

Sports Day

Pupils of Rangammal School took part in a regional school sports day, battling with temperatures of 36 degrees!

Young athletes from several schools for the disabled participated. Rangammal took first, second and third places in the 100 metre race.



Eyes down for the 100 metre race.
(Rangammal pupils are in the red Santander shirts.)

Nurses Promise



Nursing Students Make a Promise

A 'lamp lighting' ceremony for the 2021 intake of nursing students has just been held. It was delayed by Covid. The students promised to do their best in caring for patients and to treat them with compassion and respect. The 2022 intake will arrive in August so the next ceremony will follow soon.

CONTACT US

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A Summer Outing



Making the most of a waterfall



The younger children of Rangammal School celebrated the start of this year's long holiday with an outing to a local water park.

Some children preferred more gentle watery pleasures

New Uniforms



New School Uniforms

Following a long holiday in April and May, the Indian school year begins in June. Every child at Rangammal School for the Hearing Impaired receives three sets of the school uniform, free of charge, at the start of the new school year.

Speakers/Talks: **John Howley** 0113 267 3936
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THE Sylvia Wright TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 326139

40th Anniversary Summer 2022

www.sylviawright.org

Supporting

Residential School for 200 children with hearing loss
Education & Therapy Centre for 100 disabled children
Nursing College for 120 students

Dear Friends



As you will know, I am now in my 85th year, having spent the first 44 years of my life in the UK and the next 40 here in Tamil Nadu, India. Most of these 40 years have been dedicated to serving people of the area who are poor, sick or who have disabilities.

It has been far from easy. Without the generous, regular financial help and support from the Sylvia Wright Trust, it would not have been possible. Together we have done our best to help, serve, improve and develop the lives of the people God has made known to us. It is humbling constantly to meet people whose life has been transformed in so many ways by the services of our organisation, the Rangammal Memorial Rehabilitation Society (RMRS).

I have always been guided by the words Our Lord uses when he describes the essence of the Christian life 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength and your neighbour as yourself'. Together we at least tried to do that but in my own case have failed many times. However, at least He has given me the grace to go on trying.

So now, another phase of my life is about to begin but this time, back in my own country of origin.

By God's grace, I am able to leave the work we have started in the capable hands of Mr. John Rajkumar and RMRS. John is a very experienced and dedicated man who for many years has provided education and job-oriented skills support to those who are disabled, so they can lead a life of, at least partial, self-sufficiency.

This is a great step forward for our work which will now be professionally managed, unlike my own amateur efforts!

Please continue to pray that the work we have started will continue to flourish and for me in my future service (whatever that may turn out to be) when I return to the UK next Spring.

May God bless you all.

Love Sylvia

My greetings to you all



Mr John Rajkumar,
our new Chief Executive

I feel very blessed and privileged to have got to know Ms Sylvia

Wright. Indeed it is an honour for me to carry her baton forward.

I am the father of a 32 year old son with special needs and the founding secretary of a parents' organisation named Maithree. This has given me particular insights on the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Coupled with my four decades of wider business experience, I feel equipped to become the new leader of Sylvia's three projects. I am immensely pleased and happy to shoulder the responsibility of transitioning Rangammal under the governance of an empowered board.

I am thankful to God for this opportunity and grateful to both Ms Sylvia and the Sylvia Wright Trust UK for having faith in my ability to carry the mantle.

Personally this is a very enlightening journey for me. I lead a team of professionals in sustaining the high standards established by Ms Sylvia. Thousands of people in this rural, disadvantaged area of Southern India have benefitted greatly from her compassion and commitment and the sustained financial support of the Sylvia Wright Trust UK.

The current services provided by the projects: The Nursing College, The School for the Hearing Impaired and the Daycare Centre for the Children with Special Needs have a huge potential to reach out to more beneficiaries and to create pathways to better livelihoods for them.

My vision is to bring in more partners in India in order to achieve financial stability and to reduce the burden on SWT, as well as to utilise the assets and resources developed over the last four decades to their full potential.

I am confident that RMRS will continue to receive support and guidance from SWT UK. We value it very much.

P John Rajkumar CEO and RMRS Board Member

The Story So Far

In January 2022, Sylvia Wright completed 40 years of faithful service to the people of Southern India.

Early Life

Sylvia was born in Leeds in 1938 and educated at Lawnswood High School. She loved animals and her ambition was to become a vet. This was discouraged by the school and Oxbridge beckoned.

However, after her father's sudden death, Sylvia changed her plans and trained as a nurse, then a midwife and then in district health.

After a spell as a Senior Community Nursing Officer in part of inner city in Leeds, she became a Senior Lecturer in Nursing at Leeds Polytechnic (now Leeds Beckett University).

The Big Decision



Sylvia in 1981

Sylvia's mother died in 1980. After much prayer and research, she decided that her true vocation was to serve the poor, sick and the disabled in India. Her mind made up, she sold her house and car, cashed in her NHS pension and set off alone.

Medical Work 1982–2017

Sylvia settled in the town of Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu, set up a mobile clinic and treated over 400 patients a day in scattered villages throughout this poor region of Southern India. Three years later she acquired her first small hospital to deal with illnesses and endemic diseases that had previously been left untreated due to a lack of doctors, hospitals, clinics and medicines.



The Hospital in 2001

This hospital was expanded in 2001 to 150 beds, two operating theatres and 25 dialysis machines. Some 80,000 outpatients were treated each year and a number of visiting specialists supplemented the on-site doctors, dealing with TB, HIV/Aids, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney issues and many other problems.

As government provision gradually improved, Sylvia was eventually able to withdraw from medical work to concentrate further on disability.

The Sylvia Wright Trust 1982 to 2022

Sylvia's own money soon ran out. For a while she was supported by a group of friends who then formed a small but very active charity, the Sylvia Wright Trust (SWT). Supporters come from all faiths and from all parts of the UK and overseas. SWT has funded or subsidised almost all running, building and equipment costs. The projects are non-denominational. All religions and castes are served, according to need.

School for the Hearing Impaired 1994 to 2022



Rangammal School for the Hearing Impaired, Built 1996

Deafness is a common problem in rural India and there is limited provision in state schools. Sylvia started residential classes in 1994 in two rented houses. The Trust funded a small school in 1996 and several further extensions in later years.

Some 200 children attend and most board. They start at the age of five, with almost all staying until 16. About half stay until 18 after which many go on to further education.



Gymnasts at Rangammal School

A team of 32 specially trained teachers ensures a first class education in very small classes; pastoral care is excellent. Hearing aids and speech therapy are provided. There is special emphasis on hearing and speech therapies, IT skills and English. The programme greatly improves employment prospects.

Two early intervention classes help very young children who attend each day with their mothers.

All provision is free and funded by the Trust, with many supporters individually sponsoring the children.

Education and Therapy Centre 2017 to 2022



The New Education and Therapy Centre, Opened in 2017

Childhood disabilities are very common and there is limited public provision. Many children have to be kept indoors and restrained, while parents go out to work.

Sylvia's started with a weekly clinic from which she developed two small schools in rented premises. These were replaced in 2017 by a single 10,000 sq. ft. wheelchair-friendly facility which offers space, light and colour.



Warm Water Pool

Some of the nine classrooms are designated for particular purposes including academic learning, sensory development, music, art and occupational and physical therapies. A warm water pool, funded by Rotary, is especially beneficial for children with spasticity and related difficulties.

Education is integral to the programme and is taken to whatever extent each child can manage: the children are encouraged to realise their potential. They make huge progress in learning and social integration, thanks to 20 kind and dedicated staff. Parents are given support, advice and much-needed respite.

The children are bussed in five days a week: all costs are funded by the Trust

Nursing College 2009 to 2022

The Florence Nightingale School of Nursing, opened in 2009, fulfilling Sylvia's dream of training to the highest standards, including compassion and respect for patients.

The students follow the curriculum of the Indian Nursing Council, leading to a Diploma. Shortly the College will switch to a full degree course.



A Nursing Class

Currently there are 80 students: numbers will increase gradually to 120. The majority of students are women but a few men have now joined the programme. Eight full-time teachers are assisted by visiting lecturers.

The three year residential course consists of formal lectures, practical training and placements at local hospitals and clinics.

Students pay a modest annual fee which is nevertheless a major sacrifice for many parents. A bursary fund subsidises some of the poorest. The course is demanding, especially as it is taught entirely in English and very few of the students have been away from home before.

Examination results have been consistently excellent; drop out rates negligible. The students have been a credit to themselves and to their families.

To date 220 have qualified. All have obtained secure nursing jobs, in either public or private sector hospitals.

Memories

"In the mid 1970s Sylvia joined our prayer group. She read to us several times: 'Sell what you own and give the money to the poor.' (Matt. 19 v21) Realising that God was calling her, she acted in total obedience."

"Sylvia is much loved in our church. We have been privileged to support her for many, many years through the Sylvia Wright Trust and have been continually inspired by her pioneering and inspirational work. She continues to improve the lives of children, nursing students and staff. Long may the work continue."

"I remember so clearly the day Sylvia first visited us: she was taken aback when the children gathered around her on the playground as if she was a superstar. A number asked for her autograph! There was such a buzz around the school after she left, with everyone feeling inspired in their own way. For me, it was her palpable strength, of both character and faith, and the very striking modesty with which she answered the very many questions that we had for her. A remarkable woman."

"For forty years Sylvia has been the epitome of the Rotary motto 'Service Above Self'. Her enthusiasm and dedication to the poor have made the Leeds Clubs very proud to support her work."

"We have been associated with the Sylvia Wright Trust for over 20 years, seeing many changes and expansion of activities out in Tiruvannamalai. However, the greatest impression we have is of the care and happiness of the children in the school and day care centre. It is very moving and we love the relationships with our two sponsored children. Fabulous!"