

The BATEMANS Trust

From the UK a small charity helps disadvantaged Anglo-Indian children in Madras to thrive.

ANGLO-INDIANS are an independent lot. They've had to be, because as a distinct minority community they have upheld separate traditions from those around them. For many, this spirit of free thinking and sometimes sheer bloody-mindedness has brought great success, but for others it has led to problems: irregular family lives, broken homes and neglected children.

In 1994, Alex Jacob came to Madras from the UK to help the Anglo-Indian children at St. George's School in Shenoy Nagar. Several generations of Alex's military family had served in India so in some ways she was following in their footsteps. On her return to England, she set up a charity called The Batemans Trust, to support children living in St. George's boarding home, to train teachers and to pay fees for children who otherwise probably wouldn't go to school.

However, Alex was painfully aware that some children were being overlooked, not least Anglo-Indians from broken homes who had missed parts of their schooling or were held back by emotional problems. So the charity set up an Open School with counsellors and progressive teaching to help them pass the exams needed for entry into further education or vocational qualifications.

Today, the charity also runs boarding accommodation for girls and a separate boarding facility for boys. It also pays fees for Batemans children to go to local Anglo-Indian schools, universities, colleges and vocational courses. Batemans admits some needy children from other backgrounds, but Anglo-Indian youngsters remain a priority.

These include children like Robert whose father and brother disappeared, leaving him and his illiterate mother living and working on a construction site. Then there is Eileen, who came to Batemans after her father disappeared, her mother later dying when she was at school. Batemans gave her a home and an education throughout a difficult childhood and today she is a confident graduate working for a communications company. Many others have suffered abuse, bereavement and neglect – but are now thriving thanks to Batemans.

In recent years, Batemans has operated separately from St. George's, but many of the old traditions still continue. For example, Batemans children attend St. Mary's Church at Fort St. George every Sunday, just as the children of St. George's had done for more than 200 years. And many 'old boys' from St. George's now support Batemans in recognition of the work they do for the Anglo-Indian community. As for Alex, she is married to an Anglo-Indian from Madras, with whom she has three children.

As a small charity, Batemans ensures that around 95% of the money raised goes directly to the project in Madras. With support from sponsors and donors around the world, they have successfully helped scores of children to become emotionally and financially independent and prepared for a life in modern India, whilst enabling them to hold on to their Anglo-Indian heritage: The children sing and perform, bake and make European food and learn to eat with a knife and fork as well as with their hands.



*Emma Sagar,
The Batemans Trusts' new fundraiser*

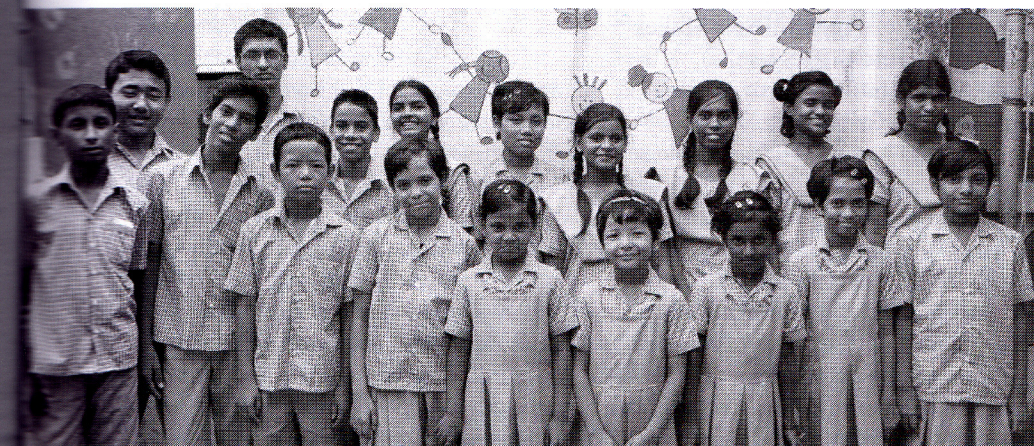
So what next? Alex and the Madras-based Batemans team are passionate about expanding this help to more children. However, dramatically increasing rent and costs in Madras are making this challenge more difficult. While the development of the city has brought rising wealth for some, it has also led to more poverty as many poorer people are drawn to Madras.

To secure the future of the charity and to expand, Batemans intends to build its own school on the outskirts of Madras. The Trust has raised sufficient money to buy the land, but now needs around £220,000 (IN Rs. 202,40,000) to build the boarding facilities that will help 350 children and young people at any one time.

The plans include an open school, primary school, teacher training centre, boarding facilities and roaming educational provision. If you can help or know anyone who can do so, please visit www.batemans.org.uk or get in touch with Batemans fundraiser Emma Sagar at emma@batemans.org.uk / +447740 379162.

A word of thanks from the Batemans Trust

By God's grace, we have been fortunate to receive longstanding support from Anglo-Indians all over the world and would like to thank The UKAIAA for their education grant, the many 'old boys' of St. George's, including The "Anglo Indian Dream-Makers" from Australia who helped one of our girls to train as a nurse, and all our other supporters who enable us to keep helping our wonderful and inspiring children.



The Batemans Open School children looking smart in their new uniforms