

Nandri



The Joe Homan Charity – Bringing Joy and Hope to Children

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Newsletter Summer

Joe Homan – Founder and Saviour of thousands of Children

Joe who founded villages for poor and destitute children in southern India, died on 30th March 2016 aged 85, after an extraordinary life of love and service to the children of India.

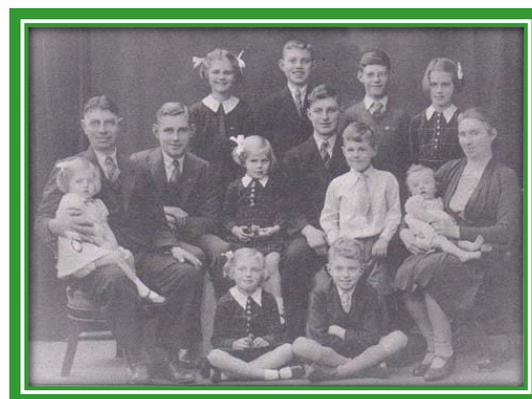
In 50 years, more than 18,000 children passed through his children's villages.

In Joe's published autobiography (Miles O' Smiles) he wrote – *'I seek no thanks, I have received much more than I ever gave'*.

Whilst saddened by his passing we can only be thankful to have known such an inspirational man.

He was cremated in Madurai on 31st March among scenes of great rejoicing from the hundreds of friends and past graduates of the Boys and Girls towns who turned out to take part in the last rites and to thank Joe for his life's work. His memory lives on in India and Thailand, not only among the children who are presently cared for by Boys Town Society and the Youth Development Society of Khon Kaen, but among thousands more, now grown up, who are passing on Joe's values to their own families and communities.

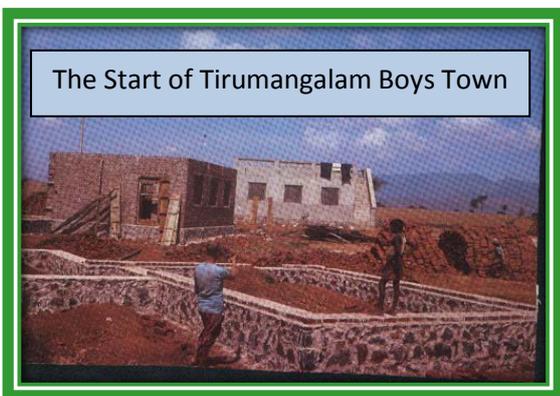
Joe was the sixth of twelve children of Adriana and Laurens, Dutch Catholics who moved to Britain and farmed in the Cambridgeshire Fens. He was educated at St Joseph's college, a Catholic boarding school in Ipswich run by the De La Salle brothers, a mission founded in the 17th century.



After leaving school he initially worked on the family farm, but it soon became clear that it was not large enough to support all his brothers and so he joined De La Salle and went back to teach at his old school.

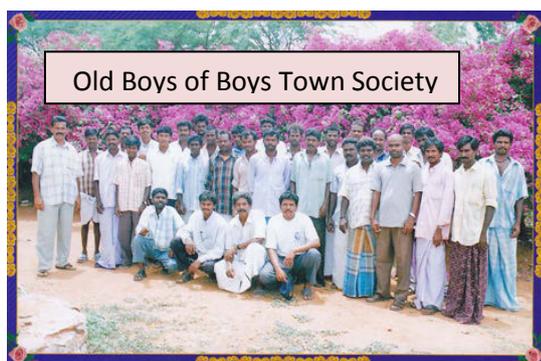
However he found he was mostly teaching the children of the prosperous so he volunteered in the early sixties to teach at a school run by the brothers in Pakistan and, later, at another in southern India. But, as he put it: " I wasn't cut out to influence poverty-stricken Hindu youngsters to become Christians." His idea of Christianity had more to do with increasing egg yields, improving crops and introducing new farming techniques in a hungry nation.

Joe had a stubborn streak and eventually fell out with his superiors and was ordered back to Britain. But instead of knuckling down for a lifetime of teaching, in 1965 he returned to India with just £200 in his pocket to set up a village for destitute boys. He started with an acre of scrubland near Tirumangalam, south of Madurai, in Tamil Nadu. His plan was to set up a poultry farm where he would teach the boys to earn a living, return to their villages and lead better lives.



Gradually, and with the aid of a friendly local farmer and financial support from family and friends at home, the project took off.

Today Tirumangalam is at the centre of a network of children's villages and homes, a school, village supplementary education projects and an environmental awareness centre in the hills. Many of the children are supported by sponsors in the UK but are administered locally by the Indian NGO which Joe founded – Boys Town Society.



Several of the Indian staff were originally brought up in the residential projects and now have leading roles within the organisation.

In recent years Joe had taken a back seat, although still brimming with schemes and plans and as enthusiastic as ever. He retired to a small coffee and pepper plantation at Perumparai in the Western Ghats, a line of forested hills that runs down the spine of Tamil Nadu.

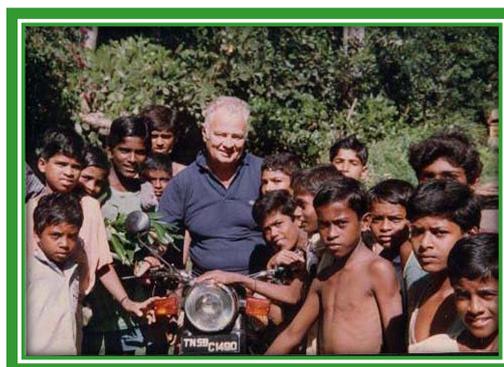


Supporters and friends from all over the UK celebrated his life at a Memorial Mass in Peterborough on 27th April. The entrance hymn would have particularly pleased Joe who wanted the lives of the children he transformed to include his passion and respect for the natural world.

Morning has broken, like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird;
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for the springing fresh from the word.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning,
born of the one light, Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise ev'ry morning,
God's recreation of the new day.

Sweet the rain's new fall, sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dew-fall, on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where his feet pass.



Joe loved the Robert Frost poem ' Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening ' – a poem which Pandit Nehru also loved and had beside his bed when he died.

'The woods are lovely dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.'

Well Joe has travelled those miles and is now asleep.
We remember him today with love and affection.

Joe Homan Memorial Fund - Remembering Joe: In words and deeds

Earlier this year we lost our dear friend and founder Joe Homan. While JHC continues to raise money to provide hope and opportunity for young people in need, the trustees want to do something specific to honour this special year.

So in the coming months a campaign will be launched to ensure that we can protect and extend the work that Joe started. It will help us to renew and protect the many projects that Joe pioneered.



Full details are still in development, we are hopeful that JHC will be able to create a campaign to raise a fund of £100k with this aim in mind. JHC will be seeking to reach out to those who knew Joe from past and present, and even those who are completely new to the work that he began. More detail will be available in the autumn. If you wish to donate in the meantime, please visit our website or contact the Peterborough office.

Francois Meyer Nursery and Primary School Tirumangalam

In 2010 Joe was determined that children from the two BTS children's villages near Tirumangalam who could benefit from an English medium education should be given the choice of attending an English medium school. He had realised early on that children who came from poor rural communities have much better opportunities in a school like this than those attending a local government school where classes are very large and teaching often of poor quality.

With the support of Thierry and Beatrice Meyer, who had already donated funds in memory of their son Francois, the new school was opened in 2011 in the premises of the Francois Meyer Training Centre.



Numbers have grown rapidly as parents of local children who can afford the minimum fees required by Government – about £50 per annum – have also asked for admission.

Boys Town Society has named the whole Tirumangalam campus the Joe Homan Campus in Joe's memory. The inauguration ceremony will be part of the Pongal celebrations in January 2017 and BTS hope that many JHC supporters will be present on this occasion.

The school now has 270 children in 2 kindergarten classes plus the five classes for Standards 1 to 5. With increased numbers the disadvantages of a single large space subdivided into classrooms soon became apparent, particularly the noisy environment which resulted, and BTS made the decision to build a purpose designed school on the land adjacent to the Francois Meyer Training Centre.



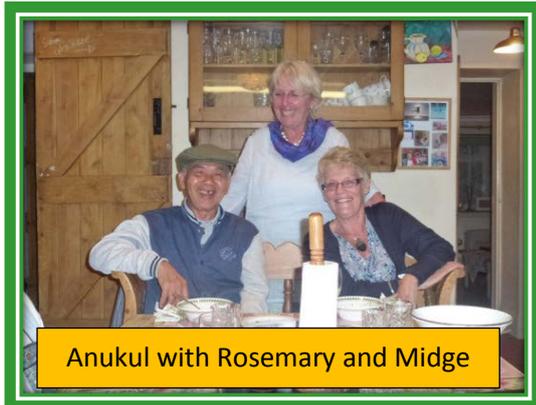
Our Pongal Promises appeal in 2015 enabled that building to start with many generous supporters promising and contributing funds.

This building has now reached the first floor stage and has the size and potential to become a beacon of academic excellence. The building has been designed to expand eventually into a higher secondary school for which BTS is currently seeking government permission.

Thailand – Joe Homan our Friend

This time last year we were celebrating our Golden Jubilee and hosting our visitors from abroad including Dr Anukul, the director of our project in Thailand.

Fond memories of that time with Dr Anukul include: Him laughing as he donned a quilted jacket, scarf, hat and gloves enduring but not complaining about the cold. His enjoyment of the flowers, butterflies and greenness of the Cotswold hedgerows and fields. His broad grin when he tried on a Sherlock Holmes hat and cape, a visit to 221B Baker St was 'must do' on his itinerary.



Anukul with Rosemary and Midge

Fundraising for the Joe Homan Charity

It was such a thrill to count up the takings from my first Coventry Donkey Derby Stall run by the Lions over 40 years ago! I had just joined the local Joe Homan support group and was to experience the joy of fundraising with its challenges and friendships from then to now.

In response to Joe's annual talks about the development of his caring projects in South India we beavered away raising money for wells, cottages, a child labour prevention village and to sponsor needy children.

The Coventry group was founded by two friendly couples who heard Joe talk on the radio in 1972. What a powerful tool that is for spreading the message, and one we would dearly like to use again today. The Board are working on it.

Having had a rejuvenation of our support group, we now do a couple of market stalls, a car boot sale, coffee mornings, a curry evening in November, craft stalls and attend a local village fete annually. All are good money-raisers.

As new media have developed, we hope that interest can be encouraged and more funds raised via the JHC website, Facebook and Text-giving.

The 50th Anniversary, and sadly, Joe's death have seen lots of former friends in Rotary, Round Table, Lions, Churches, Schools, Community Groups and individuals coming forward to support the Memorial Fund and keep alive Joe's vision of helping the poorest of children. **John Bowman Trustee**

His humbleness and gratitude towards those people he was able to meet in the UK who support the Thailand Project. His sadness at not catching up in the UK with his dear old friend Joe.

After his return to Thailand, Anukul went to see Joe and in a subsequent email wrote. *"Joe's death had caused a great deal of sorrow among us here. When I visited him in India early this year I recognized that his health had deteriorated quite noticeable. He was in tears when we said goodbye at the Airport. His tearful last look at me had caused a sense of foreboding in me that that was to be our last goodbye. So, the news of his death didn't come as a big surprise to me. Rather, it had caused me a great deal of sorrowful feeling that humanity had lost a great deal when this greatest, selfless soul had departed. I feel a bit lonely though as I realize that the man who used to walk beside me on the same path had left and I'll have to struggle to keep Boys Town alive without his support like before. I just hope that he is now resting in peace somewhere where the noble souls dwell".*

Two remarkable men who have given a life with hope to so many destitute children – noble souls indeed.

As well as the annual bric-a-brac stall, we used to have book sales, concerts and carol singing. Until recently, carol singing was a regular event, using the same carol sheets from 40 years ago! There was a strict rehearsal session then, but now we just turn up and sing, encouraging the public to sing-along too.

