

# Educare                      September 2007

We will be considering the needs of MKs and other TCKs coming from the newer sending countries in this and upcoming editions. The first article opens up the world of Indian MKs and should cause us to join with our Indian brothers and sisters in prayer and looking for solutions to the challenges that they are facing. The aim is to look at Latin American and other Asian sending countries and any contributions, comments or input would be appreciated that would help us and our families in the vital task of caring for these families.

We also are completing our 3 edition series on cross-cultural families with a contribution from Janet Fraser-Smith on "Pointers from a Punter".

## INDIAN MKs – a Fresh Exploration.

I was born in India to Australian missionary parents, grew up in the hills of Nepal, and attended Hebron School in south India as a boarder from the age of 6 to 15.5. Like many thousands of others in the 1950s- 60s, I was typical of MKs in India at that time, and in some respects I can call myself an Indian MK. But when we speak of Indian MKs today we mean something very different. What is largely unknown, both within India and beyond, is that there are over 35,000 indigenous cross-cultural missionaries in India; it has the second largest contingent of missionaries after the USA. India has twice as many missionaries as Korea! This point will be explained further below, but with such a large number of missionaries there are, of course, many thousands of children of these missionaries – Indian MKs.

Historically India plays an important role in the development of MK education, for it was here that the earliest MK schools were established – Woodstock School north of Delhi is the oldest such school that continues today. Founded in 1854 for the education of girls (initially), it set the pattern for many other famous schools; the Chefoo School for CIM MKs was established in 1881. India spawned many schools in the various hill stations prior to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hebron School (1899) and Kodai International School (1901), both in South India, are the only others beside Woodstock that still cater for 'international' MKs, albeit not exclusively as was the case in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar schools were established in other fields and continents to serve the foreign missionary community; such boarding schools became the norm for the education of MKs.

In the past fifteen years we have seen the mushrooming of 'international schools' as a by-product of globalisation and the spread of multinational companies and their workers – most major cities around the world have one or more international schools (Christian and/or secular) and since most 'Western' missionaries are now based in major cities rather than in rural areas it is natural to choose the local international school over the MK boarding school, despite the higher cost. However the pendulum is swinging back towards the MK boarding schools and many are facing increasing demands for admission.

The contemporary context of India must be understood in order to grasp the current situation for Indian MKs. In August this year India celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> year of independence as the world's largest democracy. It is justifiably proud of its position as one of the fastest growing economies, with one of the world's largest middle class populations and probably the second largest English speaking population after the USA. In many respects India has come of age, and this is certainly true of the indigenous missions movement in the country. Within 200 years of William Carey's arrival in India the Government of India slowly squeezed foreign missionaries (in the Carey mould) out of India – so that by the mid 1980s there were very few remaining on 'missionary visas'. But what is not widely known is that during the 1970s God was working in the Christian communities in the southern states of India – Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka and from here the indigenous mission movement emerged, resulting in what is

today a huge number of missions and missionaries who have moved to the northern states of the country. The Indian Missions Association has over 200 mission agencies – mostly indigenous – representing over 35,000 missionaries, but there are many more independent groups and their workers also – the total number is not known.

At this point we also need to understand what it is that makes these people missionaries. If we go by the basic view that a missionary is someone who is sent by a church to engage in cross-cultural Christian ministry, then these Indian Christians are missionaries within their own nation. Although India is one nation, the reality is that it is the world's most diverse tapestry of disparate states stitched together at the time of the British departure from the subcontinent in 1947. Virtually each of the 30+ states of India has its own ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity. The pervading religious presence is Hinduism, but the secular constitution safeguards large communities of other faiths, including the world's second largest Moslem community of 140 million and a Christian community of 25 million. India's diversity and complexity make it a modern day conundrum, for alongside the realities of a booming economy on the world stage is the stark reality of vast numbers of rural and urban poor and gross inequity of resources and basic infrastructure, especially in the northern states – sometimes referred to as the Hindu heartland. So when a missionary family from Tamil Nadu in the south moves to a state in the north they may not need passports but they will cross several cultural boundaries that ensure that they are truly engaged in cross-cultural ministry. And this means that most Indian MKs are therefore TCKs – as much as I and other 'Western' MKs growing up in India are.

Take the example of a girl we know from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, in south India whose family moved to work with a mission based in Delhi when she was 4 years old. Before leaving Chennai she **mirrored** the local community and culture – she was in every way a Tamilian.

In Delhi she found it very tough. At school as she was regarded as an outsider (from the south) - language, food, culture and ethnicity were all different in Delhi – she even experienced colour racism at school. She had to learn Hindi, acquire a taste for new foods and make new friends - and for some time she felt like a **foreigner**.

After several years in Delhi she made many friends, learnt the language and customs and began to see herself more as a cosmopolitan Delhi-ite than a Tamilian; her roots were increasingly in Delhi and she felt **adopted** and at home in the Delhi community.

After finishing school she returned to Tamil Nadu for college; it was very tough, for although she looked Tamilian, she felt more like a Delhi-ite. She could speak Tamil, but her Hindi was better; she preferred north Indian food to idli-dosai; her social network, friends and her roots were in Delhi, she found herself questioned and not accepted by the more traditional and conservative students and staff - she had returned to her parents' place but had become a **hidden immigrant**.<sup>1</sup>

### **Some challenges of Indian MK education in India:**

India's diversity is reflected in its numerous education systems. Each state government has its own 'exam board' in the vernacular language, with its own curriculum etc.<sup>2</sup> There are two national examination boards that operate across the nation, but these tend to be used by English medium schools, with better standards of education which are therefore more up-market, but also less available in the remote areas of northern India where most of the indigenous mission activity occurs. The legacy of MK boarding schools in India has almost vanished as the majority of the former boarding schools now serve the upper middle class Indian community in the main cities who desire a 'British-style boarding school education' for their children.

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<sup>1</sup> This example illustrates the Pollock – Van Reken model of 'Mirror/ Foreigner/ Adopted/ Hidden Immigrant'; Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, *The Third Culture Kid Experience*, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> India has 22 official languages and 840 minor languages and dialects.

For Indian missionary families serving in remote, rural areas there are few options: the local state government education system in the local language is usually very poor. The former MK boarding schools are too expensive and some of them lack the Christian ethos they once had. Home schooling is virtually unknown in India, but in the early 1990s Premi Koshy of Interserve India introduced a home schooling program known as 'Griha Shiksha' designed to cater for MKs up to 4<sup>th</sup> standard so that children could be with their parents for their early years before going to boarding school. The program ran successfully with small numbers of children (maximum was about 35), but numbers dwindled and it is currently on hold pending a review and feasibility study by Interserve.

Many MKs do study in the local state school system where their parents are located, but this will usually be in a different language than their mother tongue, the standard of education is usually very poor and is steeped in the majority religion worldview. Some MKs return to their home state to board with grand parents or relatives. A few Indian MKs study in Woodstock, Hebron or KIS, but this is far from ideal because high cost, curriculum and the international flavour create other concerns. But in response to the demand of the rapidly growing numbers of Indian MKs there have been several boarding schools established in the past 30 years for Indian MKs, following the pattern of the western missions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> These schools are entirely indigenous; they have very limited funds and resources both for establishment and development as well as running costs. These schools do provide English medium education affiliated to one or other of the central exam boards – which appeals to many families, but the demand for places far exceeds the capacity of these schools.<sup>4</sup>

The Indian mission movement admires and emulates the 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of the modern mission movement such as Carey, Hudson Taylor, Adoniram Judson, C.T. Studd, Amy Carmichael, et al - so much so that Indian missionaries often name their children after such heroes! This admiration includes a strong belief in taking up the cross, denying self, the inevitability of sacrifice and the priority of ministry over family<sup>5</sup>. The corollary is that God blesses and rewards such faith and trust. I understand this admiration and commitment for I am a product of this in my own family and experience as an MK. What I see in the Indian missions community (and also in Korean missions – but that is another topic) is a reflection of the prevailing situation in which I grew up as an MK in the 1950s-60s. Missionary service was 'for life'; furloughs were few and far between; finance was very limited; children went to boarding school throughout their school years and then returned to the (foreign) home country for their higher education whilst the parents remained on the field up to retirement. Sacrifice, deprivation, hardship were all part of the cost inherent in missionary service, as was the separation of families – and under girding all this was faith and trust in a sovereign God who protected and blessed his servants. Of course this is a sweeping generalization, but this was the general pattern. And I say this without cynicism or criticism or any sense of disparagement – I am a product of this and I am deeply grateful for it. Nor am I being critical of the current trend in Western missionary service that has seemingly moved far from that approach, especially with regard to families and children (that is another topic too!). My point is that we see this former ethos and approach to missionary service reflected in the current Indian (and Korean) missionary scenario. It is therefore no surprise that a consequence of this is that MK boarding schools are the preferred option for many Indian mission families. Some mission agencies insist on boarding education for their MKs.

There are two areas of concern arising from all this: **first, the level and standard of residential care in some of the Indian MK boarding schools is disconcerting.** In particular I refer to:

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<sup>3</sup> The schools that I know of are: i) in south India - Santosha Vidyalaya, Dhonavur of Amy Carmichael fame; Kings and Queens School, near Chennai; Anantha Kendra Mission School in Orissa; ii) in north India - Grace Academy, Dehra Dun and GEMS English School, Bihar.

<sup>4</sup> GEMS English School has a hostel capacity of 200+ (mostly MKs), with a waiting list of 700!

<sup>5</sup> Passages such as Lk. 14:26-28; Mt 10:37-39; 19:29-30 are taken and applied very seriously and literally.

- i) The age at which children commence boarding – 5 or 6 is common.
- ii) The ratio of residential staff to children is usually very high (1:40+ is typical).
- iii) The lack of qualified residential staff – often because of poor pay.<sup>6</sup>
- iv) The duration of separation from parents and home – many children at Indian boarding schools can only go home once a year and few missions provide the funds or opportunities for parents to visit their children during the year.
- v) Families and children are not prepared for the boarding school experience, nor is there much experience of ‘good practice’ for the parents and staff to facilitate a positive outcome from the boarding experience.
- vi) The isolated/insular nature of the boarding school means that the children are not exposed to, or prepared for, the outside world when they graduate from school and go to college – we know of many who have found this transition to be very painful and traumatic.

What is remarkable about this list is that most of these points were true of the MK boarding schools up to the 1960s -70s. But the past three decades have seen dramatic changes in the field of Western MK education. Widespread disaffection amongst Western missions with the traditional MK boarding schools led to other alternatives, especially home-schooling and variations of this, e.g. tutorial groups/ schools etc. And when we examine ‘Western’/ international MK boarding schools today we find that most, if not all, of these concerns have been addressed and there is much better and healthier practice than was the case 30 - 40 years ago – with much better outcomes too. The influence of the International MK Conferences and the considerable volume of research and writing in this field have resulted in a huge transformation of attitudes and practice with regard to the education of Western MKs that has affected families, MK schools, mission boards and sending churches. This transformation has only just begun to reach the Indian MK scene.

**Second, I am troubled by the huge disparity I see between ‘Western’ MK schools and the newly formed Indian MK schools.** The former have a long history of development, access to foreign funds (I heard recently of an international MK school in a nearby country receiving a grant of US\$3million) and solid support from Western missions that are committed to seeing that their children are well provided for in every way. The latter are in the formative stages, reliant on meagre indigenous support where MK schools are well down the priority list for allocation of funds, and fees are kept to a bare minimum so that operational costs of these schools is almost a hand to mouth existence. To illustrate this I have written my reflections of visiting Kings & Queens MK school in the state of Tamil Nadu, not far from the international MK school where my own 10 year old son studies. I conclude by observing that, ‘Classroom and dorm sizes, staff to student ratio, facilities, activities, food and entertainment etc. are on a different scale altogether – a world apart, reflected in the difference in fees: what we pay for our son would support 10 children at Kings and Queens. And inevitably hard questions have to be asked: ‘Is this disparity justified?’ ‘Aren’t all these parents serving the same King? Aren’t all these MKs sons and daughters of the same King?’ I find it very difficult to answer these questions, but I need to grapple with them...’ and I cannot escape the hard words of Jesus: ‘To whom much is given, much will be required’.

There is another area of disparity that needs to be mentioned that impacts significantly on the education of Indian MKs. Ruby Mangaldoss, MK Coordinator for Interserve India, has identified 5 levels or categories of Indian missionaries: from the CEOs/ leaders of missions who tend to reside in the major cities of India where the range and availability of good schools is plentiful, to the village evangelists/ ‘assistant missionaries’ who live in the remote corners of India with limited infrastructure, resources and very poor local educational options. Such missionaries

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<sup>6</sup> The common designation for residential staff in India is ‘warden’ – a term that I vigorously oppose because of the negative association with penal institutions (when I was a boy our nickname for boarding school was ‘borstal’ - a reform school in England); I strongly advocate the use of healthier terms such as ‘dorm parent’.

typically survive on 2-3 USD per day and owning a bicycle is a bonus.<sup>7</sup> Within these two extremes there are three other categories with varying educational options available. In the middle are those who choose to send their children to one of the MK boarding schools mentioned above, which is usually seen as a God-sent provision that enables them to continue with their ministry. What is common to all of course, is the (universal) desire that their own children should have a better education than they themselves had.

To conclude, this has been a very superficial overview of the situation regarding Indian MKs and their education. The general lack of awareness of the enormity of the needs in India, both within and beyond India needs to be overcome. The international community must consider ways whereby the Indian MK situation can be helped by strengthening those areas where it is needed, but without compromising its uniqueness. And within India there needs to be greater awareness of better practice in terms of residential care for MKs in boarding schools – by families, MK schools and mission administrators. An important component of this would be to revive and establish a viable home schooling program - Griha Shiksha - to enable MKs to remain with their parents at least until the age of 9-10 before going to boarding school.

It is my fervent prayer that the lessons that western missions took 150 years to learn regarding the education and 'flow of care'<sup>8</sup> for MKs, should be learnt much sooner in the Indian context.

John B.  
Sept 2007

## **Kings and Queens!**

It was one of my more memorable introductions - "Hello brother, I'm King Solomon!" I wasn't sure how to respond: "Pleased to meet you your Majesty"? And if I was his brother, was I also royalty?

Ruby Mangaldoss (IS India MK worker) and I were in Arakkonam, 60 kms from Chennai, for a fleeting visit to Kings & Queens Residential School – a school for Indian MKs run by King Solomon and his wife Mercy. They started the school in a rented building in the town, with 3 children in 1997; last year they moved to a 5 acre site outside the town, with buildings still under construction to cater for the 250+ students, of whom 65% are Indian and Nepali MKs whose parents are serving in 14 different states of India and Nepal.

We were only there for a few hours, but I was able to meet with the 15 or so Nepali children for a chat in Nepali. I was keen to find out about their backgrounds and how they were coping with boarding school in south India. Most of their parents were pastors in eastern Nepal but two families were serving as missionaries in Mizoram! These children only went home once a year - for the summer holiday, and their parents rarely came to visit them for the shorter holidays which they spent at school. I asked them all how they were doing, and apart from the youngest, a 6 year old who seemed subdued, all the rest were enthusiastic and happy and enjoying school life.

We also had an informal session with students in classes 6-10. We met in the newly built hall/ dining hall – a large makeshift shed with asbestos sheeting on the roof and three side walls and mud floor – it had been opened just the day before, along with a few new rooms on the first floor of the dormitory block (more of that below). The students were excited and happy to see some strange faces. I surprised them by saying that although I looked very different, we had much in common: I too was an MK who was born in Bihar, had grown up in Nepal and had been to boarding school in

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<sup>7</sup> Recently I was privileged to meet such a missionary who lives in a remote jungle area. Basic facilities such as running water, electricity and phone are unavailable, nor is there medical help, which proved fatal for his wife who died from the lethal combination of malaria and hepatitis, leaving behind their 3 young children aged 5, 4 and 2. The eldest is now in GEMS boarding school, a day's journey from where their father continues to serve and the 2 younger children are in south India with their grandparents. This sort of sacrifice is not uncommon amongst today's Indian missionaries.

<sup>8</sup> 'Flow of care' is a term used by David Pollock (Interaction International).

Tamil Nadu from the age of 6, going home once a year for the Christmas holidays. I could relate to much of what they were experiencing.

It was night and we had a train to catch at midnight, so after a meal (in the Library because that was where the only tables in the school were (apart from the desks in the classrooms) we were given a quick tour of the dorms. This was a long white building, with the first floor under construction still (3 rooms just completed and dedicated the day before). Each large room on the ground floor accommodated from 25 to 35 children; there were no beds – the children slept on mats that were rolled up during the day because until the hall had been built they ate on the floor in their dorms.

Each dorm had a small adjoining room that opened onto the dorm where the ‘warden’ stayed, and in each of the dorms for younger children there was a ‘dorm aunty’ – a young single woman who slept in the dorm with the children. The only man to supervise the 60+ older boys was King Solomon, so he and his wife occupied a small room adjacent to the senior boys’ dorm – that was where he and Mercy lived. They have no children of their own – the Kings & Queens students are their family.

And that was the impression we came away with as we rattled our way to the station in the ramshackle school van, driven by none other than King Solomon, as the driver was on leave. Here was a school that was severely under-resourced, yet the atmosphere was happy and relaxed. There was an obvious rapport between King Solomon and the children in his care, which was quietly reassuring.

But the other impression I had was deeply disturbing. My days at boarding school in Tamil Nadu back in the 1960s were spartan – we had baths twice a week, slept in bunk beds with hard coconut fibre mattresses, ate bread without butter or jam... but that was all luxury compared to the conditions at Kings & Queens. King Solomon and Mercy serve without respite because of their love and commitment to the cause of missions in India. I asked Mercy when they get time off, and her reply was, ‘We take a few weeks in the summer holidays.’ When I asked about a weekly day off she said, ‘There’s no one else to supervise the big boys, so we have to be here only.’ Throughout the year, 24/7 literally! Later when I asked King Solomon about this he simply said, ‘We have no issues with this. Sometimes if we really need a few days off (as when his father died last December) some of the parents from Chennai come to help.’

What is more disturbing is the unavoidable comparison that has to be made with another MK boarding school not so far away where our 10 year old son now studies, and where I sit on the Board. Classroom and dorm sizes, staff: student ratio, facilities, activities, food and entertainment – are on a different scale altogether – a world apart, reflected in the difference in fees: what we pay for our son would support 10 children at Kings and Queens. And inevitably hard questions have to be asked: ‘Is this disparity justified?’ ‘Aren’t all these parents serving the same King? Aren’t all these MKs sons and daughters of the same King?’ I find it very difficult to answer these questions, but I need to grapple with them, and I would ask you to join me in remembering to pray for King Solomon and his school for Indian MKs.

John B,  
Feb 2007

## Pointers from a punter or two to “NEW parents of MKs”

### Janet Fraser-Smith

*Someone asked me this recently about parents planning to work cross-culturally. “Why is it that people who are going overseas ask me about taking their children overseas? They’ll do it anyway!” My reply was that they want to know if it really is OK, from the experience of one who has been through it. She gave the cautious reply “Hmm” doubtful whether some parents would really take any note of what she said.*

I admit now that I wonder if she was right, that parents on the brink of their own adventure with God don’t listen, or that they listen and hope she’s wrong. Maybe some really do listen to advice, and make every effort to make it good for their own family – we need to pray that this is the case. Do parents expect everything to be OK for “our kids” even if the children of others struggle! Maybe some do, but through the discussion that followed, she gave some significant pointers to help those who want to learn from the experiences of others.

1. Parents going abroad need to know that **their children have extra challenges** which the children and maybe their parents might not find comfortable. It is not always going to be easy or problem-free for their children and it is not possible to know what their particular challenges will be in advance. Maybe parents need to ask themselves, “how important are our children?”
2. Remember that **the challenge of a particular move to a particular child will depend on their age and development** and possibly how many other moves they’ve made to this point.
  - Different ages think differently – (“*just so you know!*”)
  - It is difficult to tell how a child is processing what is happening to and around them, in their progress to adulthood.
  - How they eventually interpret and respond to their experiences is not only dependent on family input and friendships.
  - Parents may expect each child to make the same rate of progress, say in language learning, as other children and any perceived slowness may not be because the child is “dumb”. Let them go at their own speed and let bilingual processes work.
  - Remember that *every child makes their own responses* and you cannot be sure that what they say to you in their teens is how they will feel later, in their twenties, as they process the totality of their experiences.
3. **Children pick up what is going on in their parents lives**, at least to a certain extent. They may note any discrepancy in what their parents say and do and what they’re like. Throw away remarks are stored and reflected on. Perhaps they may not have the whole story and thus take on a burden that isn’t theirs to carry and misinterpret what was said. These things might need clarifying. Perhaps a child was too young to understand the reasons for going to boarding school, or why the money really wasn’t available consistently because of organizational policy.
4. **Children need to be noticed**. MKs may feel the need to achieve more in an effort to gain self confidence and to be worth something to their parents – especially if there is little unsolicited praise due in part to the hardworking nature of their parents’ work and call. They need to have their self esteem built up. (“*How do we know we are important to you?*”)
5. **Swapping educational systems will leave educational gaps**. Parents shouldn’t be afraid to ask questions to see what the child should have covered and needs to catch up on. The reverse may also be true and having covered more than enough; the child may be bored or become friends with those who don’t work.
6. **Parents are bringing up boys (i.e. males) and girls (i.e. females)**. Not kids (as in MKs) Children observe the gender work ethic in the home and the balance of work/family life and hobbies and which parent does what and why and make comparisons with their friends’ families.

It is not just the need to accept and acknowledge the physical changes in their teen years that matters, but also that to be a woman does not equal being a man. Adolescence for girls, in some cultures, is about wandering through the teen years wondering if womanhood is motherhood, or if a woman's *career* means being the carer of the family or if having a paid career means that home making is of lower value. In their overseas environment, perhaps mothering and womanhood is about home. How is the relationship between the role of fathering and of being the main breadwinner (or the one whose call is apparently more important), observed and understood as a model for the boys?

But in all this, there is the need to be open about sexuality and fidelity, the realities of the internet and pressure to live like everyone else. What dynamics of sexuality and expression are they learning from us in the home AND also from the culture in which the parents live and work and in which the children are growing up. For example dress sense. Or, another example, Is "sexy sex" something that only occurs outside of marriage and therefore improper, or *is it in itself* improper? As parents how comfortable are we in handling the Biblical stories of Dinah, Michal, Vashti and Hosea?

6. **The physical act of moving is relatively easy but** even though they appear to have settled in well, it sometimes takes longer for the children "to catch up with" themselves. Grief may be the emotional response to loss but --- "*all we know is that we are excited, nervous, confused and even angry and just want someone to talk to and to be there for us.*" Can someone who is grieving comfort?

*"I really miss a place that I can really call home but it is also true that I feel at ease with anyone who is international. There is this link I feel with them. It helped me to feel at home in my parent's culture as I had some schooling there."*

7. **Established family traditions may be adapted or added to** when the family relocates. When the in-laws come to visit and criticise in front of the children the changes that have been adopted, *how do we answer?* Sometimes these traditions change when the family go back on home leave? How and why does home leave challenge the "norms" of on-the-field family life?

8. **Pay attention to the spiritual teaching and example** within the home. Don't depend on school or church or someone else. Let the children see your own spiritual dynamic and prayer life.

9. **Parenting is about growing adults who have the right to ask adult questions!** As the children grow older and even after they have left home, family conversations in which the feelings surrounding all the moves could take place. "*Why was that time the worst in your life when I was at my happiest? Were you really happy there when it was tough for me? Did you really want M to become a Christian? Why was your call you said was from God aborted by a management decision (e.g. to re-locate)?* It would be helpful to know the lifeline of the parents in order to understand how they got to where they were and to understand their own formation as people.

10 **If a child or a parent is struggling**, don't be afraid to get an outside listener or professional help for them or even ask for family therapy.

**Educare** is a ministry of WEC International and is freely available to all mission and cross-cultural families. Contact either [SteveGill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:SteveGill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk) or [mk\\_tck@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mk_tck@yahoo.co.uk) to request a free quarterly subscription. Anyone who can't normally receive e-mails of this type can contact us by post at Steve & Gill Bryant, 67 Budbury Tynning, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1QE, UK.