

## Newsletter February 2010

**Thank you so much once again** - in October we were able to send £4241 as our annual remittance to the College. This included as usual a specific individual donation of £641 for a scholarship fund (£500 plus Gift Aid); for the previous 3 years, including this donation, we had only been able to send £4000.

The principal wrote, *The timely financial grant from Friends of Serampore has greatly helped the Theology Department. We are grateful to all those who give through Friends of Serampore.*

**Now the surprising news:** we have recently returned from India where Edward was made an Honorary DD by the College (University)! This is really a ThankYou to us both for the work of *Friends of Serampore*, and so it is a ThankYou to you all also - this is for the encouragement and prayer support that we are able to give to the Principal and College, as well as for financial help. But this latter has, during the last two years, enabled the Theology Department to keep out of the red in the last months of the year.

This does also recognise our service there from 1959-68. At first I was embarrassed at the award as being "over the top" for what we had done - but our unease evaporated as we realised how much it meant to those who were giving the award. We are almost the last from the time when missionaries, especially from the BMS, formed a large contingent in the life of the whole college, and those days are remembered with a great sense of gratitude. In the closing words of the Citation for Edward, "We are also expressing our gratitude to the Baptist Missionary Society, the institution Carey himself founded."

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Our first 3 days were in South India, for the Convocation ceremony itself. As you know, "Serampore College (University)" is a family of 50 theological colleges throughout India which take their degrees under the college's 1827 royal charter as a university, and we soon realised that Indian Christians (even those from the ancient churches of Kerala) revere "William Carey and Serampore" much as we in Britain think of "St Columba and Iona". The ceremony moves around on a 10-year cycle, and this year was held in United Theological College, Bangalore, which is celebrating its centenary. The logistics were immense and the organising superb, with about 500 graduates at all levels attending in person (out of an annual total of 1247). We ourselves had a very comfortable room - but the shower was cold water only, and all meals, including breakfast, were variations on curry and rice!

"William Carey and  
Serampore" - like  
"St Columba and  
Iona"

On the day before the ceremony we were invited to share for a while in a discussion session of the College Council, considering the great problem of financing Serampore's own Theology Dept. It was clear that all the affiliated colleges look on Serampore as "mother college" - but children have their own responsibilities and do not necessarily support their "mother" financially! We were struck by the calibre of those on the Council, and a number of measures were agreed by which the Indian churches would be called on to support the college, including an annual "Serampore Day". But it is clear that our support will still be a very great help - **do please continue to give all you can.**

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college" financially!

Saturday, February 6, began at 7.15am with a Commemoration Service. Commemorating who? - Carey, Marshman and Ward, of course! Edward had been invited to give the sermon, prior to which a Mizo choir sang the Hallelujah Chorus (for which the Mizos are world-renowned) and then a beautiful fine woollen shawl was placed round Edward's shoulders as a mark of honour! It felt like the sermon of his life, with a congregation of 800 including many of India's present and future church leaders. He spoke of how India had taught him to hold together profound respect for those of other faiths at the

same time as presenting Christ as the one who has opened the way to God. (A copy of this sermon is on our *Friends of Serampore* website.)

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Roman Catholics"

There were three other honoraries, Revd E. Will (!) from Germany and two Indians: a senior and much-respected Presbyterian leader from Mizoram, and an RC Archbishop from S India. We were so thrilled to be present for this - hitherto when speaking of Serampore as a wonderful ecumenical institution we have had to add, "...except for the Roman Catholics", but that will no longer be necessary. There has been one previous Catholic honorary, but that was incidental as she belonged to us all: Mother Teresa.

After collection of gowns and rehearsals (fortunately the honoraries did not have to take part) and a massive group photo which in itself took much organising, the Convocation, in a huge marquee, began at 5pm - including the annual report of the Senate and the conferment of degrees on 500 graduates, it ended at 8.30! We were very impressed by the leading figures, including the Vice-Master, Mrs Hilda Peacock, Principal of La Martiniere College in Calcutta, a fine lady deputising for the Master, Dr Rajaratnam, who was recovering from a heart operation.



Among many others present, three will be known to some of you: HG Mithra receiving his DTh, Bp. DK Sahu who until recently was general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, and KV Mathew who came over from Kerala specially to be with us on this occasion.

The next morning we flew 1200 miles by SpiceJet (!) to Calcutta and on for 4 days at Serampore College itself. That evening (a trip down Memory Lane) Edward had been asked, at 3 days' notice, to preach at the evening service for students and staff in the old Mission Church along the riverside from the college, with its plaque: "The First Home and Place of Worship of the Serampore Missionaries, Carey, Marshman and Ward". We also went there for College Prayers each morning at 7am, and Rosemary was asked to give the sermon on our last morning. Opposite the church it was good to see the cross which the college has erected on the riverside to mark the spot where the first baptisms took place.



We received wonderful hospitality as guests of the Principal and his wife Hliri, whom we had not met before. Among other qualities, she is a fine cook, of Western as well as Indian cuisine; her scrambled egg was the finest we have ever tasted, plenty of butter being part of the secret! We were invited out by others to some of our meals, but Hliri refused to let us go elsewhere for our final breakfast! We slept in the guest flat, immediately above our old flat in Carey House and having the same floor plan - to make us feel even more at home, we recognised one of our own old cupboards by its teddy bear stickers!

On Monday a "Felicitation Meeting" was held, with many present and former staff and students from Theology and from Arts-Science-Commerce. One speaker, recently retired from being head of the Physics Department, told how he was "a naughty boy" in lectures - Edward remembered his mischief all too well! We gave greetings from Edward's sister Frances, who spent five years at Serampore as Librarian; many remembered her warmly.

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It was lovely to meet people whom we had known over 40 years ago; and also to meet and hear the moving story of a lecturer from Orissa, Pratap Digal, who was himself a Hindu convert. He is son-in-law to our middle daughter's former *ayah*, who now works in the Library!

The day of our departure was spent in Calcutta with the Parsee family who used to be our best friends in Serampore outside the college, and again some of you will remember them: Manekshana the Jute Mill engineer, his wife Rati (who sadly died some years ago) and daughter Gulnar, with her husband and their 18-year old daughter. This visit brought our final experience of being driven in India, which is hair-raising. The two rules are that you squeeze into the slightest gap, and that you take care not to touch anything that manages to squeeze ahead of you - we did not see a single bump in all that melée but it was unnerving to see Gulnar's husband, who was driving, constantly on his mobile phone! I asked him at one point, "How many million rupees' worth of business have you done during this drive?" and he replied, "Not *millions*!"



**What of the College itself?** The premises no longer look very smart, but nor does anything in the town! The buildings are kept in repair, but shortage of funds means that redecoration is overdue. The gardens between Carey House and the Office Building are beautiful. The Bicentenary Building has completed a quadrangle with the Labs and Arts Block, and this also is now beautiful with flowers and shrubs. There are plans for a new block of classrooms, etc, between Carey House and the river, alongside the Carey Library, but fund-raising has so far not been successful. However, the Cemetery in the town, with all its missionary graves, now looks much better following renovation work.

As for the Senate, which directly serves the whole "family" of affiliated colleges, the Registrar, Ravi Tiwari, has been able to raise money for a fine new Senate Office, alongside Mack House - and

what a building, with offices, exam prep and marking rooms, electronics rooms, archive filing areas, conference halls and visitors' living quarters.

A major step forward in the ASC department, showing the stature of the college, is that a Postgraduate class in Zoology, with 20 students, has been started under Calcutta University. It is hoped that Physics may follow.

The Students Union election process, always a time of tension as major contending political parties get involved, was completed smoothly thanks to solid co-operation among staff, students and public and student leaders.

You may remember that we wrote last time, "Mr. Sunil Chatterjee, a friend known to many of you, is very weak now". He died on 17 October; we will write more next time, but no one had such encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the Serampore pioneers, or devotion to their memory. He was often called "Junior Carey"!

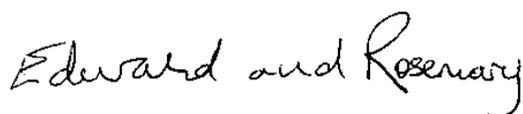
As usual, please send all donations to us at the address given below, making cheques payable to "Friends of Serampore" – unless you have made a Gift Aid declaration for gifts of £40 or more, in which case please contact us first. We have Standing Order and Gift Aid forms, available also on the website; kindly inform us if you instruct your bank to change the amount of a standing order.

There is much in all this  
newsletter for your  
prayers, your concern  
and your gifts.

We are very grateful to Andrew Hudson, who has taken over responsibility for our website, and to Steve Bunning who set it up and has run it until now.

**Thank you all** - the need is so great and support from *Friends of Serampore* means so much, as we now realise all the more.

With our warmest good wishes,



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To see our full Picasa album of photos, click on [Hon.DD, for Friends](http://picasaweb.google.com/eandrwilliams/HonDDForFamilyFriends?authkey=Gv1sRgCIH9r7Gy4tb1Rw&feat=email#) or paste the following into your browser:  
<http://picasaweb.google.com/eandrwilliams/HonDDForFamilyFriends?authkey=Gv1sRgCIH9r7Gy4tb1Rw&feat=email#>

Click here to read Edward's [Convocation Day Sermon \(PDF\)](#) or [Convocation Day Sermon \(Word\)](#).

Note: if you are viewing this in Microsoft Word, you will need to hold down the CTRL key while you click on the above links. If you are viewing it as a PDF, you should just be able to click on them.