

TSN News

Newsletter of the Tsunami Support Network

Co-ordinated by



Volume 1, Issue 8

April 2006

Welcome to TSN News

Welcome to the eighth newsletter of the Tsunami Support Network. This has been set up to help provide opportunities for support for people in the UK affected by the South East Asian Earthquake and Tsunami.

As well as our website (<http://www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org.uk>) and ongoing telephone support (**0845 054 7474**), we hope this newsletter will enable readers to obtain and contribute information, share common experiences and benefit from mutual support. Do contact us if you wish to know more.

About the TSN

The Tsunami Support Network is being coordinated by the British Red Cross which is working closely with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) & the Dept for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). The DCMS is coordinating aftercare for those affected by the Tsunami.

How to Contact the Network

If you wish to receive further newsletters or other general information from us you can call us on the support line number (**0845 054 7474**). Please pass on our contact details to anyone who you feel might benefit from our activities.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Welcome to TSN News
- 1** About the TSN
- National Tsunami Support Group Meeting
- 2** Keeping in Touch
- 2** Closing Discussion Forum
- 3** Fundraising Events: Charity Bike Ride from Saigon to Ang Kor Wat
- 4** Tsunami Poems
- 5** A Year On...
- 6** Café Gallery, Phuket
- 6** Going Back to Sri Lanka – December 2005
- 7** Documentary Seeking Interviewees
- 8** National Audit Office Survey
- attached Keeping in Touch form

Onwards with the Tsunami Support Network

On Saturday 4 March, the Millennium Gloucester Hotel in London hosted the latest meeting of members of the Tsunami Support Network (TSN) and other colleagues. One main purpose of this particular meeting, apart from an opportunity for TSN members to meet collectively once more and to continue to share life experiences, was to begin the process of handing over the running of the Network from the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) to a new independent committee of Network members. The BRCS has however kindly agreed to provide ongoing support to the TSN for a little while longer – in the form of continuing to provide the support helpline and a reduced website, facilitating local support groups and to give ongoing advice to the new committee.

There is much to do and a smaller group of TSN members have been hard at work for some time,

- CONTD. ON PAGE 2

- TSN -

WWW.TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK.ORG.UK
EMAIL: TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK@REDCROSS.ORG.UK
SUPPORT NETWORK ANSWER SERVICE 0845 054 7474

- CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

having first met in January to begin this process of handover. So in London, the Chair of this provisional TSN committee, Robert Brewster, thanked Anne Eyre, Moya Wood-Heath and Ola Rzepczynska for all their hard work and pointed out that the network would not have existed without them. Robert then introduced the proposed TSN committee members and outlined their suggested roles. Officers and Committee Members were then duly nominated and elected with a 'show of hands' by TSN members as follows:

Robert Brewster	-	Chair
Jean Dogan	-	Treasurer
Jackie Weston	-	Secretary
Alan Jones	-	Media Co-ordinator
Allison Arlotte		
Shyam Muhandiramge		
Michael Pitt		
Renuka Marley		
Steve Gill		
Richard Luck	-	co-opted as Co-Chair

The Committee will now draw up the objectives of the Tsunami Support Network, establish the relevant constitution and make more detailed plans for the future. A careful review of all the questionnaires returned by TSN members will be an important part of this. One area that will of course be of keen interest to TSN members would be around what future plans there might be to meet once more. One proposal is that on Saturday 24 June TSN members might gather for a picnic, possibly at Windsor Great Park. These and several other areas (e.g. a permanent memorial) will be discussed in detail by the new TSN Committee at their next meeting on 25 March at BRCS Headquarters in London and the results of these discussions will be put to TSN members at the earliest opportunity.

Alan Jones

Keeping in Touch

At the Red Cross we are compiling a new contacts list which will be handed over to the newly formed support group committee and will replace our current list of contacts.

If you wish to continue to receive communications, i.e. newsletter, details of events and meetings, you will wish to be included in this new contacts list. If so, please complete the form attached with this newsletter and return it to us as soon as possible at the following:

tsunamisupportnetwork@redcross.org.uk or
Ola Rzepczynska, Tsunami Support Network,
British Red Cross Society, 44 Moorfields,
London EC2Y 9AL.

Closing Discussion Forum

As discussed at the last TSN meeting, we are planning to close the discussion forum on the TSN website at the end of March. This forms part of the handing over of the running of the Network to the newly formed committee. It will still be possible for those registered with the Network to be in touch with each other and we invite you to re-register your contact details with the Network if you are keen for this and have not already done so.

Support for British Nationals Abroad

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have launched a new consular guide on Support for British Nationals Abroad.

This is the first time that the details of what the Foreign Office can – and can't – do to help British people abroad have been set out in a single document.

If you are interested in reading this guide go to:
www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Fundraising Events

At the Tsunami Support Network we are keen to know about the fundraising events and memorial funds that many of you have set up with the raised money going towards the rebuilding of various disaster areas.

Please let us know if you would like us to include what you are doing for our future newsletters.

Charity bike ride from Saigon to Ang Kor Wat

My boyfriend Simon and I were on the Thai island of Ko Hong when the tsunami came. We both survived, but I was severely injured by the wave, and had my right leg amputated four days later.

The past year or so, since the wave hit us, has been a strange one. At the beginning, Simon and I were busy concentrating on surviving, coming to terms with our new life and the loss of my leg, and getting back to our new normal. It was only once those goals were substantially achieved that I allowed myself to really think about the tsunami, and the impact it has had on the lives of so many people around the world.

One image of the day of the tsunami that has come back to me over and over again is that of a Thai man who was in the bed next to me in Krabi hospital. I could tell that he was severely injured from the reactions of his family and friends who kept a constant vigil around his bed for the entire time I was in the hospital. I don't know what happened to him, and don't know how to find out.

My father and work colleagues found me in Krabi hospital the day after the tsunami and moved me to a good private hospital in Bangkok where I probably got the best medical care possible. However, my mind just keeps on going back to that Thai man. He wasn't born into a rich country, he probably didn't have health insurance, and as a result of that he just didn't have access to the medical care that I did, medical care that

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undoubtedly saved my life.

The simple fact is that I was incredibly lucky on the day of the tsunami to be living in the UK, to have good medical insurance, and to have people around me who knew the Thai system and who were able to get me to a decent hospital when they did. So many others weren't as lucky as me, and this is something that I have found very hard to deal with since.

I have therefore decided, with a friend, to cycle 500km from Saigon in Vietnam to Ang Kor Wat in Cambodia in November this year in aid of The Cambodia Trust. The Cambodia Trust, amongst other things, provides artificial limbs to amputees in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and East Timor. I feel that by doing this I will at least be doing something small to help people who, through their circumstances, are not as lucky as me.

I bought a bike, with this goal in mind, in January. I was still poor at walking unaided in my prosthesis at that point, and so hadn't even attempted to ride a bike when I bought mine. I did, however, have some sort of blind faith that I would be able to do it if I tried and I luckily discovered that with a bit of help from toe clips my prosthetic foot stayed on the peddle, and I could cycle.

Since then, I have been practicing cycling to work at the weekends, and plan when the clocks go forward, and the nights get lighter, to cycle to work every day. Over the summer I will be attempting to cycle the "Coast to Coast" across the north of England, and have decided that if I can manage that, Vietnam and Cambodia will be a doddle.....(I am optimistic by nature!).

If people are interested, I would be happy to update you on my training in future issues of the TSN Newsletter. In the meantime, if you would like to sponsor me, Fiona Callanan, then you can do this online through my website which is:
<http://www.justgiving.com/fionaandsarah>

Alternatively, you can send a cheque made out to the Cambodia Trust to me c/o Ola Rzepczynska at the Red Cross.

Tsunami Anniversary Poem

Many of you enquired about the poem which was read out by Claire Lester at the Memorial Mass at the Gracelands Hotel in Patong on the 24th December.

It is a poem by Kelly Morgan, from Swinton, Manchester and can be found amongst others on the BBC website:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2005/04/07/ugc_tsunami_poetry_2.shtml

It was Boxing Day 2004
When the world was to change forever more
You and I would swim in the clear blue sea
But soon it would become our enemy
No one knew what it had in store
As the waves started to tumble from the ocean floor
Many people in their ideal place
Were suddenly stared at in the face
By something that could never be understood
The waves destroying their neighbourhood
People watched from all over the place
As families were destroyed without a trace
No one could predict that fateful day
But triumph we will in every way
We will pull together and not be beat
By what might seem a monstrous feat
Flowers will blossom and trees will grow
We will show our god what we all know
Our land will become our own again
And we will not be frightened when it starts to rain
Although we have lost many people we love
We will show those looking over us from above
That we think of them all in every way
Every second, minute and hour of our living day.

Below is another poem which was sent to us written by Michael Harvey in the style of Banjo Patterson, Australia's national poet.

Twas on a sunny boxing day
Quite early in the morn
A great big bloody tremor
Came moments after dawn

No warning bells were ringing
No alarm was raised
The local and the tourist
On the sands they lazed

From a watery beginning
With much increasing force
An unforeseen disaster
Takes mother nature's course

It happened in an instant
No time to take one's guard
That wave of decimation
Hit fast and it hit hard

While we watched in horror
It took all within its wake
Whether man machine or beast
No preference did it take

It seemed to last for hours
By actual minutes it was few
Unforgettable scenes of chaos
For those who made it through

And when it all was over
Once the waters did subside
A couple of hundred thousand
Were taken with the tide
Now it is a year on
And those who happened there
Will make a toast and raise a glass
And say a silent prayer

To all who didn't make it
And those who lost the lot
Please take this one small comfort
You will never be forgot

A Year On...

Richard Luck of the TSN has sent us the interview he gave with Goldlink, the alumni magazine of Goldsmith's College, about his experiences and the tsunami. Claire Norden writes:

Back in November I spoke with Richard Luck about the changes in his life since he lost his partner, Alice Macgill, and her mother, Sally, to the Indian Ocean Tsunami in December 2004.

Richard (BMus 1997-2001) and Alice (BMus 2000-03) had been together for over two-and-a-half years and had recently moved in together. "Alice had just completed her first term of her Music PGCE back at Goldsmiths'," says Richard. "She was really enjoying it, doing something she really loved - getting stuck in, teaching music."

Taking a well-deserved holiday, Alice and Sally had flown to Thailand to spend Christmas with Alice's sister Edith (PGCE 2002-03), and her partner, Matt. "Christmas and New Year is a busy time for musicians, and we both agreed for financial and work reasons, it was better I stay at home," explains Richard. "My main wish was that they enjoy a happy holiday together as a family - and when I last spoke to Alice on Christmas Day, they'd done exactly that. I won't forget that."

The next morning they went kayaking off Ao Nang Beach, Krabi, when the wave struck, claiming both their lives. They were just 23 and 53 respectively. "Completely unexpected, totally out of the blue. We were all devastated..." Richard suddenly left the show in which he was performing to come to terms with this tragic loss. He quickly moved out of their flat.

In February 2005, Goldsmiths' Music Department included in their concert Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasilieras No 1* for eight solo cellos as a memorial to Alice, herself a cellist. "It was such a wonderful evening," recalls Richard. "I'm so

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grateful to the College, and pleased so many of our friends were able to attend. I've had nothing but support from them all." Support has come also from the police, and, of course, Richard's family: "We've grown closer through this experience. Our family is pretty spread out internationally, so travelling and spending time with my brothers has been great."

The British Red Cross has been of particular assistance, establishing a support network for both survivors and those bereaved by the disaster. Together with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, they organised the service of remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral in May 2005 - followed up in September with a reception held by HRH The Prince of Wales, at Highgrove House.

"St Paul's was an incredibly moving day - and a very difficult day at that. But these occasions, together with the network meetings, are so invaluable. They're an opportunity for all those affected by the Tsunami to join together and share our traumas and feelings - something I could not have done without the Red Cross help."

Such is his feeling towards the British Red Cross, he wanted to give something back to say thank you. In early October he completed a 150ft abseil challenge, raising over £400 in sponsorship. "I didn't let it show, but I was probably a bit more nervous than I thought!" he remembers. "It was for a great cause and I'd love to do some more fundraising - I'm currently working on a bike ride across India!"

Richard plans to visit Thailand with Alice's family: "It's something I must do - to know where she was. It's difficult to suggest when we'll go, we'll have to wait and see." Their waiting continues. Though Sally was laid to rest in September, Alice is yet to be identified -

- CONTD. ON PAGE 6

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one of six Britons still unaccounted for in Thailand.

Richard now lives with his cousin in Putney, and is a busy freelance jazz-pianist and keyboard player, gigging regularly around London and currently touring with the WestEnders. He is a workshop leader for Streetwise Opera, a charity working with the homeless. His debut album Shanghai is available now and contains a blend of self-penned melodies and standard material.

A year on, Richard is keeping positive in mind: "Learning to drive, and promoting the album tour is keeping me busy – so I guess the future is far from bleak, I've plenty to look forward to."

To find out more about Richard's fundraising activities, his album and his plans for the future, please visit his website www.richardluck.com

Claire Norden

Opening Café Gallery

Claire Lester and Rin have opened a cafe gallery in Kathu in Phuket on Monday 20th March.

The website for the shop is: www.keimandrian26.com, where you can see Claire's artwork. The latter numbers from about 20 onwards are the Tsunami influenced pieces. You can click on the pictures and see them large and in colour.

In the shop there are also goods made by HIV women and children for sale which will be added to the website in the near future.

Going Back – December 05

We went to the same small hotel in Hikkaduwa, on the south west coast of Sri Lanka. It was heartening to see the same staff and some of our 'tsunami family' with whom we had spent a worrying time in the jungle, during the last week of 2004. The sound of the crashing waves awoke us at night and still caused concern, especially at the full moon.

On 26th December, at 9.20am around 70 surfers paddled out to the big break at Hikkaduwa. They formed a circle, and the waves, often 3 or 4 metres, suddenly calmed for a few moments, as if even the sea was having a moment of reflection of the awesome power that turned peoples lives upside down in less than half an hour.

We had collected money from friends and small businesses in West Cornwall to try to help give some local people a boost, and help them back into employment. We took the Sustainable Trust's small exhibition to events before we left, showing how we hoped to encourage the cottage industry of coir spinning. One of our charitable aims is to promote sustainable development so we joined forces with a local organisation 'The Centre for Environment and Development' in Colombo, who share the same ideals.

A lot of mistakes have been, and continue to be made here. Some of the large aid agencies develop programmes without consulting local people, or take into account local customs and beliefs. Very few places are even starting to be rebuilt. We had hoped to build a simple factory in Madampagama, but houses remained half rebuilt and families were still living in homemade shacks. The electricity supply was also unreliable. So instead we sat through village meetings, and watched the formation of a village council with committees concerned with housing, the coir industry, a youth group

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and children's welfare.

We took water butts to make life easier for the villagers. The wells are still poisoned with salt. We bought shoes and school necessities so that children could attend. We noticed tropical ulcers on children's feet caused by mosquito bites and rotting teeth from too much sugar. Many of the villagers were damaged. One lady had lost an eye, one man had a withered arm, even the cat had been run over and had a deformed leg. At every visit, one elderly lady wept, telling us repeatedly how she had lost everything.

We set up a scheme to provide the raw material for coir spinning to 33 families and arranged the resale of the spun ropes so they could earn a better wage. Some villagers still owed the suppliers for coir that had washed away during the tsunami. They seemed dispirited, having been made so many promises that hadn't materialised.

At every visit they became warmer. We had little language in common, but we found ways of becoming friends. The children want to learn English, so we will appeal for simple words and numbers books, pens and atlases before we return next time. They have a great curiosity about the rest of the world, surrounded, as they now are, by villages built by different nationalities.

The threat of another tsunami is always with these coastal dwellers, exposed to the brutal waves by the removal of coral for building purposes over the years. An early warning centre has been set up without government funding, running CNN news and a meteorological website constantly. The government say they will rely upon the media to warn everyone, but in 3 months I neither saw TV nor heard a radio. It may even happen at night.

Our intentions are to repair the water tower at

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Batapola College, where 5,000 people sheltered in the days after the tsunami, and the building of a community centre, built on stilts, providing a dry working space underneath. It would provide workshop space, educational and medical facilities and an information and distribution point for local cottage industries.

Throughout our travels in Sri Lanka, meeting expatriots, middle class city boys, university lecturers, shopkeepers and hoteliers alike, one question is still on everyone's lips "What happened to the money".

Pip Richards www.sustrust.co.uk

Documentary Seeking Interviewees

A documentary production company called Darlow Smithson is currently working on a documentary about the Asian Tsunami for National Geographic.

One of the film's aims is to better understand why the tsunami was as destructive as it was to both people and infrastructure. To do this, they would like to include the experiences of some of the survivors. These experiences would be featured to enable viewers to empathise with the situation unfolding. They would then be paralleled with the geological phenomena that had occurred.

The filmmakers are keen to talk with survivors from the tsunami in Sri Lanka who might be willing to share their experiences in an interview. If interested please contact the Assistant Producer Hannah Pocock on 020 7428 7835.



National Audit Office

An opportunity to let Government departments know what you think about their response to the Asian Tsunami.

A major survey by the National Audit Office of the views and experiences of UK citizens affected by the Asian Tsunami

In the aftermath of the Boxing Day tsunami, many UK citizens had contact with a range of official organisations and relief agencies – the Foreign Office, the Red Cross, the Department for Culture Media and Sport, the National Health Service and many others. You may already be aware of the National Audit Office's review of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's response which was published in November 2005. We would now like to hear your views: if you are a UK citizen, and were in the affected areas at the time of the tsunami, or if you had loved ones in the area, we would like to ask you to take part in this major survey of your views and experiences.

The survey asks you what the contact with the various organisations was like. What could have been done better and how you think different departments and agencies could and should work together in future in the face of such a tragedy. The results of the survey will help Government departments learn valuable lessons.

The National Audit Office (NAO) is an independent public sector watchdog responsible for reviewing the work of all Government departments and agencies. We make sure that departments provide value for money and that they learn from experience. We have asked The Zito Trust to work with us in developing this survey. The Zito Trust is a highly respected

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organisation with many years of experience of supporting and representing families who have suffered sudden and traumatic loss.

If you would be willing to let us know about your experiences, please follow the links below to find out more and to register to complete the survey. Please be assured that your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and with respect.

To find out more about the survey:
www.snapsurveys.com/asiantsunami

To find out more about The Zito Trust:
www.zitotrust.co.uk

To find out more about the National Audit Office:
claire.fisher@nao.gsi.gov.uk
www.nao.org.uk

To read the NAO/FCO review of lessons learned:
www.nao.org.uk