part of Scotland's Gardens Scheme, with the main beneficiary being Dr Graham's Homes. But then, lockdown came. Fortunately, by October restrictions had eased and we were allowed to open, although not quite as planned.

BYOM was added to the garden publicity - Bring Your Own Mug and Mask!

The opening hours were extended to prevent crowding, tickets were changed to donations, the dainty afternoon teas turned into a mug and a biscuit, the musicians were cancelled, the marquee disappeared and a plethora of Covid related signs were positioned. In spite of all these changes, the weekend was a success. Over the weekend, about 150 visitors came and everyone seemed to appreciate their visit. For many it was the first face-to-face event for several weeks or months.

The autumn colours were on show in the trees and shrubs and a number of perennials were still flowering. Our special features include pond and waterfall areas, a miniature knot garden, unexpected corners and views of the River Tay and Fife hills. From dusk onwards, there was floodlighting with a range of colours and effects, enjoyed by all and causing great excitement amongst our youngest visitors. We displayed photographs and information which led to conversations about the Homes. Our visitors, and some who couldn't visit, were very generous and gave donations totalling £1,210. This money will be divided between the UK Committee Dr Graham's Homes (60%) and the charities supported by Scotland's Gardens Scheme (see [scotlandsgardens.org](http://scotlandsgardens.org)).

Many thanks to all who supported us.

**John and Frances Dent**

## Fund-raising in 'The Year of the OGB'



The year 2020 was designated 'The Year of the OGB,' the Old Girls and Boys' Year, but sadly this did not turn out as anticipated due to restrictions caused by the Coronavirus. The OGBs had anticipated a bumper 'get together' to mark the 120th Birthday of the founding of the Homes.

For its part, the UK Committee had planned a Curry Lunch in Edinburgh in September. A large number of supporters and friends signed up for this, but sadly again the dreaded virus intervened and the event was cancelled. The organiser is very grateful to the many guests who declined the return of their ticket fee, which formed a sizeable donation to help support our sponsored children.

Also to mark the 120th Anniversary of the Homes, in January all UK Committee Trustees were invited to use their talents to each raise as near to £2,020 as possible. Some tried and tested ways to raise the money were suggested

- Speaking about the Homes to local groups.
- Sponsored run, walk, cycle, swim or swim.
- Writing to many friends, relations or DGH supporters and ask them to send a donation, maybe £20 to help the cause.
- Using your talents - handicrafts, open gardens, coffee mornings, soup and sandwich events.

One Trustee, working with a local group, is quilt making while another is doing a sponsored crochet, aiming to make twenty mats to give to the cottage aunts and other hard-working women at DGH.



Again, sadly, along with many of our regular fund raising social events, a considerable number of the 2020 Challenge events had to be postponed and that has had an obvious effect on the potential final figure but, at the time of writing, we could have raised about £14,000 when considering the gift aid benefit.

Let me record an early thank you to these good Trustees who so kindly rose to the challenge and made the effort to raise a few bob for our needy children, well done.

**James MacHardy**

## Aunty Theo Baker, an appreciation



Andrew Simick writes: at the grand age of 93, Aunty Theo Baker is still a pillar of the Anglo-Indian community of Calcutta.

Born in Lucknow on 24 April 1927, her parents were George and Winifred Offerman. George worked in the Railway and the family lived in the Railway Quarters in Lucknow. With her two sisters, Barbara and Sally and brother Maxwell, they were a close-knit family that prayed together and attended Church. They were transferred all over India. Aunty Theo went to Boarding School in the Wellesley Girls' School in Nainital. Following this she took commercial training and came to work in Kolkata, where for many years she worked as a secretary in the Bellevue Nursing Home.

Aunty Theo had a great love for children so, when Dr Graham's Homes had a vacancy for a Welfare Liaison Officer, she applied and was appointed. The job was to screen possible pupils for sponsorship and she would go to each home to interview the family, and then liaise with the Homes and Overseas Committees. Aunty Baker's love for children and the underprivileged Anglo-Indian families was profound and, for 23 years, Aunty Theo did this work faithfully. The children who have been helped speak for themselves and they tell their stories below..

### From a prominent member of GO

I chanced upon the original pledge signed by the Board Members of Dr Graham's when it was still called St Andrew's Colonial Homes:

"We pledge ourselves, individually and collectively, to carry on the great work of the Homes in the spirit in which Dr and Mrs Graham founded and built them up. The first call on the Homes shall always be the children in greatest need; the one vital and essential consideration the highest good of the children themselves: with the spiritual aspect of the work always kept prominently in the foreground, so that the Homes may be maintained and developed in accordance with the vision and inspired ideas of the great founder and his Divine Master to whose service his whole life was utterly and selflessly dedicated."

The BOM, St Andrew's Colonial Homes

Our first priority should always be the children in greatest need, and to me that best exemplifies Aunty Theo Baker. She always looked for the children in greatest need, plucking them out of poverty, broken homes and offering them the security of the Homes and a better future.

Today, aged 93, Aunty Theo is still involved with needy children in her community and is currently knitting baby blankets to give to the poor this Christmas. She has helped many former pupils, often accommodating them in her own home or helping out with money and meals. Aunty Baker has impacted many lives. My wife and I are standing and visible testimony. The answer that she gave my mother, that I had been selected, brought a smile and relief to my mother's face and a beginning of my life.



### **From a sponsored child**

I was born into an Anglo-Indian family in Kolkata in the late 70s to a mother who was then a teenager. My mother could hardly make ends meet and, with the support of only my grandmother, who was a school teacher earning a paltry sum, it was extremely difficult for them to even take care of me.

That's when my mother approached Aunty Baker, and explained her difficult situation. The love of an ever smiling and soft spoken Aunty Baker was immediately showered upon my family and she agreed to take me in to Dr Graham's Homes on a full sponsorship.

I was told that I left for the Homes in February 1980 at the age of two and personally escorted by Aunty Baker herself. I completed high school from Dr Graham's Homes, and in 1996, went on to complete my education at St Xavier's College Kolkata and, post grad at XLRI, Jamshedpur.

If it was not for the selfless act of love shown by Aunty Baker, I would not have received the best education and I would definitely not be the person that I am today. For many Anglo-Indian children, over the decades, in Kolkata, Aunty Baker has been a great source of blessing and she will always be close to our hearts.





### **From a sponsored child**

When I was a toddler around two years of age, I was introduced to Auntie Theo. Everybody loved her because of her motherly nature, discipline and punctuality. Auntie Theo will always be a part of my family and a mother to millions of children who were homeless and from broken families. Being the welfare officer of DGH, She would go to underprivileged homes searching for deserving children to be offered a place at Dr Graham's Homes. When she found families on the streets of Calcutta who had nowhere to go with no food to eat, Auntie Theo would arrange shelter and food for them. I can never forget the times when she would come to school and we would run to meet her at

her guest house. We would be like bees around a honeycomb when Auntie Theo was around. I can remember the time when I was low and homesick thinking about my darling mother, at that time she wrote me a beautiful letter, in that letter she mentioned about the sticky weather in Calcutta and about the road, how the heat which made the tar on the road stick to her feet, at the end she made me realise how privileged I was in Kalimpong. Recollecting the incidents which Auntie Theo has done for me and many families would fill libraries.

### **From a sponsored child**

Auntie Baker is a remarkable lady even at 93. Her home at Kyd Street has been a second home to many OGBs. And she has been a source of inspiration to many, especially those sponsored children who did not have a home to go to when they completed their studies at the Homes. Her love is never ending, her passion always alive, and most of all, she taught us to give back with a grateful heart.

We pray God continues to grant Auntie good health and strength.  
We love you, Auntie Baker.

*"Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others and God will forgive you. Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed you will receive full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands – all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you". Luke 6:37,38*



## A BIKE RIDERS NIGHTMARE!

Below you can see some of our intrepid sponsored bike riders, who have raised so much money for the Homes, negotiating a few years ago, what proved to be futile road repairs on the last leg of their journey up the hill to Kalimpong.

This year's rains again completely destroyed the road.



## Maintenance – an ongoing battle



This year saw Phase Four of the GO Cottage Renovation project, in which Elliott, Bene and New Thorburn cottages were given a thorough spring clean, repaint and refurbishment. A remarkable 37 volunteers took part under the leadership of Pauline Singh (Brooks).

These projects have brought together OGBs, spouses, friends, and fund-raisers and have been a great source of encouragement, as well as the practical benefit to the children. It shows that, working together, we can make a difference to the fabric of the campus, even when times are as financially difficult as they are just now.

Phase five has sadly been put on hold because of the pandemic, but the next houses to be tackled have been identified as Assam and Heathland cottages, and looking further ahead, there is an urgent need to repair Graham House and Jubilee House, both of which are iconic Heritage buildings as former Homes of Dr Graham, and now have very leaky roofs. These are also now on the GO radar.

### Kolkata Birkmyre House

Also on the subject of renovations, the Birkmyre hostel in Kolkata has undergone a facelift. This house was gifted to 'The Boys of the Homes' by Sir Archie Birkmyre in the times of the Raj, and has gone through better times. Some of our supported College students stay here. It is good to see renovation under way. Soon, we hope, the Birkmyre will once again be a community centre and a source of extra income for the Homes.

The fabric of the Homes and its associated buildings is a constant concern and it is great to see change happening, even on a shoestring budget.






# Dr. Graham's Homes

## CELEBRATING

### Happy Birthday,

# 120

DGH



## YEARS

# 1900 - 2020

## GOING STRONG

This year was planned as the year of the OGB with a great number of OGBs from around the world visiting to celebrate the Homes 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Sadly, this was not to be, but local board members, staff and OGBs did turn out on a misty 24<sup>th</sup> of September to pay tribute to our founder and share the traditional Birthday cake.



# UK Committee Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, India

## Honorary Presidents

The Moderator of the General Assembly  
The Church of Scotland

The Primus  
The Scottish Episcopal Church

## The Board of Trustees 2019 – 2020

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## Other members of the Board of Trustees

John Ball   Frank Dunn   Aileen Fraser   Shona Hume  
James Simpson   Jim Simpson   Pat Simpson   John Webster

## External Appointments

<b>Independent Examiner</b>	MILNE CRAIG Abercorn House 79 Renfrew Road Paisley PA3 4DA	<b>Solicitors</b>	BALFOUR & MANSON 54-66 Frederick Street Edinburgh EH2 1LS
		<b>Bankers</b>	BANK OF SCOTLAND 75 George Street Edinburgh EH2 3EW

## Kolkata – Kathmandu – Kalimpong November 2021

“more than a holiday – an unforgettable experience”



**John Webster writes:** I am not optimistic, but a 3K's tour might be feasible in November 2021! Assuming the ALL CLEAR is given, I would be delighted to organise another tour and it would be helpful, at this stage, to hear from anyone who might be interested. If you would like to hear of any definite plans, please send contact details to me in the “near future”. I would hope to make a final decision by the end of August – something, I hope, to look forward to!

**Revd John Webster   Planetree   Kings Cross   Isle of Arran KA27 8RG**

**Tel: 01770 700747   Email: [johngwebster@live.co.uk](mailto:johngwebster@live.co.uk)**



**DR GRAHAM'S HOMES, KALIMPONG, INDIA  
1900 - 2020**

**OVER A CENTURY OF CARING FOR CHILDREN**

Founder -The Very Reverend John Anderson Graham DD, LL.B, CIE  
Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1931

