



# THE SREEPUR VILLAGE NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2009

## Notes on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary visit to Sreepur.

*Liz Scott travelled with her husband Stuart Newberry. They first heard about The Sreepur Village in 1997 when Stuart played golf with Derek, Pat Kerr's husband. They have supported Sreepur Village ever since making a small monthly donation. Liz wrote the following article on her return:*

Leaving for Bangladesh everyone warned me of the culture shock. However no-one warned me that the biggest culture shock of all would be returning to the UK.

Bangladesh is a country of contrasts. On the one hand it's energetic, vibrant and colourful and on the other hand it's dirty, chaotic and poor. Walking around is an assault on the senses – it's the equivalent of being dunked in a bucket of cold water.

Bangladesh is a wake-up call like no other country I've been to. The cacophony of noise, heat and busy-ness is quite bewildering and yet the curiosity, happiness and energy of its people is so incredibly appealing.

Sreepur Village is like an oasis of calm in this chaotic world. I had expected the children to be fed and watered and housed. However I was taken aback by the warmth and love that permeated the atmosphere.

In my naivety I had expected the sadness to hit me. Let's face it most of these children and women have experienced terrible trauma. So it was a real delight to experience the smiles, fun and joy that infused the air.

The children were no doubt on best behaviour and Shishu Polli Plus (*the local name for Sreepur Village*) was spick and span to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The children, with their deep dark eyes and bright white smiles were constantly asking, "How are you?" "What is your name?"

Showing us proudly around the school rooms, dormitories, work shops and kitchens they would jump in front of the camera every time we took a photo and then excitedly look in the view finder to see themselves.

One thing I soon realised was that the children

loved their home and they were genuinely thrilled that we loved Shishu Polli Plus too. Their enthusiasm and pride was infectious.

Seeing how our money is spent was so inspiring. Sreepur Village is an incredible place. It gives the children and the mothers much more than just the basics of life – it's a safe environment in which they can flourish. They get an education, learn skills and are eventually weaned back into mainstream life in Bangladesh. They are given hope, dignity, respect and the ability to earn a living.

The biggest culture shock was returning to the UK. In Sreepur I left behind people who on one hand had so little and yet on the other were so rich. The children may have only had the basics – yet their energy and vitality with life was contagious. They may not have had a 'conventional' family and yet there was a real sense of family present.

In the UK we, by comparison, have so much. However, are we as happy as those children in Bangladesh? I'm not so sure. Each of those children must have had heart-rending story and yet their smiling faces effortlessly lit up everyone around them.

Even now I'm back in the UK I'm affected by them. On grey rainy days I think back on those happy children and I can't help but smile myself. Shishu Polli Plus really is a wonderful place.

## Sponsor Meeting

Just a reminder that we are holding our first ever meeting of UK sponsors on Saturday 6th June 2009.

**Venue:** St Martin's Hall,  
St Martin in the Fields,  
Trafalgar Square, London WC2.

**Time:** 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm

We hope to show a film of Sreepur and the 20th anniversary celebrations. Pat will give a talk, and we welcome questions and new ideas for fundraising, etc.

It will be great to meet as many of you as possible,  
so I hope you can join us.

### New Patron

Jim Fitzpatrick MP has agreed to become a Patron of The Sreepur Village following a visit he and his wife Sheila made to Bangladesh with VSO last year. They visited Sreepur, met with Pat, and became firm supporters of our work.

On 4th June 2009, Jim is holding a fundraising dinner for us at The House of Commons. Tickets cost £100 per person and are very limited, but please email us at [info@thesreepurvillage.org](mailto:info@thesreepurvillage.org) if you would like to attend.

### ClickNow search engine

We have signed up with ClickNow which will pay us a small donation each time someone uses our search page. I know it is very difficult to drag people away from using Google, but our search page works extremely well, and it is a very easy way for you to give us some extra financial support. Please go to

<http://www.clicknow.org.uk/Sreepur>

and make this your home page by clicking on the link [Make ClickNow my home page](#) at the left hand side of the ClickNow banner at the top of the page. And then each time you use it to search for something on the Web, you will know that you are adding to our income.



*Colourful flags welcomed us to the celebrations*



*A child in the audience....*

### Charity Website

We think that this needs a facelift! Is there anyone out there who can help with redesigning this to include video, music and a more interactive and exciting interface? Please call Trisha on 0208 650 8208 or email to [info@thesreepurvillage.org](mailto:info@thesreepurvillage.org) if you would like to discuss this in more detail.



*Trisha and Pat in shalwar kameez made for us at Sreepur*

### Pat

Pat's contract with the charity ended on 28th February. It actually ran for two more years than we had all anticipated because Pat's input was making such a huge difference to the opportunities we offered to the women and children, and so we encouraged her to stay longer. However, she now needs to resume her married life with Derek – they both unselfishly put this on hold while Pat lived at Sreepur – and so her contract finished after the 20th anniversary celebrations.

Pat and Derek will now be based in Thailand, and Pat intends to travel to Sreepur as needed. Initially this will probably be every couple of months, but hopefully her visits will reduce over time. She will remain our Overseas Director, and will be reinstated as a trustee of the UK charity.

### Postcards

We have just printed up sets of 16 x postcards using photographic images of some of the children and scenes at Sreepur. We are really pleased with them, and hope you will



*Two days later, things were back to normal.*

like them too. You can buy these for £6 a set to include p&p. Please send a cheque with your name and address to us at PO Box 104, Beckenham BR3 4HN and we will send them out by return.



*Friendships flourish throughout the village*