



# KEP GARDENS NEWSLETTER

October 2014

Hi Everyone,  
A new school year has started. As much as we enjoyed the month's break, towards the end we were missing all the children and young adults. It was so quiet all day. As I write this I can hear Class 1 kids playing in the playground, laughing, singing and shouting. "OK, 3.00 o'clock," and they come running to the classroom, enthusiastic and wanting to learn. A very special feeling.

## WORLD CHALLENGE

Since the last newsletter we had 2 schools from England visit in August. Highdown School made 2 volleyball courts – one regulation size and a small one for the little kids. The littlies used to use the clothesline which at times became inconvenient so now they have their own. They also made an area for the smaller children, balancing blocks of wood, sandpit and chin up bar.



South Dartmoor Community College made another swing set as the first one was just not enough, 2 seesaws and different size chin up bar. One lad commented to me that when they finished the first seesaw the children didn't know what to do with it so they had to show them. Now they load up 10 to a seesaw. Just as well they are made of thick heavy wood and can take the weight.

Thanks to the teacher, Chris who assessed for us some of the students we were concerned about.





We had a party for each group with Class 4 teaching them Khmer dancing. Both groups joined our Reading and Conversation Programme every afternoon and evening during their time with us.

We had a visit from the Australian co-ordinator who assessed for safety the village activities we run for visitors. She endorsed them all so for the next groups we will be able to offer more Cambodian experiences for the students.

We sincerely hope that all groups returned home with a sense of achievement of having contributed to a playground in which the local village children will have hours and hours of fun for many years to come.

Sopheak and Kimsy did a great job looking after the first 3 groups. They are looking forward to hosting 3 groups visiting in December and 2 in January all from Australia.

We have planted 35 trees throughout the playground. Once they all grow and spread out, the playground will be full of shade. Originally Mr Huch wouldn't plant some of the trees as he said they were trees where spirits lived. They plant a lot of them around pagodas. Off I went to the pagoda to talk to the monks. They said spirits did live in them but they were good spirits so it was OK to plant them in the playground. Mr Huch was happy with this and went ahead and planted them. We are getting some plaques made with the names of the schools that have contributed to the playground and will erect them, each under a different tree.

## EXAMINATIONS

August was also exam time and the end-of-year excursion. This year, for the first time, I had someone to help during the hectic last week. The students performed much as expected and we

were really pleased that the average mark for each class was well over a 50% pass mark although 75% is our standard pass mark. It's good to know we are on the right track.

August also saw the arrival of 3 friends from Australia who volunteered their time with the students. Greg was a great help to Andrew with the trade boys and good company for him.



Jill



Greg



Denise

See you same place, same time next year Denise to do it all again!! Actually had time to enjoy the end of school year this year. Thank you.

Jill is my mentor. She helps in so many behind the scenes ways all year round. Thanks guys for your support and the good times we had together not to mention all the work you did to help.

## END-OF-YEAR EXCURSIONS

This year we went to the movies in Kampot and watched "Despicable Me" which was on a big screen just like the movie theatres in cities. But the seating is better, comfortable lounge chairs, big area like a huge bed with lots of cushions to lie on, really comfortable. The two younger classes also had lunch in the restaurant at the movie theatre. The 3<sup>rd</sup> class came after lunch but had popcorn to munch during the movie. A big day: movie on a huge screen and lunch in a restaurant. Thanks very much to Stefaan at Ecran Cinema and Movie House for making it possible for the large number of kids to enjoy a great day out without breaking the bank.

## CAREER STUDENTS

You will have received the fundraising request for our Career Students for the coming year. All 4 of them are trying very hard and doing remarkably well in their assessments and yearly exams. We need \$10,000 to support the 4 students for one year. **Thank you very much to the people who have donated so far but we need many more to join us to reach our total. Become part of the experience.**

## NEW SCHOOL DESKS

The beginning of the new school year saw 144 students enrolled for the coming year with very few new students except for the young class. Nobody is leaving so consequently we had to turn many away as usual.

To accommodate large classes Mr Huch and crew had to build many new school desks. This project evolved into a wonderful community effort without which it would not have been possible. The thanks of us and our students go to the following supporters who assisted: BeMore volunteers, John Kennedy, KKC Recycling, Veronica's Kitchen, Riverside Hotel, Kampot Pie and Icecream, Curly, Bokor Mountain Lodge, Yvonne and Inge.



## NEW LIBRARY

We have turned the bike shed into the new library. We tiled it, put posters and a whiteboard on the walls, added a verandah and put in lights. We also installed a blind that is pulled down in the evening to stop moisture and rain from wrecking the books. This will be the home of the new story reading and playgroup. This area will also be able to be used as a small classroom. This gives us two extra areas with whiteboards which

enables us to split the larger classes when we have volunteers. Also a notice board for the students to use, we'll sell our new teeshirts from there, hopefully it will become the hub of extracurricular activities at Kep Gardens.



**Live your life in such a way that when your feet hit the floor in the morning, Satan shudders & says...**

**"Oh no....she's awake!!!"**



## STORY READING AND PLAYGROUP

Cambodian people do not read for pleasure, only if they have to for study. The fact that books have not been available for many years is probably a big reason - Pol Pot burnt them all!!! To try to instill a love of reading and learning that may continue during their life, we have started a story reading and playgroup for children 1-4 years old twice a week. Kimsy is running this group. She is very keen and does lots of preparation work before each session. The group is Khmer story reading followed by games, songs, painting and crafts, playing in the playground – lots of fun things with books as the basis of everything we do. Parents, grandparents or other relatives are encouraged to run some sessions. If they can't read they tell stories passed down through the family. We found some small desks and tiny chairs which Mission Australia put into our container to fill it up. We will set them out under the shade next to the library for their activity time as the first session tended to be too crowded in the library.



This area is Kimsy's domain. Apart from running the story reading and playgroup in the mornings she will be our Librarian in the afternoon.

Many thanks to Veronique, Maarten and their friends for buying Maarten's musical CD (rock music, not bad, I like it) and raising the funds to enable us to turn the bike shed into an amazing place. In the next week or so I will go to Phnom Penh on the weekend to buy many Khmer books to replace the mouldy copies but also many fact books that the older classes are requesting

We had 12 little ones for our first day. At one stage we had more dogs than children! Spare Dog's owners walked from the village and so all Spare Dog's puppies and a couple of other ring

ins followed and came along too!! She wasn't that thrilled to see them. Neither was I. It was pleasing to see so many turn up on the first day. We are sure that as the word spreads more will take up the opportunity. We are going to split the group anyway into two sessions – 6 and 6 and as more attend spread them evenly between the two groups.

### TRADES TRAINING

The trade guys' biggest job so far has been moving and reconstructing a wooden Khmer house. All trades: carpentry, plumbing, electrical, bricklaying etc. have been included in this job. Great experience for all the team. The house is traditional but with a few western luxuries thrown in: windows, bathrooms, electricity.

While Greg was here, in addition to his company and friendship, he was able to pass on part of his significant knowledge of welding to two of our staff, Mr Rin and Mr Rit. Since Greg's departure they have been extremely keen to undertake any welding work that became available and their skills are improving enormously. We have received our first welding job for a replacement large main steel gate. Many thanks to Greg from all of us on the construction team.



I have to share this with you.

For those who have been here, you will know Johnny, Choun's nephew who is 5. He has started English school. He runs everywhere, fights everything and everyone. He's been running around Kep Gardens since he was able to walk. For the last 2 years I have been dreading the day when he was old enough to start school!! His cousin is also in the young class. She is 6. She said yesterday that she is not going to get engaged in the day, she is going to get engaged in the night because Johnny won't be awake then so he can't come.

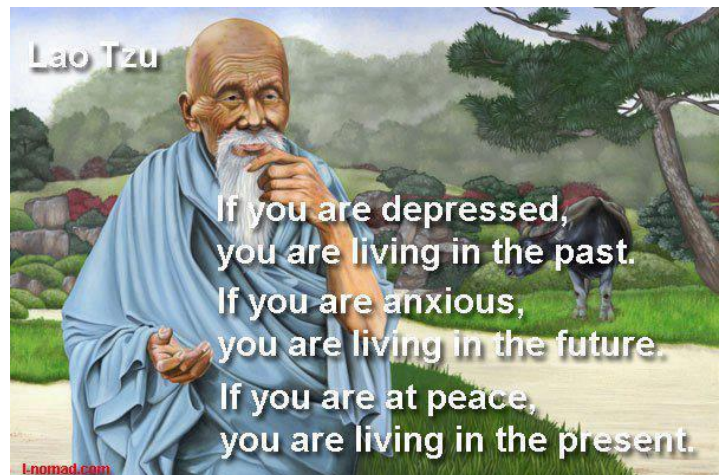
### MENAGERIE

Try as I might, I couldn't get a better photo of the dogs so that you could see how the puppies have grown. As soon as we called them together it was time to play fight and have fun. Of the 3 together, the 2 darker ones on each side are the puppies, Spri and Coca, grown so much!! The whitish one in the middle is Spare Dog. Fido is looking on at the 3 of them.



Hope all is well with everyone and that you are enjoying life and all it has to offer.

Cheers,  
Janine and Andrew



Encouraging to see the library packed every afternoon with the younger children wanting to borrow books. Have to work on the older students to get them more involved but hopefully the fact books will help them with their Khmer school studies so will entice them in.

