

BASEM



This edition is guest-edited by the medical team at World Rugby

TODAY



This image: Inle leg fisherman
Below: 600 kids doing stretches.
Note - mainly emirates football shirts worn

BRIEF ENCOUNTER TO PHAYA TAUNG 2016

A brief encounter conversation with a stranger on a runway in Heho airport in Myanmar in March 2015 resulted in an amazing adventure to a monastery school eight months later.

Article by Dr Jane Dunbar



The Monastery (Orphanage and school) is outside the tourist area. There is no public transport to it. I have had no communication with it before I flew out to help set up the clinic last November and I don't know whether they want me or are expecting me. I was welcomed and the result was the most amazing experience of my life. I could say life changing. It is an oasis of a community of children with no phone, TV or internet just calm serene friendly happy monks, kids and teachers.

On 19th November at 4am I wake in the clinic (where I am sleeping at Phaya Taung Monastery in Southern Inle Lake). It is pitch dark but there is a magical hum of children's voices meditating in the monastery pagoda next door. At 4.15 they start gently chanting. Looking outside quiet figures of children move around between accommodation houses, and the pagoda; they see me and whisper "Mingalaba"(Good morning) and giggle. I go back to sleep and wake again nearer 6am with the sound of the children's exercise class in the large field area next to the pagoda.

Led by a martial arts teacher, I watch the amazing sight of about 700 happy children doing 15minutes of stretching as the sun rises. They are perfectly in line with all the boys on one side girls on the other. A younger boy watches from the side then gradually joins in. No coercion, no raised voices just smiles and giggles seem to be the way of getting everyone to cooperate and live in harmony looking out for each other. They follow the teacher's demonstration and hold



stretches for the count of 10.

At 6.30am breakfast – the contented children help themselves to massive bowls of rice (the first of three meals of rice each day). They happily do their appointed chores. This allows this community of almost 1000 children, at this school in a remote monastery (with less than 20 adults) to function smoothly.

Feroze Dada whom I had met at Heho told me to read his book "Children of the Revolution" and emailed me a link, but not before commenting on my email address that I should not have let him know I was a doctor. It turned out that this Mayfair tax accountant was

building a clinic for the school and local village but had no medical staff. the clinic building after reading his book I discovered he had come across the monastery and the great senior Monk five years before. Since then he has set up a charity (www.inletrust.org.uk) introduced computer classes (originally solar powered) and set up a water purification and bottling plant which supplies the children and villagers with clean water - Ko yin Water. Selling bottles of water to tourists helps make money to feed the children at the school.

I arrived with Isabella a French doctor who has worked on other projects in India



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BRIEF ENCOUNTER TO PHAYA TAUNG



2015 CONGRESS REPORT





IM injections, but have little knowledge of simple prescribing and health education. My medical training left me more than uncomfortable with suggestions of dexamethasone injection for colds, testosterone injections for teenage girls with period pains and atropine injections for colic.

First priority was to try and find a properly qualified nurse to visit the clinic. Isabella had the idea that we should go to Samkar an hour away by boat because she wanted to go to the market and a particular shop in the village. She admitted later she did not know why she wanted to go there. Fate again. Reaching the shop we met a senior retired medicine man who was able to put us in touch with a retired nurse in a neighbouring village.



30 minutes later by boat we meet a delightful semi-retired nurse and head woman of her village who agrees to run a clinic one day a week at the orphanage (paid by Inle trust supporters). Step one of staffing complete. Next step support nurse training for two of the students.

We ran clinics for the week we were there and saw mostly coughs, rashes, constipation (from rice diet), dry eyes and posture problems from studying hunched up over books on the ground. Also a few infected wounds along with a few more serious problems (cardiac murmur and a possible benign malaria).

There is a massive medical education opportunity here and we started with cleaning of shared shaving equipment for little novices' head that was cross infecting all the novices' scalps with ring worm. Advice for reducing the scabies shared by little monks living in close quarters.

I fell in love with this family of 1200 children, and their head Monk, who welcomed me with intelligence and love and with whom I think I can share my knowledge and experience to give them a help in their life adventures. I also became a guest at a Shan wedding and was involved in ceremonial laying of the first bricks of the boys' toilet block and girls shower and a massive village party to open the clinic.

and Myanmar for 10 years and comes out once a year to her charities projects. She had been to the monastery once before and shared concerns of the ease and availability of drugs in markets

and village shops and the dispensing by poorly qualified health workers in Myanmar. Some local "medicine men" are taught to inject everything with IV infusions, drugs or

I would suggest you visit the charity's web site for more information: www.inletrust.org.uk/

- Clockwise from top left:
- The new clinic building
 - School boys
 - Ko Yin Novice monks
 - The clinic opening ceremony
 - Jane with the head monk
 - My school photo
 - Leaving Samkar market to find the nurse
 - Rice, three times a day
 - A joiner making a teak examination bed during clinic
 - Local market stall sells every drug
 - The nurse

