

from

BATEMANS



# "They leave confident, happy and ready to lead their own lives"

As she prepares to step down, Anne Desir reflects on her time as Chair of the Batemans Trust

I can't help but look back at the past seven years and reflect on all the changes, the challenges and the achievements and remember the children who have left us over those years, armed with good qualifications, confidence, life skills and a smile.

The challenges have been numerous, but Monica Augustine and Ragland Samuel, our amazing project leaders, have always found a solution to each problem with calm, dedication and professionalism and kept the care of the children at the heart of all they do.

As a consequence of rising rental costs and the scarcity of suitable properties to house a hostel, as well as our firm belief that Satkaarya could offer good quality, inclusive education to even more vulnerable children, we bought a plot of land to build our own school. The gathering of all the necessary planning permissions might take longer than we anticipated – we are not quite there yet – but this is the reality of India and we have learnt patience. We will get there!

The regulations regarding the running of hostels have tightened hugely in the past seven years, which is to be welcomed. It is the Indian's government's belief – and ours, our course – that, wherever possible, children should be living at home. However, in practice, this is not always in the best interest of a child, as there is very little support for vulnerable families.



The Chennai Child Welfare Board seems to recognise this, as many children in our care have been referred to us by them. Our regular inspections are always extremely positive: the level of care and support, the range of extra-curricular activities, the

**"So many of the young people I first met 15 years ago now have good jobs"**

positive vibe that you feel as soon as you step into the hostel are mentioned without fail. However, meeting new regulations requires a lot of thought, time and expertise, as well as a mountain of paperwork. Our team in Chennai manage it.

The staff we are now allowed to employ is also highly regulated. Only women can work in a girls' hostel and we are no longer allowed a couple to run the boys' hostels.

Recruiting the right staff has been a huge challenge and explains our current closure of the boys' hostel (see page 2). Knowing how strong and united our team is, a solution will be found in due course.

Open Schools, which support children who can't cope in mainstream education, are also no longer allowed and children must be at school in the year group matching their age. As we welcome many children who have never been to school before, our team in Chennai has had to find new ways of helping them cope. We are delighted the vast majority of our young people pass their exams, go to college or carry on with some form of training. Most importantly, they leave confident, happy and ready to lead their own lives.

So many of the young people I first met 15 years ago when I went to Chennai as

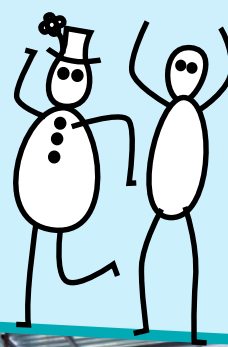
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# Generous donation from Chennai business group



In recent years, poor quality water in the girls' hostel has meant precious funds have had to be spent on buying in drinking water. Even washing in the tap water was making the children sick.

So we were delighted when Ragland Samuel, our project administrator, secured an incredibly generous donation of a water treatment plant, worth more than £5,000, from the business networking group, BNI Chennai.

This much-needed gift will reduce running costs and, more importantly, ensure the girls and staff can stay healthy.

This donation is part of our long-term strategy to increase funding for our projects from within India.

The treatment plant purifies the water on site, providing clean drinking water 24 hours a day.



With great fanfare and excitement, the water treatment plant was inaugurated in October.



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a volunteer teacher, now have good jobs that enable them to support their extended family and pay for the education of their younger siblings.

This is exactly what we are about and this is why I have been involved with Batemans for 15 years and will carry on supporting this amazing charity as a trustee for the years to come as I hand over to Becky Sewell, our new chair, who has supported Batemans for even longer than I have.

Sponsors and supporters, we could not have achieved all this without you! Thank you so much for your trust and dedication. We are truly grateful.

## Boys' hostel update

We are sorry to report that Satkaarya had to close the boys' hostel this summer as a result of a safeguarding issue, which has led to staffing challenges.

All the boys are being cared for and are continuing to attend school, and the trustees

are currently considering how best to support the boys in the future. The girls' hostel continues to operate as normal.

We will keep supporters informed of any developments as soon as we are able to.



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# Reflections on

Earlier this year, trustee Amanda Morris-Drake visited Chennai to see the work of Batemans-Satkaarya for the first time. Here, she reflects on her trip

**T**o be in India is to know one is alive. To be in India is to know intimately the struggle to survive, to feel the merciless gaze of misfortune from every crossroad and every pavement, to feel it burn into your shoulder and whisper in your ear "I will not forget you next time."

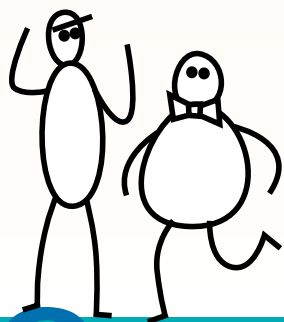
These words from photographer Olivier Föllmi

resonate as I reflect on my visit to Chennai and the Satkaarya Trust. One cannot help but feel the onslaught on every sense in your body as you arrive at Chennai airport and drive through the frenetic, traffic-filled streets. After a dusty, hot tuk tuk ride we arrived at the girls' hostel and were welcomed by project director Monica Augustine.

## A nurturing environment

My first impressions were of a calm sanctuary in the middle of a crazy city. I was immediately impressed by the warmth of Monica and the staff. They provide a nurturing environment for the vulnerable children in their care. As we were shown round and met the girls as they arrived home from school, I was particularly struck by the girls' self-esteem and wish to lead independent lives.

"First impressions were of a calm sanctuary in the middle of a crazy city"



"It was an absolute pleasure to meet our team in Chennai"



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# Chennai visit



## Outreach programme

Later in the week, fellow trustee Becky Sewell and I saw the outreach programme in action on the site where we plan to build our own school (see pics below).

Logesh, the social worker, had made good contacts with local families and, at the time of our visit, up to 18 children aged between three and six years old were attending regularly. It was wonderful to see them responding so happily to stories, songs and activities in both Tamil and English.



**"We are now planning to provide the staff with additional training in managing mental health"**



## Mental health challenges

During my visit I spoke at length to Monica about the mental health issues some children face, and the challenges this gives the staff. It brought home to me the importance of the supporting role played by

Batemans. We are now planning to provide the staff with additional training in managing mental health so they can have confidence that they are doing all they can for the children and young people in their care.

Overall, it was an absolute pleasure to meet our team in Chennai and see first-hand what a wonderful job they do. The happy smiling faces of the children are a testament to this.



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# "India is on the moon"

These were the words of Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, chair of the Indian Space Research Organisation, as an Indian spacecraft touched down on the little-explored lunar south pole.

This historic event inspired some of the girls to create their own artwork of imaginary lunar landscapes.

Creativity is key to life at Satkaarya and this was just one of many art projects the children have engaged in over the past year.



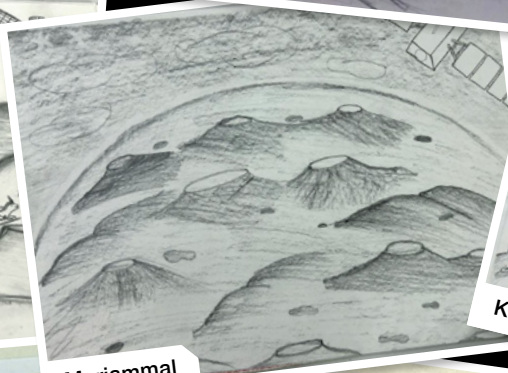
Susee



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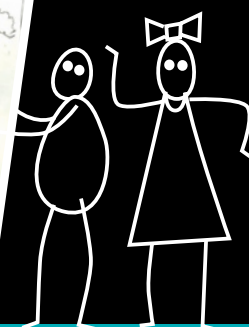
Kannika



Tamilselvi



Akshaya



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# Porridge, plays and prizes

It's only through the generosity and creativity of our fundraisers and supporters that we can continue to change the lives of vulnerable children we support. Here are some highlights from 2023



**At the Truck Festival,** porridge-makers Bev, Charlie, Nicola and Kate generously donated their profit of £600! Our usual Truck volunteers also had a record-breaking year, making all their hard work worthwhile.



**It was back to the stage in Steventon** for youngsters Libby, Willa and their friends, who put on a fundraising production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.



**Nicky Webb enjoys her** first prize of a beautiful quilt won in our very successful raffle that raised more than £1,700. Many thanks to Dennis Parker who bought more than 50% of the tickets.



**Another cake and plant sale** was held in Chelmsford, providing a wonderful opportunity for buyers to stock their garden and indulge in some yummy takeaways.



**Con Conlon, long-time donor and valued friend** of Batemans-Satkaarya, cycled 800km from Bratislava to Berlin and raised nearly £6,000 via supporters in India and the UK.

*Daphne Roach*

**We continue to be** incredibly grateful to the Daphne Roach company, which creates printed textiles for interiors. This small company has a big heart and donates a percentage of its annual profits to Batemans.

## Upcoming events for early 2024

- Quiz night in Essex
- The Steventon Spice Lunch

Look out on our e-newsletter or website for how to book tickets.

## Three ways you can give financial support to Batemans

1. Donate via our annual Wish List
  2. Sponsor a child for just £20 per month
  3. Remember the Batemans Trust in your will
- See more at [www.batemans.org.uk/donating](http://www.batemans.org.uk/donating)

With thanks to CPLOne for the design and production of this newsletter ([www.cplone.co.uk](http://www.cplone.co.uk))



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