

Friends of Sangam (UK)

Newsletter – Autumn, 2019



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The Editor Writes

Namaste!

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this bumper edition.

I was lucky enough to visit Sangam, again, this summer – and so saw, at first hand, the effects of this year's heavy monsoon. As Michelle, the new Centre Manager, explains, in her Sangam Update, the rains caused extensive damage to the boundary wall, at the bottom right side. The small nullah, which usually trickles past, became a raging torrent – and swept away the foundations, with the result that the wall now has wide cracks and is, in places, hanging on, by a thread. To replace the wall will be extremely expensive, but, in the meantime, to keep Sangam secure, a metal fence is being constructed, some 5 metres, or so, in. I've added the pictures I took, to Michelle's report.

The Sangam family has again joined together, to support one of their own, during a difficult period. Our thoughts are with Sangeeta, who works in Sangam's kitchen, whose husband died, suddenly, in early October. Many of you will also know their daughter, Priyanka, who worked at Sangam, during Donna's tenure, and spent time at Pax Lodge, as a volunteer.

The closing date for items for the Spring edition is 31st March, 2020.

Tina Powell

From the Chairman



It was lovely to meet so many people at the FOS Gathering at Hautbois, just a short time ago. Many UK members were present and our numbers further increased by Canadian friends for the weekend and local day visitors on the Saturday. We were blessed with sunny weather over the weekend, so we were able to have our Welcome Ceremony and the giant snakes and ladders game outside on the terrace!

Members were encouraged to engage in as much or as little activity as they wanted and a wide range of options was available: chapatti and lassi making; Warli art; word searches; Indian games; mirror embroidery; lavender craft and a Saturday night quiz, to name but a few! We truly are a talented bunch!

We also managed to do some fund raising for Sangam, with raffle, tombola and shopping proving popular.

The new constitution was ratified at the AGM and from now on, our Trustees group consists of 6 members, plus the new President, Gill Shepherd. Gill's appointment as President was greeted by rapturous applause. She will be a great source of support to the Trustees in her new role.

Unfortunately, whilst Indian technology was working perfectly, it was disappointing that there was an internet problem at Hautbois, so we were unable to make our scheduled, live communication with Sangam's new Manager, Michelle Hughes.

If you wish to keep up to date with Sangam developments, please check the Sangam website. You can register to receive monthly reports by contacting Sangam directly and asking to be put on their email list!

I am going out to Sangam this month and will be there for the 53rd Birthday on 16 October – a fitting way to start my term of office and reconnect with friends and my Indian family! Look out for photos in the Spring newsletter!

Trish Halmshaw

And From the Previous Chairman

Namaste.

My time as Trustee and your Chairman is now complete. I am so grateful to all of the members of the Committee who served with me and to so many of you for supporting all the enjoyable activities and times that we have had together.

As members of FOS (UK), you continue to make members of Girlguiding aware of our Asian World Centre, Sangam, and the impact it has on us all. You arrange such enjoyable Annual Gatherings and fundraise at various meetings and venues. Now Diane Davies, our fundraising and trading representative, has given us a new idea: help FOS (UK) to buy solar panels for Sangam by buying a £1 section on a paper sheet – and you can always add a 'Treasure Hunt' prize to one lucky section.

The Fun and Friendship of Girlguiding is always with us, but Sangam holds something special. You feel a sense of peace when you enter the centre: the 'Spirit of Sangam'.

Best Wishes to you all.

Victoria Bagshaw

From the President

In my early days of FoS membership, I shared a room with Joey Shelley; progressed to sitting in Trustees meetings, with Katherine Benson-Evans, Jane Smart, Jane Wardropper and ultimately Trish Halmshaw, all excellent Presidents, with the Spirit of Sangam running through their veins. I feel very honoured to be asked to follow in their footsteps and will do my best to help Trish, and the Trustees, in their efforts to support and promote our wonderful 'Home' in India.

We have just had another successful Annual Gathering, relaxing with Friends, in the sunshine, at Hautbois, where well over £1,000 was raised for Sangam, and four new members were welcomed, as well as twelve local Trefoil Guild members, who I hope will also decide to join us.

Poor Internet connections precluded us from 'meeting' by video link, the new centre manager, Michelle Hughes, who has very recently taken over the running of Sangam and arrived in time to witness an unusually bad monsoon, which has caused devastating damage to the property. She has had to launch an urgent appeal to repair that damage, and I am proud to say that FoS (UK) was able to respond almost immediately, by sending £2000.

Please continue to help us to 'Keep the Spirit Alive'.

Gill Shepherd

Meet the New Centre Manager

The monsoon has now almost ended but everything still looks very green! The campsite has lovely long grass and there are bright and colourful flowers everywhere. We have a multitude of different birds visiting us daily and they provide the musical background to life here! Oh, and we have our cat, Sonu!



I am really pleased and honoured to be here in Sangam, as World Centre Manager. I have very fond memories of my time here as a volunteer, 20 years ago! I think you may know Trish Halmshaw, who was my Programme Director. at the time (and obviously a very tough boss!

Lol!!).

I have been in Guiding since I became a Brownie at 7 years old. More recently I have been a Guide and Ranger leader in London and a Guide and Scout leader in Estonia. I am afraid I am hooked! For me, Guiding still has so much potential to change the world! One girl at a time! Or 10 million!

In the past 15 years, I have been working around the world as a British Diplomat, a job which has prepared me well for working in our close-knit international team here in Sangam. We



really do have a great team of staff here!! I have spent the past two months getting to know the Sangam way of life and the Sangam family. I have come to understand that the Sangam family reaches far and wide across this neighbourhood in Pune but also across the world. I hadn't previously been aware of the really high levels of support for Sangam around the world. This has been an amazing surprise! And a bit of a humbling experience.

In my time here, I want to ensure that Sangam continues to be a safe, friendly, exciting, challenging and wonderful home in India for all Scouts and Guides from around the world. To make sure that when people walk through the door they immediately feel like they are at home! As a big part of that, I am going to work very hard to encourage more and more Guides and Scouts to come to visit us and become part of the Sangam family. We have to admit that bookings for Sangam are at a low level for this year and next and so we need to concentrate some effort on making sure that more bookings are made. These bookings will need to come from current friends of Sangam but we also need to make new friends in new countries.

It's a delight to be back in Sangam after 20 years! What's the biggest change ?? Nothing really! The staff have changed, we have a new swimming pool (thank you!) and much better technology but in many regards Sangam hasn't changed at all. The food is still great, the staff are still so friendly, the programme is still challenging and the Sangam spirit is still everywhere. It sounds a bit of a cliché but Sangam is very much the same wonderful place!

I would be delighted to invite you all to come and visit me in Sangam; come for adventure, friendships old and new, Indian culture and shopping, a bit of a challenge - but also just loads and loads of laughter and fun! You are all welcome to become part of the Sangam family (although I think that maybe most of you already are!)

Thank you so much for your continued wonderful support. It makes me feel great to know that you are there for me – the fence campaign showed that! However, please also remember that I, and Sangam, are here for you! This is your home in India, and it will always be here waiting for you!

Michelle Hughes

Sangam Update

Currently we are raising funds for our '**Fence Project**'. Our property wall, on the north side, was damaged during the monsoon: it may collapse, soon, as it has several large cracks in it and there is a risk of people entering inside our property. We are currently building a fence around the area, to keep Sangam secure, and need your support, to be able to complete this project. If you require more information please get in touch with our World Centre Manager on Michelle.Hughes@sangam.waggggs.org. Thanks to your help, we are over half way to our target!! Thank you!!



Our next big project will be the installation of a sustainable energy source which we will use to provide the majority of Sangam's electricity and power needs. We are still looking into options, but it looks likely to involve solar panels. Alongside the cost, one big question will be location of the panels which is yet to be decided. We will give updates as we better understand our options.

We would also like to share with you some of our exciting upcoming adventures from now until the end of our season:

In breaking news from Sangam Family, we have launched a brand new programme '**Magic Masala**'. One of the most wonderful ways to experience India is through the variety of delicious foods from the many diverse regions throughout the country. From North to South and East to West, there is one magic ingredient: Masala!

Magic Masala events allow you to blend together various Spices (Sangam Sessions) to create your perfect **Magic Masala** programme that meets the needs of you, your group and your Indian experience! E-mail us for more information, at GuestServices@sangam.waggggs.org

Christmas holiday season is around the corner; do you have any plan? Why not join in our end of the year event – **Body, Mind & Soul**. Join us, to celebrate the New Year together, through a spiritual festival that celebrates you!

Are you looking for an event that celebrates the diverse and unique culture of India? Come to Sangam and share your passion about food, traditions and fashion in this place filled with aroma and colours! Book into an [Essence of India](#) event!

Any plan for the Easter break? Why not come and enjoy mangoes with us? Book into the [Mangoes and Mermaids](#) event.

We also still have places in our leadership events towards the end of the season, [Be the Change](#) and [Reach for the Stars](#).

Looking for long term experience? Our Community Programme is ideal! E-mail us on communityprogramme@sangam.waggggs.org to understand, better, the range of opportunities available. Please remember that there is no upper age limit to this experience!

Don't forget to stay in touch with us! You can always find our Monthly Report [here](#); and sign up for our newsletter [here](#). You can also find us on social media, via [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Youtube](#)!

Michelle Hughes

Kerala

Anne Allery found the following poem in the cabin of her houseboat, when she spent a couple of days on the backwaters, after Sangam's 50th birthday celebrations.

Subtle yet powerful is the path made by the back waters of Kerala.
Subtle because they hold the cultural nuances of aeons;
Powerful because they have shaped the life of the region.
Every act in the daily routine of the Kuttanad region of Allepey is linked to the watery regime:
The child running along the bunds to school;
The boats which ply back and forth laden with smiles and sorrows;
The quiet concentration of the fisherman;
The smell and colour of drying paddy in the courtyard;
The quaint places of worship where many gods still reside;
The wind caught in freshly laundered clothes;
The poignant yellow of flowering mango;
The seasonal exodus of duck farmers;
The vibrant hues of tropical wetland flowers -
All speak volumes about this rice bowl that is Kerala.
This is a virtual optical feast, the time and rhythm of which is inherent in the houseboats,
The purest and most sustainable slice of Kerala life itself.

Annual Gathering, 2019

A good time was had by all of us who were able to attend this year's Gathering, at Hautbois, Girlguiding Anglia's training and activity centre, set in rural Norfolk. Most chose to stay in the house – but there were a number of members who opted to enjoy the reedcutters' cottages experience – and even three campers. Luckily, we were blest with a warm and sunny weekend!



As well as such standard components, as a welcome ceremony, the actual AGM and the Indian meal (with everyone wearing their Indian finery), we also had a dabble afternoon, which offered attendees and day visitors the chance to try various Indian activities, ranging from games, to mehendi and embroidery, to name but a few – together with lavender pomanders (in honour of Norfolk), a Bollywood movie and a quiz evening. There was a raffle and sale items and we were able to raise over £1,000!



Many thanks to Gill Shepherd, for organising the Gathering – and to all of those who helped to make it such a great weekend.

Tina Powell

One of our members, *Katherine Brown*, was even moved to compose a poem:

I've been to Hautbois
For a lovely weekend,
And I was so pleased
To see all of my friends.

With Tombola and shop
And with Raffles and Jam,
We all spent our money
To help dear Sangam.

The Monsoons were heavy
They damaged a wall,
So the playground is dangerous
In case children fall.

So let's raise some money
For the dear friends we've made,
Let them know that we care
By giving Sangam some aid!

The Chairman's and Treasurer's reports, which were presented at the AGM, have been included, below.

Chairman's Report

This is my report for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

It is wonderful to be here with you, Friends of Sangam (UK).

In 2018, Jen Barron, the World Centre Manager, at Sangam, began her retirement from that position. However, she did begin to work part-time for the Centre, and WAGGGS advertised for a new, full-time manager. This vacancy was not filled until recently, in 2019.

In April, 2018, the Indian government imposed new goods and services taxes (GST), which led to an increase in Sangam's fees and charges. Our World Centre continues to need bookings, in order to maintain itself.

Sangam is always very grateful for all donations from FoS (UK). These donations depend upon all of YOU, the members. Again, you continued to pay your membership fees, held coffee mornings, gave expenses from talks for promotion, sold crafts, collected small change, and made personal donations (many of which attracted Gift Aid). In 2018, monies sent to Sangam have been used to update the computer system (including back-up) and the refurbishment of the campsite ablution block. A legacy that was sent to us, was forwarded to Sangam, to be added to the Scholarship Fund.

Our Newsletter editor, Tina Powell, and the committee members continued to appeal for articles about your activities, and other Indian items, but were sadly disappointed, with only a

small response.

Our Annual Gathering, last year, where we proudly displayed our new banners, designed by Rachel Smith, was in the famous Adelphi Hotel, in Liverpool. Thank you to Diane Davies and her team, for arranging such an entertaining meeting, including a Taste of Sangam activities and an Indian lunch.

At the Annual Meeting, members ratified the necessary proposed amendments to our Constitution. These were then presented to the Charity Commission, and have since been accepted.

During 2018, there were no changes to the committee. I am so grateful to ALL of them – the president, vice-president, and the trustees, for their support, dedication and hard work, in a variety of capacities – but particularly to my secretary, Hilary Taylor, and treasurer, Anne Allery, for sorting out so many queries.

Thank you, to you all.

Victoria Bagshaw

Financial Report

Income and expenses account, for Y/E 31st December, 2018

<u>Income</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Donations	1248.75	2230.68
Junior badges	2.50	27.00
Sangam Challenge badges	391.40	166.20
Golden Challenge badges	0.00	393.00
Trading	863.45	846.40
Fundraising	1449.34	833.05
Gathering, 2017	0.00	393.00
Gathering, 2018	1020.00	0.00
Gift Aid	0.00	501.41
Interest	shown elsewhere	0.37
<u>Total</u>	<u>9005.44</u>	<u>10004.41</u>

Expenses

Travel	382.55	763.97
Postage	8.54	18.60
Stationery	88.92	123.42
Photocopying	17.76	51.20

Sangam	9000.00	8000.00
Newsletter printing	203.00	406.00
Newsletter postage	318.80	415.00
Badges	251.17	0.00
Trading	345.42	234.73
Gathering, 2017	0.00	239.11
Gathering, 2018/9	1043.34	200.00
Miscellaneous	158.65	53.67
Website fee (Cheque not presented)	(36.00)	36.00
Returned cheque	N/A	10.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>11904.05</u>	<u>10505.70</u>
<u>Deficit</u>	<u>2898.61</u>	<u>501.29</u>

Treasurer's report for Y/E 31st December, 2018 presented, showing receipt and payment accounts, and a statement of total assets.

Income: The subscriptions are variable, depending where we are, on the 5-year cycle. This shows a reduction of £188, below last year's figure.

Donations are lower than last year. Several of us have received expenses, after giving talks about Sangam to all sorts of organisations. Many trustees have returned travelling expenses. Several members have filled the tubes with 20p pieces, which is an easy way of donating.

The income from Sangam Challenge badges is up, thanks to Guiders who encourage their girls to do the challenge, but income from Junior badges and Golden Challenge badges has decreased considerably.

The figure from trading is much the same. Diane Davies continues to take Sangam goods to many events, and is mainly responsible for the trading figures.

A profit was made on the Gathering, in Liverpool, thanks to Diane Davies and her team.

No Gift Aid has been claimed, for two years, but the situation will be resolved, in the near future.

Expenses: Travelling expenses were halved – but several trustees kindly return their expenses, as donations.

The stationery and photocopying figures are much lower.

The Newsletter printing is also lower, because only two editions were produced, in 2018. Postage is less, for the same reason.

Badges were purchased, because stocks were getting low.

Trading items were purchased, for Diane Davies to sell at events.

£100 was spent on new banners, which have been much admired.

Several small items are shown for an honorarium and lunch ingredients, for the trustees meeting.

£9,000 was sent to Sangam, for update of electricity and Sister Scholarships.

Summary: A deficit of £2898.61 will be carried forward to the 2019 accounts.

Anne Allery

Ganesh Festival, 2019

This Hindu festival has been celebrated with particular enthusiasm, in Maharashtra, since the late 19th century, when the independence advocate Lokmanya Tilak advocated it as a way to circumvent the laws preventing public gatherings, which had been introduced by the British. It marks the arrival on earth of the elephant-headed god, who champions new beginnings and generally takes place over 10 days.

It begins with the installation of an idol, whether in a small shrine, within the home, or office, or in a large pandal – a temporary temple, built by the roadside. Each day, there are different offerings of Ganesh's favourite foods (which tend to be sweets, shared with the community), the chanting of vedic prayers, and great festivities, with loud music and drumming. At the end, the idols are "immersed" in a river, or the sea – which actually involves someone wading out, and throwing the idol backwards!



Idols always have their heads covered, when being carried to their installation



Tarabai's Ganesh shrine



Building the Phule Market pandal



Try to imagine the flashing lights, which constantly changed colour, in this pandal, in Indiranagar.



A beautiful rangoli design, outside another Indiranagar pandal.

Some of you may have vivid memories of roads being blocked, by processions, of rivers being clogged up by immersed idols and of being kept awake by incessant drumming, long into the night – but this year Pune was keen for the festival to be clean and green! While plaster of Paris idols were not actually banned, they came with a premium price tag, for both sellers, and buyers – so proved far less popular than the unfired clay ones, which readily dissolve. There were rules about how far into a road a pandal might extend, and the large speakers no longer appeared to be patched into the nearest streetlight. Finally, all drumming and music was to cease, at 11pm.



Surely such enthusiastic drummers (yes, he really is leaping into the air, while beating an enormous metal drum) would not simply stop, on the stroke of 11?

But they did!

Tina Powell

Friends of Sangam (UK) Gathering 2020

This will be held on **October 3rd** at **St James' Methodist Church Hall, St James' Road, Rainhill, L35 0NS, Merseyside.**

It will be a day event from 9.30am, to 4pm, with the possibility of joining the group for an Indian meal from 5pm, at the Blue Mango Indian Restaurant. A sandwich lunch, tea and coffee, during the day and activities are included in the price of **£15**. Please bring a mug.

Further details of the timetable for the day will be included in the next newsletter.

For anyone wishing to come to the area for the weekend some of the nearest hotels are: Premier Inns at Rainhill; Micklehead St Helens; Huyton; Whiston ,or Widnes; Mercury Hotel, St Helens; Hillcrest Hotel, Cronton, or Travelodge, Widnes. **This accommodation should be booked individually.**

Please send the booking form below to:

Diane Davies, 5 Epping Close, Rainhill, L35 0QE by **July 1st 2020**

I would like to attend the Friends of Sangam (UK) Gathering 2020 and enclose a cheque for £15, made payable to Friends of Sangam (UK), as full payment for the day.

I would like to receive details of the Indian meal. Please tick.

Name

email address for confirmation

or enclose an SAE for confirmation

Trustee nominations

Anne Allery (treasurer) and Susan Westwood complete their second term of three years as trustees after the Gathering in 2020, and therefore we require two new trustees.

We would like to invite you to join our committee where you can help to further the work of Sangam.

FoS (UK) Trustees - nomination form.

We wish to nominate the following person as a trustee for Friends of Sangam (UK)

Candidate's name _____

and signature _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

e-Mail _____

This person would be willing to be put forward for the position of treasurer if elected. Please tick.

Name of proposer _____

Signature of proposer _____

Name of seconder _____

Signature of seconder _____

Please send to:

Hilary Taylor, Whitesmocks, Smallhope Drive, Lanchester, Co. Durham, DH7 0SJ,
by January 1st 2020.

Contact Details for FoS (UK) Trustees, Autumn, 2019

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FoS (UK) Committee, 2019

Back row, L-R: Hilary Taylor; Susan Westwood;
Alison Lund

Seated, L-R: Gill Shepherd; Trish Halmshaw;
Christine Doughty; Anne Allery



In response to a suggestion in the last Junior Friends Newsletter, these Southwell Guides and Brownie organised a cake sale - and raised £35 for Sangam.