

# INDIA BLOG 2014

## Thrills on Thursday

Our day began early with a chance to watch a kho-kho final and demonstration of how to play the popular Indian game. As a favourite game now in Southroyd, it was enjoyable to watch the game played on the official marked out kho-kho arena. In front of many house based fans, the girls went first, then the boys, demonstrating some excellent speed, agility and tactics. With the blue team winning both, there were cheers for the blue house and the air full of dust!



Next, it was our turn. Mr Overton and Mr Manton had worked with a large number of children to learn how to play tag rugby - this was the chance for a final demonstration match, putting all the skills together in front of a huge audience. Both teams lined out and soon rugby league had reached Gujarat! Members of the crowd waved their Leeds Rhinos flags, kindly donated by one of our Trust Partners, and the crowd cheered some entertaining and skilful rugby.

The result was that of enjoyment and satisfaction from us, that in our celebratory year of the Rugby World Cup, we had introduced rugby to our partners. In the final assembly

we were delighted to present them with not only the rugby equipment needed, lots of memorabilia, Ronnie the Rhino himself, but also a signed Leeds Rhinos shirt for the school to present. Following our success on the rugby field we turned to some more traditional Indian PE. We marvelled at karate, yoga, drills and human pyramids as the children impressed with their team work and control. A real eye opening range of coordination and flexibility - especially the yoga demonstration of walking on folded toes! Our time in India was rapidly coming to a close. We were invited to the comeback soon assembly, where we were escorted into the main hall by students dressed as guards and overwhelmed with the kind words and well wishes of the smiling children. We shared all the good work from Southroyd classes as well as enjoying the final chant of "Follow Me", accompanied by arm swaying! An emotional and sad farewell but a reminder of the strength of our continuing partnership.

### William Shakespeare Wednesday

Wednesday was soon upon us, and another chance to enjoy life in Bachpan school and the friendly welcome that we've enjoyed. Today was another chance for Mr Overton, Miss Harvey and Mr Manton to teach an ever increasing group of children. Miss Harvey was enjoying some more mental maths with some large class sets and Mr Overton and Mr Manton were pleased to see some good rugby skills emerging on the playground from boys and girls alike.

A new challenge for today was to commemorate the Year of Shakespeare, which will be an important shared event in Southroyd next month. In front of a combined audience of Year 8,9 and 10, we were able to present both some background about William Shakespeare and his Globe Theatre, and a unique Anglo-Indian interpretation of a Midsummer Night's Dream.

The children wore masks to act out the meeting of the Fairy World, Oberon, Puck and Titania, and the mischief it caused amongst the people of Athens. Despite a complex plot, Shakespeare arrived (in some form!) to a wide audience. Meena Ma'am has explained that classes will do some more work on the play and share it with ourselves during Shakespeare Week. Food called. The family of Kushbu, a teacher who will meet everyone in the UK in October, gave us a warm welcome for lunch at her family home. We travelled across the river once more to the family home of Kushbu teacher, to enjoy a lovely meal served kindly by the family in a spacious traditional home. Other Bachpan families in the area soon heard and popped in to see us.

With the failing light, there was one more chance to hone our street cricket skills and burn off some of the ice cream! Incredibly, our small game soon ballooned into a large cricket game involving a number of Bachpan staff and children! Miss Harvey, at one



the best was to come our way!

Having observed some science lessons in school, re-taught some rugby and maths lessons and enjoyed class 1-3 assembly, the gang faced a return walk home on energy saving day!

A surprise was in store. Sanjay Sir, feeling for our comfort in the heat, arranged for an auto-rickshaw to meet us half way - and what a ride! Mr Manton was folded double in the cab, as Mr Overton and Miss Harvey hung on for dear life at the back. What an experience as we were bumped and jostled whilst being waved at by friendly passing cyclist, pedestrians, lorry drivers and more.



### Magnificent Monday

This morning was the tenth anniversary welcome assembly and our first chance to teach in Bachpan. The tenth assembly was a wonderful mixture of dance, poetry, mime and speeches where the children and parents reflected on how important the school's link with Southroyd is to Bachpan. The thoughts of everyone was very moving and looking back there is no surprise that we are the longest serving international school partnership since British Council began the link.

As well as sharing and cutting a tenth anniversary cake, Sanjay Sir and Mr Manton both expressed the importance of the link from their own points of view and looked forward to many happy further experiences and exchanges.

The rest of the morning was an opportunity for working in classes. Mr Overton was

teaching rugby in the sun-baked playground, making the most of morning shadows. Meanwhile Miss Harvey enjoyed sharing the mental maths games enjoyed in Southroyd. What amazing experiences for all!



In the outdoors Mr Overton and Mr Manton have been sharing the exciting game of tag rugby. Children have been learning some important skills leading to a demonstration of a small game of rugby on Wednesday. What a great way to finish off our international project on the Rugby World Cup and share our exciting links with the Leeds Rhinos (sorry, Bull's fans!)

After an incredible experience teaching with classes, sometimes of 50 children, we were able to refresh and prepare ourselves for an evening visit to the family of Keli, who came to England last year.



A perfect chance for your team to play a spot of cricket outside Sanjay Sir's home. Despite the occasional passing cow, milkman, chipmunk, dog, scooter and wedding party, we were able to enjoy a good game with Bachpan teachers. The lofted shot into the lethal thorn bushes became a popular one, with Mr Overton discovering a wider range of dangers to sandaled feet in the undergrowth! Miss Harvey, despite showing some promising cricket skills, decided to employ a hockey stick in her fielding to try and fend off both ball and wildlife.

To complete a perfect day, the fatigued team were hosted by Keli and her family for another mouth watering spread of Gujarati foods. So much kindness and welcome was shared.

Travelling through two huge wedding parties, including two grooms on white horses, we returned back to our beds and reflected on an amazing day.

### Fond Family Food Fun

In the evening we were entertained at the house of Shivani. We drove through the cow, goat and pig filled streets to be welcomed by a sea of smiling faces. The house belongs to eighteen members of a Bachpan family, where extended family live alongside 4 brothers and their own pairs of children. Each family shared the living spaces but had their own bedroom for space. The kitchen was upstairs in this traditional Indian home, with extended family working across the surfaces and floor to boil, fry and pan-fry an incredible range of local foods.

We were welcomed so kindly into their home, with garlands of flowers and gifts, then made to feel so welcome as they served us our dinner. We cannot begin to relate the wide range of dishes that we enjoyed, except to say our eyes were opened to the range of flavours available in a vegetarian diet. All the food products are bought within the local markets and are grown fresh in the adjacent farm lands.

Mouth fresheners were politely declined and the team returned home both full with food and filled with admiration for the kindness and hospitality afforded to us.

### Spectacular Sporty Sunday

What an amazing day! We began our Sunday with a 7:45am appointment at the local farm cricket pitch. Two house teams had qualified for a 12 over match in which Mr Manton and Mr Overton were invited to attend. Miss Harvey was quite happy to enjoy the sunshine and soak up some of the tranquil rural atmosphere. The game soon began demonstrating some high quality cricket skills. Mr Manton was delighted to be able to

play with the skillful yellow team and despite being bamboozled by an over of crafty spin, we were able to score 112 in the 12 overs.

Mr Overton and the greens performed well but sadly at the end of the day, the team fell 20 short. Neels Patel accepted the winning trophy on behalf of the yellow team, from the dignitary Miss Harvey.

With a healthy appetite we were invited to the home of Chaitali Ma'am. Whilst we ate at the table, the family busily served us a wide range of local delicacies. It is traditional to treat "guest as god" which we felt was certainly taken seriously.

After dinner a new challenge, which felt a little like a "Bush Tucker Trial", involved sampling the palette cleansing mouth freshener delights. There are over a hundred different varieties ... for which we have a long way to go. The team all "discovered" the secret of the dried, salted mango seed pulp. Let's just say we won't be bringing any back to Southroyd! Mr Overton accepted a further challenge, in an effort to clean the palette and deter any interest from wild animals, insects, locals, travelling companions etc !!! Despite a valiant struggle, Mr Overton was unable to convince the rest of the party to try one (even though, through tearful eyes, he suggested it was "like a sugary, mango sweet")

After a quick break, the team headed off to visit a local farm irrigated by the river. The farm was owned by an extremely charitable and kind family who provided all their produce to feed local, poor people. We enjoyed some more snacks and toured the incredible farm. Miss Harvey was particularly fond of the cows and Mr Overton was extremely impressed by the size of the local aubergines, known as brynjil.

The team enjoyed a terrific game of round kho-kho, until the sun fell quickly to leave the players in darkness, with a number of rocky obstacles to try and avoid. The speed that the sun falls is noticeable here closer to the equator.

The day is far from over. Would the team face another challenge of eye-watering mouth fresheners before the end of the day?

### Glorious Glittering Garba

We arrived at the Garba for our tenth anniversary to find over 180 children dressed in fantastic traditional costumes, the playground bathed in flood light and a huge sound system. Miss Harvey, Mr Overton and Mr Manton had been able to take their part, with Miss Harvey dressed in a flamboyant and decorative purple and black sari, with Mr

Overton in an aqua-marine chemise and Mr Manton wearing a salmon number.

The children linked their hands to form a guard of honour through which we were able to enter the party place. The music was soon vibrating as we were entertained by some Garba dance routines perfected by both students and staff. Our turn was coming and soon we found ourselves spinning around the floodlit area surrounded by smiles and clapping dancers.



After initially standing on a lot of toes and losing a lot of shoe, we managed to catch some of the rhythms and routines with Mr Overton winning a special prize for the best returning Garba dancer and Miss Harvey the best newcomer. There were other prizes for the best outfits of the day – but none for the dirtiest feet, which would have been ours!

We managed a really enjoyable evening without letting ourselves down too much, and with some regular water breaks we completed a fantastic Garba. We were amazed by some of the incredibly decorative and hand made traditional outfits, worn by staff and children. The Bhangra dancing to end the evening was an enjoyable freestyle challenge (no video available!)

We returned with sore feet to enjoy some of Meena Ma'am's special cuisine. Sleep.

### We're Online

Dear Everyone, We're online ! Huge apologies that we didn't tell you about our exciting visit earlier, but we had a few technological difficulties! We have lots to tell you about Bachpan and will write a full report here soon.



Mr Overton, Miss Harvey and Mr Manton completed an exciting but tiring 22 hour journey to Sanjay and Meena's house in Surendranagar to spend their first day at Bachpan. Despite some long queues in Ahmedabad airport, we arrived at 2:30am on time, before having to wait 2 more hours before we got out of the queues at the airport and 3 more hours to make the tiring drive to Surendranagar.

After a quick wash and mini-clean up, we were invited to join a spectacular welcome assembly with the children of Bachpan. The welcomes seem to get even more spectacular year after year. There were fireworks, rangoli patterns, garlands and tikka welcomes, as well as an amazing assembled group of children delighted to make us welcome. We gave some speeches our selves to the audience and began a tour of the school. In some classes the year group are now split four ways and still have 50 in a class !



### India Partnership 10th Anniversary Plans

Mr Overton, Miss Harvey and Mr Manton will be flying out from Manchester Airport on Friday 14th February. We hope you can follow their blog on this page during the week and find out about their trip. You can email [triptobachpan@leedslearning.net](mailto:triptobachpan@leedslearning.net) to ask any questions you would like ! Have a nice half term.

