

THE STORY OF EMMANUEL SCHOOL HAIPI

This account of God working among his people both in Manipur and here in the West should rightfully begin with the final paragraph from the booklet entitled 'A Vision for Village Christians in Manipur, North East India', written by Alan Weir a few years ago. It reads:

"In April 1986 the whole family (Kai, Muriel, David, Joanne and Peter Kipgen) visited Haipi and the children were able to meet their grandmother for the first, and, as it turned out, last time, for she died soon afterwards. It was during this visit as Kai and Muriel walked around the village and surveyed the land, which, as the chief's eldest son, now belonged to Kai, that the idea of a Christian School really took root – the vision of poor village children receiving a good Christian education that would equip them to become leaders within their communities. The land was freely available and ideal – a hillside visible from the main National Highway, surrounded by mountains, with a plentiful water supply and space for playing fields and cultivation. The village elders were enthusiastic when the idea was put to them. And so it was that when Kai and Muriel returned to the UK they shared this vision with friends from a local church. They received unreserved enthusiasm and support. Gladys Price, Muriel's mother, donated £1,200, part of which was used to produce a brochure entitled 'In Need of a Christian School'. The Manipur Christian School Project had become a reality. Little did we know then what a long and sometimes difficult journey lay ahead!"

This, then, is the story of the journey.

It was not until 23 October 1987 that the first small committee meeting took place, attended by Ray and Ruth Thompson, Ken and Peggy Jones, all members of the South Hatfield Evangelical Church, and Kai and Muriel. By this time £4,000 had been donated, a solicitor identified to produce a declaration of trust and an architect found.

January 1988 saw the official start of the Project and the next meeting, on 14 January 1988, was momentous in several ways. The first appointments were agreed – Ray was asked to be chairman, Ken agreed to be treasurer and Kai was named as the project manager. It was at this meeting that it was unanimously agreed that the Declaration of Trust of the Manipur Charitable Trust, as prepared by the solicitor, should be adopted and it was signed by the chairman, Ray

Thompson. (The Trust was subsequently accepted by the Charity Commissioners on 3 March 1988). It was decided that the school should be called 'Emmanuel School' and also that Kai should visit Manipur as soon as possible.

Kai duly left for India on 13 February 1988. He took with him a bank draft for £2,000 and the prayers and good wishes of the committee and many supporters. During this first trip much was accomplished and Kai wrote on his return that he felt "God's hand in a number of happenings and that the timing was right – there was an air of great expectation among the people."

On 23 February about 200 Haipi villagers gathered to begin clearing the site chosen for the School. The undergrowth was thick and tough. It took a further three days to finish the task and by the end eight truck loads of firewood had been collected. A bulldozer then had to be hired to dig out the remaining tree stumps and level the ground before a gradient survey could be done.

Before his return, Kai set up the Emmanuel School Society to enable money to be sent to India – this Society had to be registered with both the State Government of Manipur and the Central Government of India and this was eventually granted in July 1989. Back in England, coffee mornings began and they have over the years become an integral part of the Project's fundraising, still being held on the last Saturday of each month! In the first Annual Report of the Manipur School Project, Kai writes of the growing interest in the Project being shown by a number of churches and fellowships and also of the prayer meetings that were being held once a month in Hatfield.

At the committee meeting held in January 1989 it was agreed that, in order to further the progress of the school, it was necessary for Kai to visit Manipur again and so in February he set out for India. It was during this trip that the most crucial appointment for the future success of the Project was made - that of a Christian engineer, a man both completely committed to the vision of the School and transparently honest.

Access to Haipi at this time was by means of a dirt road winding its way up from the National Highway. Sections of it were steep and dangerous. If the school was to become the flourishing community we envisaged, something had to be done. And so the whole village became involved, with the help of the Engineer, in the widening and realignment of the road. Boulders were hauled from the nearby river to be used as foundations and chippings mixed with earth spread on top. At the

end of seven days 22 truck-loads of boulders had been hauled from the river and 1 kilometre of the road was ready for the tarmac that had been promised by the State Government. When he returned to England in April, Kai brought with him a video of the villagers at work. It was shown at Dagnall Street Baptist Church in St Albans and £1,400 was raised for the School Project.

During the latter part of 1989 Kai welcomed Alan Weir on to the Trust Committee and also had the satisfaction of seeing the detailed plans for the building layout and teaching block, before leaving for Manipur again on 7 February 1990. Perhaps the highlight of this visit, although not directly connected with the school project, was the completion, after ten years and without the aid of architectural plans, of the new Haipi church. It is a grey stone building, 90' by 37' with a 58' high steeple and a capacity of 600 – enough to accommodate all the villagers from this wholly Christian village.

At the committee meetings the problems of fundraising were being highlighted, possible contacts and ideas suggested – and then rejected. It was becoming obvious that it was going to take much longer than the first optimistic estimates before enough money could be raised to finish even the first teaching block. The full drawings of the school were received from the architects on 23 October 1990; these were approved and payment authorised. They included, as well as the already received teaching unit, a chapel, art technology and music blocks, staff and pupils' accommodation, kitchen and dining hall, gymnasium and science block. These designs have provided the basic framework for the building of the school, although inevitably modifications and adaptations have been made as the building work has progressed over the years.

The first of what were destined to become 'annual' barbecues was held on 22 June 1991 and raised just £231. Around this time 'Manipur evenings' were found to be a popular and successful way of promoting the Project and raising funds. These evenings included a 'Manipur' meal cooked by Kai, a slide show and talk and small exhibition of Manipur arts and crafts. Three were held in 1991 and four in 1992. Food cooked in Hatfield was taken not only to local churches but as far away as Maidstone and Romford, with all the committee taking part. It was because of these evenings that Kai's trip to Manipur in 1991 was postponed until October.

The first Manipur School Project Newsletter was produced in August 1991. Two hundred and fifty copies were printed. Plans for the next one were already in hand as the first was being distributed – it was decided it should be ready by January

1992 and contain details of Kai's October '91 trip.

It was during this October trip that both the site survey and the water supply survey were completed and construction of the very first building, a large storehouse with three rooms, was begun. This building, which was completed during 1992, was designed not only to store the cement, sand and steel rods, which had already been purchased for the building of the first teaching block, but also to provide temporary accommodation for the skilled workers from the State of Bihar. Kai appointed a site superintendent and storekeeper during this trip.

Early in 1993 the Trust was in a position to send £7,000 out to India and work on the first teaching block was at last able to begin. During this year the Project received several very generous contributions. A total of £28,000 was sent out in 1993. This encouraging development was in stark contrast to the worsening political situation in Manipur and the assassination of Pagin, Kai's cousin brother, who was the secretary of the Emmanuel School Society, a great advocate of the Project and a much loved and respected leader of the community. Work on the school site stopped for a week as a mark of respect for Pagin, but then resumed in earnest with the thought that a speedy completion of the teaching unit would be a fitting memorial to Pagin and his services to the school project.

With the very real possibility of the first teaching unit being finished by 1994, the committee turned its thoughts to the opening of the school. It was decided that the teaching medium should be English and the syllabus should be the 'All India Schools'. Unfortunately this burst of enthusiastic planning had to be put on hold. Building costs increased, not only because of the spiralling inflation caused by the political unrest, but also because of the design of the building. Work had to stop because of lack of funds. At the same time the political situation between the Nagas and the people of Manipur was worsening. There were brutal atrocities – many villages burnt to the ground with over 1,000 innocent Kukis massacred and 50,000 left as refugees.

Fundraising, though, continued steadily and in 1994 it was possible, in spite of all the unrest, for building work to resume. The committee thought that maybe the opening of the school could take place in July 1995 and with this in mind a Board of Governors was formed. But then there was another, completely unexpected tragedy. Haipi village itself was attacked by the Nagas on 1 January 1995 and five

villagers were killed. Our engineer visited Haipi the next day and despite everything he and the villagers were enthusiastic about continuing the Project. At the committee meeting held on 17 January 1995 it was decided that 'detailed plans for the school could not sensibly be made, but that progress should be step by step, each step taken in faith'. The decision about Kai's next visit was left entirely with him, his main task, if he went, would be one of encouragement. Of course he went. He found heightened security, with the villagers guarding Haipi at all times. They had made a request for an army outpost in the village but the Manipur Government (headed by a Naga Chief Minister) had refused. While Kai was out there it was decided that the opening of the school should be postponed until February 1996. The Board of Governors believed there was enough money available in India to complete the building. They were, at that time, in the process of approaching the State Government for a grant of £6,000 for two football pitches - unfortunately, they were not successful.

By December 1995 the news from Haipi was much more hopeful. The engineer wrote to say that six of the gutted houses had been rebuilt, the irrigation canals, bridge and the community hall had all been repaired and the teaching block was almost complete. Added to this there was a lessened threat from the Nagas and a prevailing spirit of unity amongst the villagers. So it was with a sense of great anticipation and armed with all available funds that Kai left for Manipur at the beginning of January 1996. This optimism was somewhat dampened on his arrival when he discovered how much there was still to be done if the school was to open in February – building to be finished, painting to be done, furniture to be made, clearing of the grounds. The most pressing need was, though, for teachers. Kai scoured the surrounding villages and towns looking for suitable applicants and put advertisements in the newspapers. In the end, just in time for the opening, they were able to call twenty five prospective teachers for interview and from them choose eleven, only three of whom were not Christian.

Against all the odds and amid great rejoicing over five hundred people gathered on the morning of Monday 26 February 1996 for the opening of Emmanuel School. The original plan had been that classes should commence the next day but accommodation had yet to be found for the teachers and the children from outside Haipi. Disused buildings in the village were repaired and made into suitable temporary accommodation for the teachers and some of the children, the rest boarded with families in the village. In the end, it was not until 18 March that classes began. There were eighty-five pupils, fourteen of whom were boarders.

The school's opening coincided with the Public Works Department covering the 3 kilometre access road to Haipi from Highway 39 (the road initially built by the villagers in 1989) with tarmac, thus improving transport both to the school and the village. It seemed that all was set fair for the future of Emmanuel School.

How wrong this proved to be! 1997, ten years since its start, heralded one of the most difficult and challenging periods of the whole Project. Kai travelled out on the 11 February and found that the political situation in Manipur had worsened again, with escalating violence, not only between the Kukis and Nagas, but also between the various Kuki underground insurgent groups, which had sprung up all over Manipur. One of these groups had stationed itself just outside Haipi and was holding the village to ransom, demanding at will money, food and transport – it is difficult to refuse a lad with a gun. Law and order in all parts of Manipur, including the capital, Imphal, had deteriorated to such an extent that the various underground groups were in virtual control of the state, creating fear and insecurity amongst the people. Parents did not feel it was safe to allow their children to travel to Emmanuel School and so instead of the expected increase in the numbers of pupils, fewer had enrolled at the start of this new school year. The situation was depressing and demoralising. The acting headmaster had not returned after the Christmas break and so the school was without a leader. In this atmosphere there was little that Kai could accomplish. On his return, Kai shared all these problems and frustrations with the committee and then later with the Project's supporters in the June 1997 newsletter, adding that because of all this political turmoil and violence the need for a good, Christian school, free from corruption, was greater than ever.

With this clarion call ringing in its ears the committee pressed ahead with its planning and fundraising. David Walker, who had joined the committee at the beginning of the year, bringing to it his artistic and advertising skills, suggested that in the December newsletter we should have a pictorial 'day in the life of a village child', using some of the many photos Kai had taken. Ken, after ten years of loyal service, felt it was time to relinquish his position of treasurer and so Peter Wastall was asked by the committee if he would be willing to take on this role and, much to their pleasure, he agreed. As the year progressed the news from Manipur improved. The militants had been driven out of the Haipi area by the Indian army. The Emmanuel School Society in Manipur had found and appointed a new, Christian, headmaster, the number of pupils had increased from 75 to 110, with many more expected when the new school year commenced in February 1998. With this growth came the urgent need for another teaching block.

In 1998 Kai had another eventful trip to Manipur. He saw the beginning of the construction of the second teaching block – a double storey building with 8 classrooms – big enough to accommodate 320 pupils. On 28 March the second anniversary of the school's opening was celebrated. An occasion, held in Emmanuel School hall, to which special guests were invited and which included a guest speaker, items by the children and prize giving. All this was followed by a school picnic by the river - a completely new experience for the village children and greatly enjoyed by everyone!

After Kai's return to England, an emergency committee meeting had to be called as a letter had been received from Manipur stating that they would need more money by July in order to continue the building of the second teaching block. Just a few weeks before, the committee had received the offer of a generous, interest free loan and after much discussion it was decided that this offer should be accepted with the following conditions. The loan should be formally arranged for a specific period and members of the committee should collectively act as guarantors of the loan should the necessity arise. So it was possible to send £7,000 to India on 9 July to enable the work to continue. The Project also received some very generous donations during this period and so, when again, in October, the engineer wrote to say that more money was needed a further £13,000 was transferred to India.

All in all, 1998 was a good year for the School Project, with good progress made on the building of the second teaching block, new teachers found, great generosity from our supporters and a lessening of the ethnic violence in the Haipi area. The Trust was able to turn its thoughts to the new and urgent needs, listed by Kai in the December 1998 newsletter. They were – teachers' quarters, two permanent dormitory blocks – one for boys and the other for girls - and a science block and library. This was not a project for the faint hearted!

The Trust agreed that Kai should visit Manipur again early in 1999 and his first, most urgent task should be to address the need for temporary boarding accommodation – the plan was that two disused buildings in the village should be refurbished for this purpose. And so it was that, on 29 January 1999, Kai once again set out for Haipi. This time, though, he was not alone. His daughter accompanied him and his wife and younger son joined him at the end of March, in time for Easter. There was a real sense of joy and thanksgiving that, despite all

the troubles and hardships, this visit was possible. His family could see for themselves the great need and experience the enthusiasm of the people, children and parents alike, for this Christian school that was being built, through the generosity of people in the UK, in this remote area of North East India. Inevitably, of course, this trip also had its frustrations. When they arrived in Haipi they found that, contrary to expectation, the teaching block was nowhere near completion (though, as the four ground floor classrooms were finished, they were already in use, with the building work continuing above them) and nothing had been done about converting the disused buildings into dormitory accommodation. Fortunately, one of the teachers – a skilled craftsman – was able to complete this work and the buildings were ready to welcome the first twelve boarders, four girls and eight boys from three different places in Manipur, at the beginning of the school year in February. During this visit, the urgent need for teachers' quarters became even more apparent and this need was highlighted in the next newsletter, along with pictures of the children moving into the newly refurbished dormitory accommodation. The committee, at the meeting held soon after Kai's return, agreed with the engineer's suggestion that the teachers' quarters should consist of a cluster of four bungalows, to house 8 teachers and the headmaster's family. It was hoped that the building of these bungalows would begin as soon as the double storey teaching block was finished and that they could be built quickly, with the minimum of expense.

Towards the end of 1999, just twelve years after the first small committee meeting took place, the committee met with their partners for a 'Manipur' meal, hosted by Kai and Muriel, to celebrate the progress made so far. This has in subsequent years become an annual event – a way of saying 'thank you' to the committee members for their valuable contributions of time and expertise throughout the year. It was at this first meal that Kai's next two trips to Manipur were arranged – a short visit in the spring and then a longer one in the autumn. There was a very real sense of urgency amongst the committee, that the Project should make speedy progress.

Kai left at the beginning of March 2000 with a long list of 'things to do' from the committee but, as usual, other more pressing needs were waiting for him. The headmaster had gone to his sister-in-law's wedding and so no arrangements had been made for the founding day celebrations, the site superintendent had 'borrowed' several bundles of GCI sheets and 500 bricks to build himself a new house and Haipi Baptist Church had reduced its contribution to the school by

several thousand rupees! On the plus side Kai reported that the new, double storey teaching block had been completed and the new boarding facilities were proving very successful. A Nepali lady being employed as cook and Kai's sister looking after the finances. The engineer made several visits to the site while Kai was in Haipi and together, he and Kai were able to map out the water supply for the school in detail and the sites for the teachers' quarters and science block. The original design for the teachers' quarters was modified and the estimate for each of the four units was £5,400. Unfortunately, even though £12,000 was available in the Trust's funds to begin building these units, because of the very heavy monsoon that year, it was not possible to start the building until the beginning of October.

Support here in the UK continued steadily. Soon after Kai's return there was an invitation from Panshanger church in Welwyn Garden City to give a presentation and also a meal. This proved to be an excellent evening which cemented our already strong links with this church. One result from this evening was that when Kai went out to Manipur with his son in late September he took with him enough money to buy a TV and VCR for Emmanuel School, donated specifically for this purpose by the members of Panshanger. There was great excitement amongst the children when Kai and Peter, having purchased the TV and VCR in Imphal, brought them to the school. Another very visible addition to the school, organised during this visit, was the erection of a large, twelve foot high school sign on Highway 39 pointing the way up the Haipi road to Emmanuel School. Yet more publicity for the school was achieved by the Emmanuel School choir who, led by two talented teachers, were invited to sing in three local churches. A special coach was hired to take the choir to these engagements. A new site superintendent was employed, subject to the approval of the committee (approval that was unanimously given at the meeting held in January 2001). He was a refugee who had moved, with his family, to Haipi and been re-housed after his own village had been burnt down by the Nagas. So, with the monsoon over, it was time for work to begin on the teachers' quarters. Kai was able to leave three separate cheques of varying amounts with the engineer, to be cashed when necessary. At the same meeting held in January 2001, Kai reported that he had just received a telephone call from the engineer to say that the money was almost gone. The foundations had been completed as well as two of the four bungalows. The committee agreed that a further £10,000 should be sent out to enable the work to continue.

It was at this meeting that the committee accepted, with regret, the resignation of David Walker (necessitated by his move to Hastings) who had contributed so much

in short space of time to the promotion of the Project through the design of the newsletter. Kai suggested that Keith Fox, a member of Southdown Methodist Church and a loyal supporter of the school, should be asked to join the committee in David's place. Kai told the committee that he would bring with him valuable IT skills.

In many ways 2001 proved to be another landmark year in the life of the school. Keith accepted the Trust's invitation and agreed to join the committee. He immediately set to work on creating a video of the Project to be used for fundraising and promotional purposes. Nicolette Camburn became the representative of the School Project at Panshanger church – as a direct result from the Manipur evening held there in May 2000 – and through her and the enthusiasm of members of the church the idea of a student sponsorship scheme was born. The front page of the June 2001 issue of the Manipur News announced "New Teachers' Quarters Complete!" Each unit cost £5,500 to build – a little more than first envisaged because of inflation – having two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathroom, plenty of room for two teachers. In this newsletter our chairman wrote about the student sponsorship scheme, which had been discussed at length during the committee meeting held in May. The committee were very conscious of the fact that all the children attending the school were from poor families who really struggled to find the necessary school fees. The choice of which children should be sponsored must be very carefully considered so as not to 'sow seeds of discontent' amongst other pupils and their families. Initially, a 'pilot' project would be run and so, for the moment, no more sponsors could be accepted. Also in this newsletter Alan looked back at how much had been achieved in the last thirteen years – it was perhaps all taking much longer than we had at first thought, with many setbacks, but there was so much for which to give thanks.

Kai's next trip took place in the autumn of 2001. He was able to see for himself the newly completed, very attractive teachers' quarters, discover the very great need there was for the sponsorship scheme amongst the refugee children – at the parents' meeting held one Sunday afternoon in November there was an urgent plea made for more sponsors – and discuss details of the new dormitory complex which, it was decided, should be built next. The engineer estimated the cost for these buildings – two dormitories each housing 48 boarders, warden's quarters and a kitchen and dining hall – to be £32,000. Muriel joined Kai during this trip and saw the progress that had been made with the buildings and also experienced the enthusiasm of the pupils. In her report written for the December newsletter she

said that this enthusiasm plus the welcome she was given made the efforts of all the supporters of the Project seem very worthwhile.

For Kai, the next visit to Manipur seemed to come very quickly. It was agreed at the committee meeting in January 2002 that he should leave at the beginning of March, but before that there was to be a farewell meal for Ray Thompson, our chairman since the beginning of the Project, and Ruth, his wife. There was no way that the Trust could adequately thank them for their invaluable and loyal support over the years but it was decided that a meal together in a local Chinese restaurant would be appropriate. A photo album giving a pictorial history of the Project was prepared as a memento for them. The Trust had been fortunate indeed to have them as leading members of the committee. The Trust was equally fortunate to have another gifted member of the committee, namely Alan Weir, willing to step into Ray's shoes. And so it was that in January 2002 Alan became the new chairman and Vivienne Kendall, a member at Southdown Methodist Church, joined the committee, with a special remit of overseeing the student sponsorship scheme. Ray had presented a paper to the Trust with regard to the sponsorship scheme and in it was a suggestion that an administrator should be appointed.

Kai left for India on the 3 March with £5,000 to be used for the start of the dormitory complex. When he arrived he was very encouraged to discover that the number of pupils at Emmanuel School had risen to 315 and that there could have been a further 20 or so if the dormitory accommodation had been ready. He also found that the student sponsorship fund had been fully implemented with 21 pupils benefitting from the scheme, including 4 boarders. All children were from families affected by the ethnic violence, and who had lost one or both parents. Keith had lent Kai a video camera for this trip so that he could take clips for the Project video he was compiling for promotional purposes. Soon after he returned, Keith was able to make use of this material and at the next meeting in May the committee were able to watch the draft video.

The June 2002 newsletter reflected the optimism of this trip, with a front page picture of the foundations of the 'much needed dormitory complex' being laid and a headline proclaiming 'Exciting News from Manipur'. Kai wrote of the number of children now attending the school, the success of the sponsorship scheme and also the fact that because of the presence of the school not a single child from Haipi or its immediate surroundings had joined one of the many underground militant groups that were springing up as a result of the political climate in North

East India.

During the summer and autumn of 2002 support here in the UK continued. There were several fundraising activities including a weekend spent at Huntingdon Methodist Church and an evening at Dagnall Street Baptist Church, as well as the usual summer barbecue and garden lunch and monthly coffee mornings. In all of these activities our supporters' generosity greatly exceeded the committee's expectation and in September we were able to send out a further £8,000 towards the building of the dormitory complex. The Trust also received more offers of sponsorship and Kai was able to report in the December newsletter that 31 needy children were now being sponsored – thus reaching the 10% suggested in Ray's paper. This new venture was certainly meeting a very real need. Kai also wrote in this newsletter of the excellent exam results attained by pupils in the Board Examinations. During this time Vivienne prepared a new brochure, highlighting the sponsorship scheme but also stressing the continued need for building funds and giving a clear explanation of the vision of the school. Keith also finished his promotional video and this was advertised with the hope that small groups could use it to raise awareness of the needs of Emmanuel School.

At the committee meeting held in early January 2003 Kai had to report that because of a bank error the money sent out in September could not be accessed and so the building of the dormitory was way behind schedule and was most unlikely to be ready for the new intake of students in February. He hoped that when he went out on 23 January with a further £3,000 good progress could be made on the new building and also that, in the meantime, he would be able to persuade the owner of some disused buildings in the village to let us use them as temporary accommodation.

And so it was that Kai left once again for Haipi armed with a list of things to do, money to pay for the sponsored pupils and towards the dormitory complex. When he arrived, he found that no progress had been made since the previous June because of lack of funds, and building work had stalled at the completion of the foundations. But by the time he returned in March he was able to report that construction of the walls of three of the four buildings had been completed – the bank in India had at last rectified their error and released the money, so there was money, not only for all this progress, but enough left for the remaining bricks, the steel rods for reinforced concrete pillars and for the timber. Still needed was money for cement and the corrugated iron sheeting for the roofs – perhaps another £5,000. He had found a skilled carpenter to make bunk beds – a small picture of

one of these beds is to be found in the 'new-look' colour newsletter of June 2003. This skilled carpenter had other talents and he was able to sort out the plumbing and electricity supply to the main school building – giving them running (cold) water and an occasional supply of electricity. A vision for the future was born at this time - a hydro electric plant to serve both the village and the school, giving them all a regular supply of electricity – something which would literally transform all their lives. Another more down to earth vision and also a more easily attainable one was for there to be a biogas plant attached to the septic tanks in the dormitories which would provide fuel for cooking the boarders' meals.

On the front page of June 2003's newsletter is a colour picture of the new school gate with the name of the school high above the two posts. During this trip Kai discovered some disturbing information about Khupkholun, the acting headmaster. We had at one point hoped that, because of his enthusiasm and many good points, he might be sent for further training and then be appointed headmaster of Emmanuel School, but it seemed that, during the past two years, he had proved himself to be less than trustworthy and honest, especially when it came to financial matters and so it was with regret that Kai had to begin looking for another headmaster – not an easy task in this remote and troubled part of India.

During the summer of 2003 the Trust's funds were given an unexpected and very welcome boost in the form of a £21,000 gift from Dagnall Street Baptist Church. The committee were delighted and encouraged by this very generous donation – money tithed from that raised for the refurbishment of the church. It was felt that this lump sum should be used towards the building of the science laboratories and library and that there should be some tangible recognition of this in the naming of the building. Before this next stage in the school could commence there was still the dormitory complex to finish and it was suggested that money could be 'borrowed' from this fund and then 'replaced' as soon as more became available. Once again estimates had been affected by rising prices and it was thought a further £6,000 would be needed to finish the complex.

The Trust was encouraged by more excellent exam results – out of the 20 candidates 13 had passed in the coveted first division. Alan, as chairman, wrote to the headmaster congratulating him and also sent a gift in the form of a world atlas to the school. After another summer of successful and enjoyable fundraising, the committee at their December meeting were encouraged to hear that the engineer had been in contact with a possible new headmaster – his credentials on paper

appeared perfect. A committed Christian and highly qualified, formerly head of a Christian school in South India and more recently as a headmaster in Ghauhati. They were anxious that these initial enquiries should be followed up and that Kai should interview and also, if suitable, recruit him during his next trip to Manipur. A provisional salary of £200 a month was agreed.

The December newsletter's front page focussed on the Haipi poultry and piggery enterprise and vegetable garden, an idea born from the need to feed the boarders in an environment devoid of supermarkets. A farm monitor was employed, chicks bought from the local market, two sows and a boar acquired and a lesson in compost making given. The turnover for chickens is very fast and piglets sell well, so the basis for a successful business, as well as the means to feed 31 hungry children, was established.

Since the start of this enterprise, one of the most satisfying parts of Kai's trips to Manipur has been his visits to the vegetable garden and the overseeing of the compost bins.

Kai's 2004 trip to Manipur was a long one – he left England on 1 January. There was the finishing of the dormitory complex to be achieved before the start of the new school year and the prospective new headmaster to be interviewed. When he arrived he found that the complex was far from finished. There was so much still to be done but the builders were sure they could be ready for the dedication on 16 February. In the end this had to be changed to 10 March. There was also a major problem - the parents! When they found that the proposed girls' dormitory was just across the quadrangle, opposite the boys', they refused to let their children, girls and boys, stay so close together, even though they would be in completely separate buildings. They were adamant and there was nothing that could be done to change their minds. This meant that another dormitory was needed, situated some distance from this newly built, fully equipped and perfectly adequate complex, for either the girls or the boys. It was decided that, as there were more boys than girls, the boys should move into the new buildings and the girls continue to live in the disused buildings they had been occupying, with the promise that they would be relocated as soon as possible. It would have to be done before work could start on the much-needed science laboratories and library.

The prospective headmaster was interviewed at the beginning of February and appeared to be just the person the Trust had been looking for ever since the opening of the school in 1996. He promised to consider the offer of the position carefully and let Kai know his decision as soon as possible. Coming from South

India, he was aware of cultural differences as well as the political unrest in this part of North East India. Much to Kai's delight, he wrote two weeks later accepting the position. The new dormitory complex, with its two biogas plants and working showers in the washrooms, was opened as planned, on 10 March, with a service of dedication and amid much excitement – at least amongst the boys. The girls were very anxious to know when work would start on their dormitory complex.

After Kai's return to the UK, the Trust received a letter to say that the new principal had started work at the school and that all seemed to be going well. The summer barbecue in 2004 turned out to be a very wet, but financially very successful event, with over 100 people crowding under a tarpaulin shelter in the Worcester Road garden. The September garden lunch held in Harpenden was also very successful. This, by contrast, was held in brilliant sunshine, with people crowded under parasols for shade! Another Manipur evening was held at Panshanger Church, where the people once again demonstrated their generous interest in the Project. At the September committee meeting Keith told the Trust that he had been looking into setting up a website for the Project. It was, at the moment, using Southdown Methodist Church's website but really needed one of its own. At this meeting the date for Kai's next trip to Manipur was agreed – 11 January to 8 April. It was suggested that Muriel should join him at some point during this visit – a visit which proved to be one of the most challenging he had undertaken.

As arranged, Kai left for India on 11 January 2005. When he arrived in Haipi, he found that, once again, there were many problems waiting for him. There seemed to have been a complete breakdown in discipline at the school with the new headmaster unable to deal with the mounting problems, many of which were the result of actions taken by the former acting head. There was trouble both in the girls' and the boys' dormitories, questionable exam results and a feeling of disquiet amongst the staff, some of whom were wanting to leave. Something had to be done and done quickly. It was soon apparent that the new headmaster was finding it very difficult to gain the respect of his staff and also to adjust culturally and settle in a small North East Indian village community. Kai held separate meetings with the teachers, the boarders and then with the headmaster in an endeavour to create some understanding and cohesion. All had the best interests of the school at heart and so it was that soon there appeared to be an improvement in the atmosphere and a growing respect both between children and staff and staff and headmaster. As a result, on the annual founding day all were working together for the good of the school – in fact the way staff gave willingly of their free time to help the

children rehearse and how hard the children worked was remarked upon on in the June newsletter – they all seemed genuinely proud of their school and wanted to do their best. On the last evening of Kai and Muriel's visit the boarders, the teachers, the headmaster and other members of staff organised a huge feast in their honour. A pig was roasted on a spit, a bonfire lit and a very happy evening enjoyed by everyone!

During this visit some suitable buildings were acquired, just a short distance from the school site, for the girls' dormitory and work on converting them was begun. The buildings had originally been built by Pagin, Kai's cousin brother, just before he was assassinated, as an NGO training centre for the village, but they had since fallen into disrepair and left unused. As well as repairing existing buildings for use as dormitories, dining room and warden's accommodation, a kitchen and bathroom facilities would have to be added. Also the water supply system would have to be upgraded and electricity installed. Inevitably it meant that some of the money intended for the science and library block would have to be diverted. While this refurbishment was taking place, some weaving looms from the previous training centre were found and the idea of a cottage industry for the unemployed villagers was born. It was a vision of not only weaving, but jam making and a garden centre, with Neijou, Kai's niece, full of enthusiasm and ideas, at the helm.

Kai's report to the committee and also the article in the June 2005 newsletter reflected on the many facets of this recent trip – both the good and the bad. The rest of 2005 followed the usual pattern of coffee mornings, prayer meetings, summer barbecue and garden lunch. The Project's website was launched by Keith. It included a diary of events, photos of the Project and the latest newsletter. It also had a 'contact us' facility which could be used to ask questions about the Project and enquire about ways in which the Project could be helped. It was decided at the October committee meeting that two televisions should be purchased, one for the boys' hostel and one for the girls' - it was agreed that these were really necessary for the boarders during the long dark evenings. Kai said he would buy them in Imphal during his next visit to Manipur in January 2006. He estimated the total cost would be about £250.

Throughout this short history the word 'challenging' has been used to describe various situations and occasions and this again is the word that comes to mind when thinking of events in 2006 - both during Kai's trip and also in the ensuing weeks and months. He arrived in Haipi, as usual, at the beginning of January to find that not only had seven teachers left the school because they were unhappy,

but also the headmaster had left for his Christmas break and never returned. It seems that the cultural gap was just too wide for him to bridge and that in his discontent he had upset many members of staff. And so Kai had to rearrange his priorities and immediately begin the search for nine new teachers (the headmaster's wife had also been teaching at the school). He writes in the June newsletter and in his report to the Trust that through God's grace and despite the political unrest he was able to recruit several outstanding new teachers, including a temporary headmaster and that the school intake had risen to 400. There were also other significant successes to be reported. The poultry and piggery enterprise and vegetable garden was proving very successful, supplying chickens and vegetables to the boarders, and pigs to the village community for the feasts and celebrations which are an important part of their life. The girls were very happy with their new accommodation which was completed while Kai was in Manipur. This essential work had meant that there had been no progress made on the new science block, but it was hoped that now the girls' hostel was finished work would resume with renewed vigour. The engineer estimated that a further £21,000 would be needed to complete the block.

The headline on the front of the June 2006 newsletter, though, was 'No July Barbecue this Year'. Alan, as chairman, wrote the article, explaining that as Kai had just suffered a heart attack and consequently needed to rest, it was necessary to break with a tradition of 15 years and cancel the barbecue. Kai was not happy, but there was nothing he could do. He did, though, make an excellent recovery and was soon back to normal, working hard for the Project. If the Trust had been at all concerned about lack of funds to send to the engineer because of the cancellation of the barbecue, they need not have worried – on 8 August, thanks to the generosity of supporters, Kai was able to send a further £10,000. The engineer acknowledged receipt of this sum later in August and reported that work had resumed on the science block. And at the October committee meeting Kai reported that there was already a further £8,000 in the bank. This meeting was the last held with Alan as chairman. The Trust expressed their deep appreciation of all that he had done for the Project over the years and were glad to hear that they would still benefit from his experience and wisdom as he had agreed to stay on as a member of the committee. The fact that Keith had agreed to become the new chairman was greeted with pleasure and the committee thanked him for taking on this responsibility. Two names were put forward as possible new members for the committee, namely Richard Humber who would bring with him a wealth of engineering knowledge and Nicolette Camburn who had been a loyal and

generous supporter of the Project for several years. The committee agreed that these two people should be approached as soon as possible. They both agreed and so were welcomed on to the committee during the annual pre-Christmas meal hosted by Kai and Muriel. Unfortunately, soon after this Nicolette had to withdraw from the committee due to other commitments. Richard, though, immediately put his skills to work and started investigating the possibility of generating hydro electricity in Haipi.

On 4 January 2007, Kai left for Manipur again, in time to attend the church assembly on 7 January. At this meeting he was able to convince the deacons that they should contribute £2,500 towards the running of Emmanuel School – a very generous gift from a village community, which would help to meet the cost of the teachers' salaries. Another very positive aspect of this trip was the progress that was being made with the piggery poultry and vegetable garden. It was providing chickens and vegetables to the boarders and they, in turn, were providing food for the pigs from the left-overs. There had been a rise in demand for chickens and pigs. Even the much improved compost was being sold. The venture had become self-supporting.

It was during this trip that Kai experienced for himself the very real and urgent need for some form of transport for the school community. Until recently they had had the use of Kai's sister's old jeep, but this has now been sold. In the June newsletter Alan highlighted this need, listing various essential uses such as taking sick children to the local hospital, buying rice for the boarders (they consume about 50kg a day!) and chicken feed for the thriving poultry enterprise. The initial response to this plea was slow. Also during this trip, Kai was faced again with the desperate need for more sponsors. He had felt compelled to accept several day pupils even though they had, as yet, no sponsor. The committee at the meeting in May 2007 agreed with this decision when Kai explained their situations and that he felt the extra cost could be absorbed by the school without encroaching on the building funds. The sponsorship scheme was another aspect of this Project which was proving very successful and meeting a very real need.

On his return Kai told the committee of the disappointing progress with the science and library block and the urgent need for more funds. He wrote in the newsletter of the size of the building and the many uses to which it would be put – it will have three laboratories, physics, chemistry and biology and a lecture room on the ground floor and an assembly hall and library on the first floor. The hall will have a stage for drama productions and meetings, but for most of the time the main floor

space would be used for indoor sports such as volley ball and badminton.

Fundraising during the summer returned to normal during 2007, with the barbecue being held in July and the garden lunch at the beginning of September. Once again these two events were very successful both financially and in the way they were able to generate interest in the Project. Over the years they have proved to be very enjoyable social occasions that have become fixtures in many people's diaries. At the October committee meeting all present were somewhat shocked to hear the revised estimate for the completion of the science block – much more than had been originally thought – fundraising would have to continue with renewed vigour.

For the December newsletter Richard said he would like to write about his interest in alternative energy and this article found its way on to the front page with a graphic illustration of how the plentiful water supply from the nearby river could be harnessed to provide electricity for not only the school, but also the whole village – the vision was beginning to take shape. While Kai was out in Manipur in 2008 he visited an old hydro electric plant built during the British administration and still in working order. He also organised the older classes to take part in a survey of uses for electricity in the village and also took them up to the 'take off' point in the river. It was found that there was a plentiful supply of water, even though it was the dry season, and a good gradient, proving that there would be adequate water for the whole year. Kai reported that he hoped this project could be mainly financed by the villagers themselves – he had suggested to them an initial contribution of 10,000 rupees per household.

During this trip, Kai again experienced the inconvenience of having no transport and the committee decided that there should be a renewed effort to raise the money for this essential for the school community. The need was mentioned again both by word of mouth and in the next newsletter and this time the response was both swift and generous. It appeared that by the time Kai was due to go out to Manipur again – probably in January 2009 - he would be able to take enough money with him to purchase a second hand pickup truck. 2008 brought with it a new opportunities for fundraising. In February the Trust were offered the use of the coffee shop at High Street Methodist Church in Harpenden for one Saturday morning and also the refectory in St Albans Abbey one Sunday afternoon in June – both proved to be busy and enjoyable occasions, where the work of the Project could be promoted.

In the June 2008 newsletter Kai reflected that it was over twenty years since the launch of the Manipur Christian School Project. Years that have seen many challenges and difficulties faced and overcome. The Trust knows that before its completion there will be more, but they also know that with God all things are possible. So many times over the past twenty years, when humanly speaking things have seemed impossible, a way forward has been found and a path made clear. They are humbled by all that has so far been achieved – not just the building of the infrastructure of the school, but much more. The poultry and piggery and market garden, the weaving and jam making giving employment opportunities and of course the student sponsorship scheme, giving hope to those who had none. This faithful God who has overseen the Project thus far will not fail His people in Manipur.

THE STORY OF EMMANUEL SCHOOL HAIPI

This account of God working among his people both in Manipur and here in the West should rightfully begin with the final paragraph from the booklet entitled 'A Vision for Village Christians in Manipur, North East India', written by Alan Weir a few years ago. It reads:

"In April 1986 the whole family (Kai, Muriel, David, Joanne and Peter Kipgen) visited Haipi and the children were able to meet their grandmother for the first, and, as it turned out, last time, for she died soon afterwards. It was during this visit as Kai and Muriel walked around the village and surveyed the land, which, as the chief's eldest son, now belonged to Kai, that the idea of a Christian School really took root – the vision of poor village children receiving a good Christian education that would equip them to become leaders within their communities. The land was freely available and ideal – a hillside visible from the main National Highway, surrounded by mountains, with a plentiful water supply and space for playing fields and cultivation. The village elders were enthusiastic when the idea was put to them. And so it was that when Kai and Muriel returned to the UK they shared this vision with friends from a local church. They received unreserved enthusiasm and support. Gladys Price, Muriel's mother, donated £1,200, part of which was used to produce a brochure entitled 'In Need of a Christian School'. The Manipur Christian School Project had become a reality. Little did we know then what a long and sometimes difficult journey lay ahead!"

This, then, is the story of the journey.

It was not until 23 October 1987 that the first small committee meeting took place, attended by Ray and Ruth Thompson, Ken and Peggy Jones, all members of the South Hatfield Evangelical Church, and Kai and Muriel. By this time £4,000 had been donated, a solicitor identified to produce a declaration of trust and an architect found.

January 1988 saw the official start of the Project and the next meeting, on 14 January 1988, was momentous in several ways. The first appointments were agreed – Ray was asked to be chairman, Ken agreed to be treasurer and Kai was named as the project manager. It was at this meeting that it was unanimously agreed that the Declaration of Trust of the Manipur Charitable Trust, as prepared by the solicitor, should be adopted and it was signed by the chairman, Ray

Thompson. (The Trust was subsequently accepted by the Charity Commissioners on 3 March 1988). It was decided that the school should be called 'Emmanuel School' and also that Kai should visit Manipur as soon as possible.

Kai duly left for India on 13 February 1988. He took with him a bank draft for £2,000 and the prayers and good wishes of the committee and many supporters. During this first trip much was accomplished and Kai wrote on his return that he felt "God's hand in a number of happenings and that the timing was right – there was an air of great expectation among the people."

On 23 February about 200 Haibi villagers gathered to begin clearing the site chosen for the School. The undergrowth was thick and tough. It took a further three days to finish the task and by the end eight truck loads of firewood had been collected. A bulldozer then had to be hired to dig out the remaining tree stumps and level the ground before a gradient survey could be done.

Before his return, Kai set up the Emmanuel School Society to enable money to be sent to India – this Society had to be registered with both the State Government of Manipur and the Central Government of India and this was eventually granted in July 1989. Back in England, coffee mornings began and they have over the years become an integral part of the Project's fundraising, still being held on the last Saturday of each month! In the first Annual Report of the Manipur School Project, Kai writes of the growing interest in the Project being shown by a number of churches and fellowships and also of the prayer meetings that were being held once a month in Hatfield.

At the committee meeting held in January 1989 it was agreed that, in order to further the progress of the school, it was necessary for Kai to visit Manipur again and so in February he set out for India. It was during this trip that the most crucial appointment for the future success of the Project was made - that of a Christian engineer, a man both completely committed to the vision of the School and transparently honest.

Access to Haibi at this time was by means of a dirt road winding its way up from the National Highway. Sections of it were steep and dangerous. If the school was to become the flourishing community we envisaged, something had to be done. And so the whole village became involved, with the help of the Engineer, in the widening and realignment of the road. Boulders were hauled from the nearby river to be used as foundations and chippings mixed with earth spread on top. At the

end of seven days 22 truck-loads of boulders had been hauled from the river and 1 kilometre of the road was ready for the tarmac that had been promised by the State Government. When he returned to England in April, Kai brought with him a video of the villagers at work. It was shown at Daanall Street Baptist Church in St Albans and £1.400 was raised for the School Project.

During the latter part of 1989 Kai welcomed Alan Weir on to the Trust Committee and also had the satisfaction of seeing the detailed plans for the building layout and teaching block, before leaving for Manipur again on 7 February 1990. Perhaps the highlight of this visit, although not directly connected with the school project, was the completion, after ten years and without the aid of architectural plans, of the new Haiyi church. It is a grey stone building, 90' by 37' with a 58' high steeple and a capacity of 600 – enough to accommodate all the villagers from this wholly Christian village.

At the committee meetings the problems of fundraising were being highlighted, possible contacts and ideas suggested – and then rejected. It was becoming obvious that it was going to take much longer than the first optimistic estimates before enough money could be raised to finish even the first teaching block. The full drawings of the school were received from the architects on 23 October 1990: these were approved and payment authorised. They included, as well as the already received teaching unit, a chapel, art technology and music blocks, staff and pupils' accommodation, kitchen and dining hall, gymnasium and science block. These designs have provided the basic framework for the building of the school, although inevitably modifications and adaptations have been made as the building work has progressed over the years.

The first of what were destined to become 'annual' barbecues was held on 22 June 1991 and raised just £231. Around this time 'Manipur evenings' were found to be a popular and successful way of promoting the Project and raising funds. These evenings included a 'Manipur' meal cooked by Kai, a slide show and talk and small exhibition of Manipur arts and crafts. Three were held in 1991 and four in 1992. Food cooked in Hatfield was taken not only to local churches but as far away as Maidstone and Romford, with all the committee taking part. It was because of these evenings that Kai's trip to Manipur in 1991 was postponed until October. The first Manipur School Project Newsletter was produced in August 1991. Two hundred and fifty copies were printed. Plans for the next one were already in hand as the first was being distributed – it was decided it should be ready by January

1992 and contain details of Kai's October '91 trip.

It was during this October trip that both the site survey and the water supply survey were completed and construction of the very first building, a large storehouse with three rooms, was begun. This building, which was completed during 1992, was designed not only to store the cement, sand and steel rods, which had already been purchased for the building of the first teaching block, but also to provide temporary accommodation for the skilled workers from the State of Bihar. Kai appointed a site superintendent and storekeeper during this trip.

Early in 1993 the Trust was in a position to send £7,000 out to India and work on the first teaching block was at last able to begin. During this year the Project received several very generous contributions. A total of £28,000 was sent out in 1993. This encouraging development was in stark contrast to the worsening political situation in Manipur and the assassination of Paoin, Kai's cousin brother, who was the secretary of the Emmanuel School Society, a great advocate of the Project and a much loved and respected leader of the community. Work on the school site stopped for a week as a mark of respect for Paoin, but then resumed in earnest with the thought that a speedy completion of the teaching unit would be a fitting memorial to Paoin and his services to the school project.

With the very real possibility of the first teaching unit being finished by 1994, the committee turned its thoughts to the opening of the school. It was decided that the teaching medium should be English and the syllabus should be the 'All India Schools'. Unfortunately this burst of enthusiastic planning had to be put on hold. Building costs increased, not only because of the spiralling inflation caused by the political unrest, but also because of the design of the building. Work had to stop because of lack of funds. At the same time the political situation between the Nagaas and the people of Manipur was worsening. There were brutal atrocities – many villages burnt to the ground with over 1,000 innocent Kukis massacred and 50,000 left as refugees.

Fundraising, though, continued steadily and in 1994 it was possible, in spite of all the unrest, for building work to resume. The committee thought that maybe the opening of the school could take place in July 1995 and with this in mind a Board of Governors was formed. But then there was another, completely unexpected tragedy. Haipei village itself was attacked by the Nagaas on 1 January 1995 and five

villagers were killed. Our engineer visited Haiji the next day and despite everything he and the villagers were enthusiastic about continuing the Project. At the committee meeting held on 17 January 1995 it was decided that 'detailed plans for the school could not sensibly be made, but that progress should be step by step, each step taken in faith'. The decision about Kai's next visit was left entirely with him, his main task, if he went, would be one of encouragement. Of course he went. He found heightened security, with the villagers guarding Haiji at all times. They had made a request for an army outpost in the village but the Manipur Government (headed by a Naga Chief Minister) had refused. While Kai was out there it was decided that the opening of the school should be postponed until February 1996. The Board of Governors believed there was enough money available in India to complete the building. They were, at that time, in the process of approaching the State Government for a grant of £6,000 for two football pitches - unfortunately, they were not successful.

By December 1995 the news from Haiji was much more hopeful. The engineer wrote to say that six of the gutted houses had been rebuilt, the irrigation canals, bridge and the community hall had all been repaired and the teaching block was almost complete. Added to this there was a lessened threat from the Nagas and a prevailing spirit of unity amongst the villagers. So it was with a sense of great anticipation and armed with all available funds that Kai left for Manipur at the beginning of January 1996. This optimism was somewhat dampened on his arrival when he discovered how much there was still to be done if the school was to open in February - building to be finished, painting to be done, furniture to be made, clearing of the grounds. The most pressing need was, though, for teachers. Kai scoured the surrounding villages and towns looking for suitable applicants and put advertisements in the newspapers. In the end, just in time for the opening, they were able to call twenty five prospective teachers for interview and from them choose eleven, only three of whom were not Christian.

Against all the odds and amid great rejoicing over five hundred people gathered on the morning of Monday 26 February 1996 for the opening of Emmanuel School. The original plan had been that classes should commence the next day but accommodation had yet to be found for the teachers and the children from outside Haiji. Disused buildings in the village were repaired and made into suitable temporary accommodation for the teachers and some of the children, the rest boarded with families in the village. In the end, it was not until 18 March that classes began. There were eighty-five pupils, fourteen of whom were boarders.

The school's opening coincided with the Public Works Department covering the 3 kilometre access road to Haipei from Highway 39 (the road initially built by the villagers in 1989) with tarmac, thus improving transport both to the school and the village. It seemed that all was set fair for the future of Emmanuel School.

How wrong this proved to be! 1997, ten years since its start, heralded one of the most difficult and challenging periods of the whole Project. Kai travelled out on the 11 February and found that the political situation in Manipur had worsened again, with escalating violence, not only between the Kukis and Nagas, but also between the various Kuki underground insurgent groups, which had sprung up all over Manipur. One of these groups had stationed itself just outside Haipei and was holding the village to ransom, demanding at will money, food and transport – it is difficult to refuse a lad with a gun. Law and order in all parts of Manipur, including the capital, Imphal, had deteriorated to such an extent that the various underground groups were in virtual control of the state, creating fear and insecurity amongst the people. Parents did not feel it was safe to allow their children to travel to Emmanuel School and so instead of the expected increase in the numbers of pupils, fewer had enrolled at the start of this new school year. The situation was depressing and demoralising. The acting headmaster had not returned after the Christmas break and so the school was without a leader. In this atmosphere there was little that Kai could accomplish. On his return, Kai shared all these problems and frustrations with the committee and then later with the Project's supporters in the June 1997 newsletter, adding that because of all this political turmoil and violence the need for a good, Christian school, free from corruption, was greater than ever.

With this clarion call ringing in its ears the committee pressed ahead with its planning and fundraising. David Walker, who had joined the committee at the beginning of the year, bringing to it his artistic and advertising skills, suggested that in the December newsletter we should have a pictorial 'day in the life of a village child', using some of the many photos Kai had taken. Ken, after ten years of loyal service, felt it was time to relinquish his position of treasurer and so Peter Wastall was asked by the committee if he would be willing to take on this role and, much to their pleasure, he agreed. As the year progressed the news from Manipur improved. The militants had been driven out of the Haipei area by the Indian army. The Emmanuel School Society in Manipur had found and appointed a new, Christian, headmaster, the number of pupils had increased from 75 to 110, with many more expected when the new school year commenced in February 1998. With this growth came the urgent need for another teaching block.

In 1998 Kai had another eventful trip to Manipur. He saw the beginning of the construction of the second teaching block – a double storey building with 8 classrooms – big enough to accommodate 320 pupils. On 28 March the second anniversary of the school's opening was celebrated. An occasion, held in Emmanuel School hall, to which special guests were invited and which included a guest speaker, items by the children and prize giving. All this was followed by a school picnic by the river - a completely new experience for the village children and greatly enjoyed by everyone!

After Kai's return to England, an emergency committee meeting had to be called as a letter had been received from Manipur stating that they would need more money by July in order to continue the building of the second teaching block. Just a few weeks before, the committee had received the offer of a generous, interest free loan and after much discussion it was decided that this offer should be accepted with the following conditions. The loan should be formally arranged for a specific period and members of the committee should collectively act as guarantors of the loan should the necessity arise. So it was possible to send £7,000 to India on 9 July to enable the work to continue. The Project also received some very generous donations during this period and so, when again, in October, the engineer wrote to say that more money was needed a further £13,000 was transferred to India.

All in all, 1998 was a good year for the School Project, with good progress made on the building of the second teaching block, new teachers found, great generosity from our supporters and a lessening of the ethnic violence in the Haipi area. The Trust was able to turn its thoughts to the new and urgent needs, listed by Kai in the December 1998 newsletter. They were – teachers' quarters, two permanent dormitory blocks – one for boys and the other for girls - and a science block and library. This was not a project for the faint hearted!

The Trust agreed that Kai should visit Manipur again early in 1999 and his first, most urgent task should be to address the need for temporary boarder accommodation – the plan was that two disused buildings in the village should be refurbished for this purpose. And so it was that, on 29 January 1999, Kai once again set out for Haipi. This time, though, he was not alone. His daughter accompanied him and his wife and younger son joined him at the end of March, in time for Easter. There was a real sense of joy and thanksgiving that, despite all

the troubles and hardships, this visit was possible. His family could see for themselves the great need and experience the enthusiasm of the people, children and parents alike, for this Christian school that was being built, through the generosity of people in the UK, in this remote area of North East India. Inevitably, of course, this trip also had its frustrations. When they arrived in Haipi they found that, contrary to expectation, the teaching block was nowhere near completion (though, as the four ground floor classrooms were finished, they were already in use, with the building work continuing above them) and nothing had been done about converting the disused buildings into dormitory accommodation. Fortunately, one of the teachers – a skilled craftsman – was able to complete this work and the buildings were ready to welcome the first twelve boarders, four girls and eight boys from three different places in Manipur, at the beginning of the school year in February. During this visit, the urgent need for teachers' quarters became even more apparent and this need was highlighted in the next newsletter, along with pictures of the children moving into the newly refurbished dormitory accommodation. The committee, at the meeting held soon after Kai's return, agreed with the engineer's suggestion that the teachers' quarters should consist of a cluster of four bungalows, to house 8 teachers and the headmaster's family. It was hoped that the building of these bungalows would begin as soon as the double storey teaching block was finished and that they could be built quickly, with the minimum of expense.

Towards the end of 1999, just twelve years after the first small committee meeting took place, the committee met with their partners for a 'Manipur' meal, hosted by Kai and Muriel, to celebrate the progress made so far. This has in subsequent years become an annual event – a way of saying 'thank you' to the committee members for their valuable contributions of time and expertise throughout the year. It was at this first meal that Kai's next two trips to Manipur were arranged – a short visit in the spring and then a longer one in the autumn. There was a very real sense of urgency amongst the committee, that the Project should make speedy progress.

Kai left at the beginning of March 2000 with a long list of 'things to do' from the committee but, as usual, other more pressing needs were waiting for him. The headmaster had gone to his sister-in-law's wedding and so no arrangements had been made for the founding day celebrations, the site superintendent had 'borrowed' several bundles of GCI sheets and 500 bricks to build himself a new house and Haipi Baptist Church had reduced its contribution to the school by

several thousand rupees! On the plus side Kai reported that the new, double storey teaching block had been completed and the new boarding facilities were proving very successful. A Nepali lady being employed as cook and Kai's sister looking after the finances. The engineer made several visits to the site while Kai was in Haipi and together, he and Kai were able to map out the water supply for the school in detail and the sites for the teachers' quarters and science block. The original design for the teachers' quarters was modified and the estimate for each of the four units was £5,400. Unfortunately, even though £12,000 was available in the Trust's funds to begin building these units, because of the very heavy monsoon that year, it was not possible to start the building until the beginning of October.

Support here in the UK continued steadily. Soon after Kai's return there was an invitation from Panshanger church in Welwyn Garden City to give a presentation and also a meal. This proved to be an excellent evening which cemented our already strong links with this church. One result from this evening was that when Kai went out to Manipur with his son in late September he took with him enough money to buy a TV and VCR for Emmanuel School, donated specifically for this purpose by the members of Panshanger. There was great excitement amongst the children when Kai and Peter, having purchased the TV and VCR in Imphal, brought them to the school. Another very visible addition to the school, organised during this visit, was the erection of a large, twelve foot high school sign on Highway 39 pointing the way up the Haipi road to Emmanuel School. Yet more publicity for the school was achieved by the Emmanuel School choir who, led by two talented teachers, were invited to sing in three local churches. A special coach was hired to take the choir to these engagements. A new site superintendent was employed, subject to the approval of the committee (approval that was unanimously given at the meeting held in January 2001). He was a refugee who had moved, with his family, to Haipi and been re-housed after his own village had been burnt down by the Naga's. So, with the monsoon over, it was time for work to begin on the teachers' quarters. Kai was able to leave three separate cheques of varying amounts with the engineer, to be cashed when necessary. At the same meeting held in January 2001, Kai reported that he had just received a telephone call from the engineer to say that the money was almost gone. The foundations had been completed as well as two of the four bungalows. The committee agreed that a further £10,000 should be sent out to enable the work to continue.

It was at this meeting that the committee accepted, with regret, the resignation of David Walker (necessitated by his move to Hastings) who had contributed so much

in short space of time to the promotion of the Project through the design of the newsletter. Kai suggested that Keith Fox, a member of Southdown Methodist Church and a loyal supporter of the school, should be asked to join the committee in David's place. Kai told the committee that he would bring with him valuable IT skills.

In many ways 2001 proved to be another landmark year in the life of the school. Keith accepted the Trust's invitation and agreed to join the committee. He immediately set to work on creating a video of the Project to be used for fundraising and promotional purposes. Nicolette Camburn became the representative of the School Project at Panshanger church – as a direct result from the Maniour evening held there in May 2000 – and through her and the enthusiasm of members of the church the idea of a student sponsorship scheme was born. The front page of the June 2001 issue of the Maniour News announced "New Teachers' Quarters Complete!" Each unit cost £5,500 to build – a little more than first envisaged because of inflation – having two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathroom, plenty of room for two teachers. In this newsletter our chairman wrote about the student sponsorship scheme, which had been discussed at length during the committee meeting held in May. The committee were very conscious of the fact that all the children attending the school were from poor families who really struggled to find the necessary school fees. The choice of which children should be sponsored must be very carefully considered so as not to 'sow seeds of discontent' amongst other pupils and their families. Initially, a 'pilot' project would be run and so, for the moment, no more sponsors could be accepted. Also in this newsletter Alan looked back at how much had been achieved in the last thirteen years – it was perhaps all taking much longer than we had at first thought, with many setbacks, but there was so much for which to give thanks.

Kai's next trip took place in the autumn of 2001. He was able to see for himself the newly completed, very attractive teachers' quarters, discover the very great need there was for the sponsorship scheme amongst the refugee children – at the parents' meeting held one Sunday afternoon in November there was an urgent plea made for more sponsors – and discuss details of the new dormitory complex which, it was decided, should be built next. The engineer estimated the cost for these buildings – two dormitories each housing 48 boarders, warden's quarters and a kitchen and dining hall – to be £32,000. Muriel joined Kai during this trip and saw the progress that had been made with the buildings and also experienced the enthusiasm of the pupils. In her report written for the December newsletter she

said that this enthusiasm plus the welcome she was given made the efforts of all the supporters of the Project seem very worthwhile.

For Kai, the next visit to Manipur seemed to come very quickly. It was agreed at the committee meeting in January 2002 that he should leave at the beginning of March, but before that there was to be a farewell meal for Rav Thompson, our chairman since the beginning of the Project, and Ruth, his wife. There was no way that the Trust could adequately thank them for their invaluable and loyal support over the years but it was decided that a meal together in a local Chinese restaurant would be appropriate. A photo album giving a pictorial history of the Project was prepared as a memento for them. The Trust had been fortunate indeed to have them as leading members of the committee. The Trust was equally fortunate to have another gifted member of the committee, namely Alan Weir, willing to step into Rav's shoes. And so it was that in January 2002 Alan became the new chairman and Vivienne Kendall, a member at Southdown Methodist Church, joined the committee, with a special remit of overseeing the student sponsorship scheme. Rav had presented a paper to the Trust with regard to the sponsorship scheme and in it was a suggestion that an administrator should be appointed.

Kai left for India on the 3 March with £5,000 to be used for the start of the dormitory complex. When he arrived he was very encouraged to discover that the number of pupils at Emmanuel School had risen to 315 and that there could have been a further 20 or so if the dormitory accommodation had been ready. He also found that the student sponsorship fund had been fully implemented with 21 pupils benefitting from the scheme, including 4 boarders. All children were from families affected by the ethnic violence, and who had lost one or both parents. Keith had lent Kai a video camera for this trip so that he could take clips for the Project video he was compiling for promotional purposes. Soon after he returned, Keith was able to make use of this material and at the next meeting in May the committee were able to watch the draft video.

The June 2002 newsletter reflected the optimism of this trip, with a front page picture of the foundations of the 'much needed dormitory complex' being laid and a headline proclaiming 'Exciting News from Manipur'. Kai wrote of the number of children now attending the school, the success of the sponsorship scheme and also the fact that because of the presence of the school not a single child from Haibi or its immediate surroundings had joined one of the many underground militant groups that were springing up as a result of the political climate in North

East India.

During the summer and autumn of 2002 support here in the UK continued. There were several fundraising activities including a weekend spent at Huntingdon Methodist Church and an evening at Daanall Street Baptist Church, as well as the usual summer barbecue and garden lunch and monthly coffee mornings. In all of these activities our supporters' generosity greatly exceeded the committee's expectation and in September we were able to send out a further £8,000 towards the building of the dormitory complex. The Trust also received more offers of sponsorship and Kai was able to report in the December newsletter that 31 needy children were now being sponsored – thus reaching the 10% suggested in Rav's paper. This new venture was certainly meeting a very real need. Kai also wrote in this newsletter of the excellent exam results attained by pupils in the Board Examinations. During this time Vivienne prepared a new brochure, highlighting the sponsorship scheme but also stressing the continued need for building funds and giving a clear explanation of the vision of the school. Keith also finished his promotional video and this was advertised with the hope that small groups could use it to raise awareness of the needs of Emmanuel School.

At the committee meeting held in early January 2003 Kai had to report that because of a bank error the money sent out in September could not be accessed and so the building of the dormitory was way behind schedule and was most unlikely to be ready for the new intake of students in February. He hoped that when he went out on 23 January with a further £3,000 good progress could be made on the new building and also that, in the meantime, he would be able to persuade the owner of some disused buildings in the village to let us use them as temporary accommodation.

And so it was that Kai left once again for Haipi armed with a list of things to do, money to pay for the sponsored pupils and towards the dormitory complex. When he arrived, he found that no progress had been made since the previous June because of lack of funds, and building work had stalled at the completion of the foundations. But by the time he returned in March he was able to report that construction of the walls of three of the four buildings had been completed – the bank in India had at last rectified their error and released the money, so there was money, not only for all this progress, but enough left for the remaining bricks, the steel rods for reinforced concrete pillars and for the timber. Still needed was money for cement and the corrugated iron sheeting for the roofs – perhaps another £5,000. He had found a skilled carpenter to make bunk beds – a small picture of

one of these beds is to be found in the 'new-look' colour newsletter of June 2003. This skilled carpenter had other talents and he was able to sort out the plumbing and electricity supply to the main school building – giving them running (cold) water and an occasional supply of electricity. A vision for the future was born at this time - a hydro electric plant to serve both the village and the school, giving them all a regular supply of electricity – something which would literally transform all their lives. Another more down to earth vision and also a more easily attainable one was for there to be a biogas plant attached to the septic tanks in the dormitories which would provide fuel for cooking the boarders' meals.

On the front page of June 2003's newsletter is a colour picture of the new school gate with the name of the school high above the two posts. During this trip Kai discovered some disturbing information about Khupkholun, the acting headmaster. We had at one point hoped that, because of his enthusiasm and many good points, he might be sent for further training and then be appointed headmaster of Emmanuel School, but it seemed that, during the past two years, he had proved himself to be less than trustworthy and honest, especially when it came to financial matters and so it was with regret that Kai had to begin looking for another headmaster – not an easy task in this remote and troubled part of India.

During the summer of 2003 the Trust's funds were given an unexpected and very welcome boost in the form of a £21,000 gift from Daanall Street Baptist Church. The committee were delighted and encouraged by this very generous donation – money tithed from that raised for the refurbishment of the church. It was felt that this lump sum should be used towards the building of the science laboratories and library and that there should be some tangible recognition of this in the naming of the building. Before this next stage in the school could commence there was still the dormitory complex to finish and it was suggested that money could be 'borrowed' from this fund and then 'replaced' as soon as more became available. Once again estimates had been affected by rising prices and it was thought a further £6,000 would be needed to finish the complex.

The Trust was encouraged by more excellent exam results – out of the 20 candidates 13 had passed in the coveted first division. Alan, as chairman, wrote to the headmaster congratulating him and also sent a gift in the form of a world atlas to the school. After another summer of successful and enjoyable fundraising, the committee at their December meeting were encouraged to hear that the engineer had been in contact with a possible new headmaster – his credentials on paper

appeared perfect. A committed Christian and highly qualified, formerly head of a Christian school in South India and more recently as a headmaster in Gauhati. They were anxious that these initial enquiries should be followed up and that Kai should interview and also, if suitable, recruit him during his next trip to Manipur. A provisional salary of £200 a month was agreed.

The December newsletter's front page focussed on the Haipi poultry and piggy enterprise and vegetable garden, an idea born from the need to feed the boarders in an environment devoid of supermarkets. A farm monitor was employed, chicks bought from the local market, two sows and a boar acquired and a lesson in compost making given. The turnover for chickens is very fast and piglets sell well, so the basis for a successful business, as well as the means to feed 31 hungry children, was established.

Since the start of this enterprise, one of the most satisfying parts of Kai's trips to Manipur has been his visits to the vegetable garden and the overseeing of the compost bins.

Kai's 2004 trip to Manipur was a long one – he left England on 1 January. There was the finishing of the dormitory complex to be achieved before the start of the new school year and the prospective new headmaster to be interviewed. When he arrived he found that the complex was far from finished. There was so much still to be done but the builders were sure they could be ready for the dedication on 16 February. In the end this had to be changed to 10 March. There was also a major problem - the parents! When they found that the proposed girls' dormitory was just across the quadrangle, opposite the boys', they refused to let their children, girls and boys, stay so close together, even though they would be in completely separate buildings. They were adamant and there was nothing that could be done to change their minds. This meant that another dormitory was needed, situated some distance from this newly built, fully equipped and perfectly adequate complex, for either the girls or the boys. It was decided that, as there were more boys than girls, the boys should move into the new buildings and the girls continue to live in the disused buildings they had been occupying, with the promise that they would be relocated as soon as possible. It would have to be done before work could start on the much-needed science laboratories and library.

The prospective headmaster was interviewed at the beginning of February and appeared to be just the person the Trust had been looking for ever since the opening of the school in 1996. He promised to consider the offer of the position carefully and let Kai know his decision as soon as possible. Coming from South

India, he was aware of cultural differences as well as the political unrest in this part of North East India. Much to Kai's delight, he wrote two weeks later accepting the position. The new dormitory complex, with its two bio-gas plants and working showers in the washrooms, was opened as planned, on 10 March, with a service of dedication and amid much excitement – at least amongst the boys. The girls were very anxious to know when work would start on their dormitory complex.

After Kai's return to the UK, the Trust received a letter to say that the new principal had started work at the school and that all seemed to be going well. The summer barbecue in 2004 turned out to be a very wet, but financially very successful event, with over 100 people crowding under a tarpaulin shelter in the Worcester Road garden. The September garden lunch held in Harpenden was also very successful. This, by contrast, was held in brilliant sunshine, with people crowded under parasols for shade! Another Maniour evening was held at Panshanger Church, where the people once again demonstrated their generous interest in the Project. At the September committee meeting Keith told the Trust that he had been looking into setting up a website for the Project. It was, at the moment, using Southdown Methodist Church's website but really needed one of its own. At this meeting the date for Kai's next trip to Manipur was agreed – 11 January to 8 April. It was suggested that Muriel should join him at some point during this visit – a visit which proved to be one of the most challenging he had undertaken.

As arranged, Kai left for India on 11 January 2005. When he arrived in Haipi, he found that, once again, there were many problems waiting for him. There seemed to have been a complete breakdown in discipline at the school with the new headmaster unable to deal with the mounting problems, many of which were the result of actions taken by the former acting head. There was trouble both in the girls' and the boys' dormitories, questionable exam results and a feeling of disquiet amongst the staff, some of whom were wanting to leave. Something had to be done and done quickly. It was soon apparent that the new headmaster was finding it very difficult to gain the respect of his staff and also to adjust culturally and settle in a small North East Indian village community. Kai held separate meetings with the teachers, the boarders and then with the headmaster in an endeavour to create some understanding and cohesion. All had the best interests of the school at heart and so it was that soon there appeared to be an improvement in the atmosphere and a growing respect both between children and staff and staff and headmaster. As a result, on the annual founding day all were working together for the good of the school – in fact the way staff gave willingly of their free time to help the

children rehearse and how hard the children worked was remarked upon on in the June newsletter – they all seemed genuinely proud of their school and wanted to do their best. On the last evening of Kai and Muriel's visit the boarders, the teachers, the headmaster and other members of staff organised a huge feast in their honour. A pig was roasted on a spit, a bonfire lit and a very happy evening enjoyed by everyone!

During this visit some suitable buildings were acquired, just a short distance from the school site, for the girls' dormitory and work on converting them was begun. The buildings had originally been built by Paain, Kai's cousin brother, just before he was assassinated, as an NGO training centre for the village, but they had since fallen into disrepair and left unused. As well as repairing existing buildings for use as dormitories, dining room and warden's accommodation, a kitchen and bathroom facilities would have to be added. Also the water supply system would have to be upgraded and electricity installed. Inevitably it meant that some of the money intended for the science and library block would have to be diverted. While this refurbishment was taking place, some weaving looms from the previous training centre were found and the idea of a cottage industry for the unemployed villagers was born. It was a vision of not only weaving, but jam making and a garden centre, with Neiiou, Kai's niece, full of enthusiasm and ideas, at the helm.

Kai's report to the committee and also the article in the June 2005 newsletter reflected on the many facets of this recent trip – both the good and the bad. The rest of 2005 followed the usual pattern of coffee mornings, prayer meetings, summer barbecue and garden lunch. The Project's website was launched by Keith. It included a diary of events, photos of the Project and the latest newsletter. It also had a 'contact us' facility which could be used to ask questions about the Project and enquire about ways in which the Project could be helped. It was decided at the October committee meeting that two televisions should be purchased, one for the boys' hostel and one for the girls' - it was agreed that these were really necessary for the boarders during the long dark evenings. Kai said he would buy them in Imphal during his next visit to Manipur in January 2006. He estimated the total cost would be about £250.

Throughout this short history the word 'challenging' has been used to describe various situations and occasions and this again is the word that comes to mind when thinking of events in 2006 - both during Kai's trip and also in the ensuing weeks and months. He arrived in Hairoi, as usual, at the beginning of January to find that not only had seven teachers left the school because they were unhappy,

but also the headmaster had left for his Christmas break and never returned. It seems that the cultural gap was just too wide for him to bridge and that in his discontent he had upset many members of staff. And so Kai had to rearrange his priorities and immediately begin the search for nine new teachers (the headmaster's wife had also been teaching at the school). He writes in the June newsletter and in his report to the Trust that through God's grace and despite the political unrest he was able to recruit several outstanding new teachers, including a temporary headmaster and that the school intake had risen to 400. There were also other significant successes to be reported. The poultry and pig enterprise and vegetable garden was proving very successful, supplying chickens and vegetables to the boarders, and pigs to the village community for the feasts and celebrations which are an important part of their life. The girls were very happy with their new accommodation which was completed while Kai was in Maniour. This essential work had meant that there had been no progress made on the new science block, but it was hoped that now the girls' hostel was finished work would resume with renewed vigour. The engineer estimated that a further £21,000 would be needed to complete the block.

The headline on the front of the June 2006 newsletter, though, was 'No July Barbecue this Year'. Alan, as chairman, wrote the article, explaining that as Kai had just suffered a heart attack and consequently needed to rest, it was necessary to break with a tradition of 15 years and cancel the barbecue. Kai was not happy, but there was nothing he could do. He did, though, make an excellent recovery and was soon back to normal, working hard for the Project. If the Trust had been at all concerned about lack of funds to send to the engineer because of the cancellation of the barbecue, they need not have worried – on 8 August, thanks to the generosity of supporters, Kai was able to send a further £10,000. The engineer acknowledged receipt of this sum later in August and reported that work had resumed on the science block. And at the October committee meeting Kai reported that there was already a further £8,000 in the bank. This meeting was the last held with Alan as chairman. The Trust expressed their deep appreciation of all that he had done for the Project over the years and were glad to hear that they would still benefit from his experience and wisdom as he had agreed to stay on as a member of the committee. The fact that Keith had agreed to become the new chairman was greeted with pleasure and the committee thanked him for taking on this responsibility. Two names were put forward as possible new members for the committee, namely Richard Humber who would bring with him a wealth of engineering knowledge and Nicolette Camburn who had been a loyal and

a generous supporter of the Project for several years. The committee agreed that these two people should be approached as soon as possible. They both agreed and so were welcomed on to the committee during the annual pre-Christmas meal hosted by Kai and Muriel. Unfortunately, soon after this Nicolette had to withdraw from the committee due to other commitments. Richard, though, immediately put his skills to work and started investigating the possibility of generating hydro electricity in Haiqi.

On 4 January 2007, Kai left for Maniour again, in time to attend the church assembly on 7 January. At this meeting he was able to convince the deacons that they should contribute £2,500 towards the running of Emmanuel School – a very generous gift from a village community, which would help to meet the cost of the teachers' salaries. Another very positive aspect of this trip was the progress that was being made with the picaery poultry and vegetable garden. It was providing chickens and vegetables to the boarders and they, in turn, were providing food for the pigs from the left-overs. There had been a rise in demand for chickens and pigs. Even the much improved compost was being sold. The venture had become self-supporting.

It was during this trip that Kai experienced for himself the very real and urgent need for some form of transport for the school community. Until recently they had had the use of Kai's sister's old jeep, but this has now been sold. In the June newsletter Alan highlighted this need, listing various essential uses such as taking sick children to the local hospital, buying rice for the boarders (they consume about 50kg a day!) and chicken feed for the thriving poultry enterprise. The initial response to this plea was slow. Also during this trip, Kai was faced again with the desperate need for more sponsors. He had felt compelled to accept several day pupils even though they had, as yet, no sponsor. The committee at the meeting in May 2007 agreed with this decision when Kai explained their situations and that he felt the extra cost could be absorbed by the school without encroaching on the building funds. The sponsorship scheme was another aspect of this Project which was proving very successful and meeting a very real need.

On his return Kai told the committee of the disappointing progress with the science and library block and the urgent need for more funds. He wrote in the newsletter of the size of the building and the many uses to which it would be put – it will have three laboratories, physics, chemistry and biology and a lecture room on the ground floor and an assembly hall and library on the first floor. The hall will have a stage for drama productions and meetings, but for most of the time the main floor

space would be used for indoor sports such as volley ball and badminton.

Fundraising during the summer returned to normal during 2007, with the barbecue being held in July and the garden lunch at the beginning of September. Once again these two events were very successful both financially and in the way they were able to generate interest in the Project. Over the years they have proved to be very enjoyable social occasions that have become fixtures in many people's diaries. At the October committee meeting all present were somewhat shocked to hear the revised estimate for the completion of the science block – much more than had been originally thought – fundraising would have to continue with renewed vigour.

For the December newsletter Richard said he would like to write about his interest in alternative energy and this article found its way on to the front page with a graphic illustration of how the plentiful water supply from the nearby river could be harnessed to provide electricity for not only the school, but also the whole village – the vision was beginning to take shape. While Kai was out in Manipur in 2008 he visited an old hydro electric plant built during the British administration and still in working order. He also organised the older classes to take part in a survey of uses for electricity in the village and also took them up to the 'take off' point in the river. It was found that there was a plentiful supply of water, even though it was the dry season, and a good gradient, proving that there would be adequate water for the whole year. Kai reported that he hoped this project could be mainly financed by the villagers themselves – he had suggested to them an initial contribution of 10,000 rupees per household.

During this trip, Kai again experienced the inconvenience of having no transport and the committee decided that there should be a renewed effort to raise the money for this essential for the school community. The need was mentioned again both by word of mouth and in the next newsletter and this time the response was both swift and generous. It appeared that by the time Kai was due to go out to Manipur again – probably in January 2009 - he would be able to take enough money with him to purchase a second hand pickup truck. 2008 brought with it a new opportunity for fundraising. In February the Trust were offered the use of the coffee shop at High Street Methodist Church in Harpenden for one Saturday morning and also the refectory in St Albans Abbey one Sunday afternoon in June – both proved to be busy and enjoyable occasions, where the work of the Project could be promoted.

In the June 2008 newsletter Kai reflected that it was over twenty years since the launch of the Manipur Christian School Project. Years that have seen many challenges and difficulties faced and overcome. The Trust knows that before its completion there will be more, but they also know that with God all things are possible. So many times over the past twenty years, when humanly speaking things have seemed impossible, a way forward has been found and a path made clear. They are humbled by all that has so far been achieved – not just the building of the infrastructure of the school, but much more. The poultry and pigery and market garden, the weaving and jam making giving employment opportunities and of course the student sponsorship scheme, giving hope to those who had none. This faithful God who has overseen the Project thus far will not fail His people in Manipur.