

Newsletter 2011 Part 2: Yangon, Vientiane, Rangamati

Yangon: The visit to Kanazogone was amazing. The journey back by boat and car was



less eventful in that the boat did not begin to sink!! The next two days were spent in visiting different orphanages and monasteries. This time we had decided to give out 2,000 exercise books as the children

need many for school and they are a problem for each institution. With the books we gave pens and also in many places offered a meal -- cooked by us -- or paid for. The first nuns' temple had 340 members (all dressed in pink as is the custom in Myanmar) and the second had 270! You may be surprised by the numbers... Well, at the moment, many young girls are apparently being kidnapped for sex and work especially from the border areas. So those that want to become nuns, where mothers might have been unwilling in the past, are being happily

sent to the monasteries. (Of course they can leave whenever they want to, as is the Buddhist custom.) Curiosity inspired me to ask, through Nge-nge, some of them why they had come to live in the temple. Even the littlest ones seemed to be very clear!



And then we went to a huge orphanage, one we had been to last year. Left is the monk with the mountain of exercise books. he has over 500 children and, though he seems to be well supported in many ways, the children are packed in to dormitories and sleep on two story-beds with just enough space between them to squeeze by! I felt very sorry to see someone working so hard and still having problems. Maybe we try to help him in the future...



Bye-bye Nge-nge (left)! Thank you for all your help!



Vientiane: Next it was back to Bangkok and then off to Udon Thani (northern Thailand) to meet Percy (left). He was organizing our trip to visit the school we had made the floor of in Laos; i wondered how the roads would be...



Percy Vatsaloo has a silk weaving village where he creates sublime shawls, in particular, as well as other things which are sold from his shop (www.isangallery.com.sg) in Singapore. That evening we had a party with all of the members from the village. Of course mujin was a huge nuisance as vegetarian food is unknown in Thailand -- or at least almost 00 but they looked after me so well.

The next day we set off. Car to Friendship bridge, bus through no-man's land, another bus to Vientiane. There we met up with Madame Manola. an amazing person who was

able to show me a lot of Laotian culture just through her being. She put me together with an old friend and off we went to visit temples. Then Madame Manola very kindly lent us a 4-wheel drive car and driver to take us to the school (THANK YOU!).



We drove due north along the Mekong River; the road was incredibly bad in places but good in others.

After a long drive (was it 3 or 4 hours?) we arrived at the little village and walked through the mud to the school. Here it is below left from the path. I was rather disappointed by the state it was in and decided not to do such a



half job in future. The cement bricks were punctured and the floor uneven in places. We gave sweets and gifts to the kids on leaving the village.

Back to Vientiane and Percy left me to stay a few days longer during which i not only visited lots of temples but also found a way to leave the mark of the Douglas A Campbell Foundation behind me.



Madame Manola took me to a school for children who don't go to school. "Who are they," i asked. "Well, they are children whom the parents won't let go to school or who don't know how to. We send a bus to collect them each day and then they come. The problem is that we have to

supply everything and at present we are very badly off and the school ground is flooded," the head teacher replied.



As the school was well known to Madame Manola, after the tour, out of the blue, i was able to give her money. Here is the teacher receiving the money with Madame Manola standing behind.



Here (left) is a graphic advertisement to try to stop people using the bushes instead of the toilets -- still a problem in Laos. Laotian life (right).

And so my lovely days in Vientiane came to an end and it was back to Udon Thani and then to Bangkok and on to Bangladesh, a country i was visiting for the first time.



Rangamati: Wow! Dhaka! I found Bangladesh to be like India was in my memory in the 1970s with technology added = nothing short of chaos! However, our goal was Rangamati in the southern hills, the home of many of the Hill Tribes of Bangladesh, and so we set off the next day.. The drive was amazing and goes highly recommended as an experience to avoid (better fly to Chittagong from there you have at least 2 hours experience of driving!). Left is our reception at the school gate.



Next day was a tour of the place, a magnificent compound. You may wonder why these people are called hill tribes as opposed to mountain tribes. Well, basically they live in the

hills, little hills, they spend their lives going up and down. "Wow, healthy," i thought, "but tiring." Thus is the school compound: hills with little ponds in between. Our computers were well installed and in full use and there is even a plan to do some out sourcing typing to make money for the school! The school has been through some rough times and so has many plans for attaining self-sufficiency = Laudable...



As we went around, i noticed that there was garbage everywhere and the children were throwing everything everywhere as well. This was partly due to a lack of rubbish bins but also a lack of conscience. So the suggestion of making rubbish collection day was made. Anyway one thing led to another and we decided to have a whole day program during my stay. October 18 was born.



7:30 am children were put into groups and assigned an area
9:30 am garbage was brought to the main place of the event



10:00 Clean-up



followed by a drawing competition -- designs for posters to teach people to put rubbish in bins. Everyone doubted whether we could have a competition with about 600 kids. But it worked and the atmosphere

of the children drawing was marvelous = the buzz of busy, creative minds. Then came lunch.



After lunch there was the prize giving:
For most garbage + cleanest area;



for best pictures.



And a cultural show.



Finally we designed and ordered 30 garbage cans, dust bins or rubbish bins, whatever you wish to call them (below). They are extremely hardy and will be decorated by the



children with metal paint!!! Some more bright colors for Moanoghar.

So if you are bored or at a loose end, do visit some of these places, they would love to see you!
May you all be well and happy -- until next time!
mujin