

ASIAN GUIDES IN DISTRICT CELEBRATION

Thirty Asian Guides from the newly - formed company at Greenham entertained 150 Guides and Brownies from the Kennet Vale District for the annual Thinking Day celebrations at Kennet School on Saturday. The Asian girls in their national costume delighted their audience with traditional songs and dances.

And it was fitting that they should have been there, for Thinking Day is when Guides think of their friends throughout the world.

Companies took part in a competition to provide a cooked dish, dance, song and national costume of a country of their choice. Winners were the 2nd Cold Ash Company, which is attached to St. Finian's School.

Re-united Asians shed tears of joy

SOME of the stateless Asian men who are now being allowed into this country have this week been re-united with their wives and families at the Greenham re-settlement camp.

By yesterday nine of the stateless refugees had moved into the camp to start planning a new future.

They have been at refugee camps in countries throughout Europe waiting for permission from the British Government to come and join their families who have English passports.

Mrs. Ruby Beyts, wife of the camp administrator, said the arrival of the men had brought many tears of happiness among the worried wives.

The Uganda Resettlement Board yesterday rejected a report that the Greenham camp was to close by the end of May.

A spokesman said that there were no plans yet for the closure of Greenham which is currently housing 941 refugees.

Two of the other six camps are due to close during March and it is quite possible that Greenham will take some of the remaining refugees from these.

MP to question minister on future of Asian camp

LOCAL MP Mr. John Astor is to question the Minister of Defence about the possibility of converting the Ugandan refugee re-settlement camp at Greenham into cheap accommodation for local people.

Since the camp opened in October a number of local people have suggested that the barrack blocks at RAF Greenham might eventually be used to ease the local housing shortage.

And this week a national newspaper revealed that the Government have been considering a scheme involving some of the 16 refugee camps which were set up around the country.

The plan was abandoned after talks between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Defence. But several MP's are pressing for the matter to be looked at again.

Mr. Astor said on Tuesday that he is not one of the MP's who are planning to ask questions on the subject in the House of Commons.

But he feels it is "an interesting idea" and he

promised to make enquiries with the Minister of Defence about the future of Greenham.

"I think the whole thing will probably rest with the American Air Force who lease the land from the Ministry of Defence," he said. "But certainly Newbury has a housing problem and it is an idea worth considering."

Any scheme for providing housing at the camp would be welcomed by Newbury town councillor Dick Easterbrook who was one of the people who suggested it when Asians first moved in.

He was strongly opposed to any proposal of giving refugees priority on the local housing list and said he did not see why the same efforts could not be made to help the local homeless.

"I think this would be a splendid idea to ease the local housing situation," he said on Tuesday. "It might perhaps provide short-term accommodation until people are able to find a permanent home."

The *Daily Express* revealed on Monday that Whitehall officials had abandoned the scheme because most of the camps involved were too far from areas of employment, schools and other amenities.

But this has not satisfied MP's who believe that there are many young people with cars who would be only too happy to commute.

Some of the camps — like Greenham — are only a few miles from towns and the MP's say that bus services could be laid on.

Workmen toiled around the clock to convert the 60 barrack blocks into units suitable for the Asian families. The camp has been able to accommodate more than 1,000 refugees at a time with food provided by a catering firm in the American servicemen's canteen.

Yesterday there were 76 Asians at the camp and the Uganda Resettlement Board said they had no information on when it was likely to close.

* UGANDAW
ASIATICS

5th April 1973



...n looked for jobs and children went to school there was little for Asian women to do at Greenham. So Volunteers set up a special recreation room and here they enjoy a cookery session.

Asian committee chairman Capt. A. Q. Meer serves a young girl at a shop which has been opened at Greenham.

3,700 start a new life at camp

IT IS NOW more than six months since a ragged and tired busload of Ugandan refugees arrived at RAF Greenham in the middle of the night. Since then a lot more have moved in, many have left — and some are still there.

In those first six months 3,700 Asians have started a new life at the camp, leaving behind the terror of a country where they were beaten, raped and robbed.

Greenham has provided a place to recover and to plan a new future with the help and guidance of a team of hard-working officials.

They have been led by a man ideally suited to the job of camp administrator. Brig. Bill Beyts was born and brought up in India and when he heard that refugees were to come to this country he told Home Secretary Mr. Robert Carr that he would be glad to help in a re-settlement scheme.

In September he and his wife Ruby left their cottage in Devon to open the first refugee camp at Stradishall in Suffolk. A fortnight later that camp was running smoothly and they were asked to move on to Greenham.

"It all seems such a long time ago," says Brig. Beyts. "I remember it was near panic at first — it was bewildering.

"When we first arrived I thought it was absolutely hopeless with so much to do in such a short time. I could not see us getting it ready for at least a month let alone a few days."

Worries facing the Brigadier included a central heating system which hadn't been in use for several years, a sewerage system which it was feared might be overloaded and a big upheaval in the American servicemen's canteen for the changeover from "hamburgers to curries."

To make matters worse he was unable to find a catering contractor until a few days before the camp was to open. The first refugees were due to arrive at 8 pm on Sunday October 1. At midnight the volunteers were still waiting in the cold.

Within a few hours, however, not one but several buses had deposited refugees clutching what remained of their belongings. Life began in earnest for the camp.

At first some members of the volunteer team worked up to 20 hours a day seven days a week and Brig. Beyts spent more than one night on a sofa in his office.

"It got to the stage eventually where if we did have time for a decent rest we couldn't sleep because we weren't used

By
Barrie Hedges

the "magnificent efforts" of all his staff.

But there has been one other very important factor in the triumph — the gratitude and willing co-operation of the Asians who formed their own committee to help with administration.

"It would be wrong to accuse these people of sitting here and taking everything with both hands," says Brig. Beyts. "They are really anxious to leave but the housing shortage is making it very difficult."

This week there are just over 700 Asians at Greenham. In addition to finding new homes and jobs for them, camp officials also face the difficulties of re-settling some "problem" cases including the elderly, the disabled and families with no fathers.

There are about 10 families who have been at the camp since it opened. Men like Abdul Butt have begun to wonder if they will ever find a new home.

Abdul has been lucky enough to get a clerical job with Barclays International in London and he has been quickly promoted. But while he stays with friends in London during the week, his wife and four children have to stay at Greenham because a house cannot be found for them.

"I am not very disappointed really," he says. "I know that everything possible is being done to help me and I am still hopeful of getting a house.

"But wherever I go I will never forget the people here in Newbury. I have been to this country before and travelled all over but I have never met such friendly people."

The refugees have become so friendly with the Alder Valley bus drivers and conductors going to and from the camp that they regularly invite them into their barrack blocks for a cup of tea between journeys.

Asian committee chairman



It was like Christmas all over again for refugee children when toys were handed out to keep them busy over Easter holidays.

One of the most successful aspects of camp life has been the school and further education classes run by South Berk. College.

Present headmaster is Mr. John Green who has recently returned from three years of teaching in Kuwait. Before that he taught at Kintbury Primary School and immediately before taking over at Greenham he spent a term at the new Fir Tree Primary School in Newbury.

Numbers during the last term have fluctuated between 320 and 220 with 12 members of staff to cope with the youngsters.

He explains that the aim of the school has been not only to continue the education of the refugees but also to help them settle into the English way of life.

"The majority have settled in well and they are very eager to learn. There have been on or two problems one would not get in a normal school like children having time off translate for their parents holy days but they have been nothing to worry about."

Older youngsters have already met with considerable examination success at the college and more are sitting O and A levels this summer.

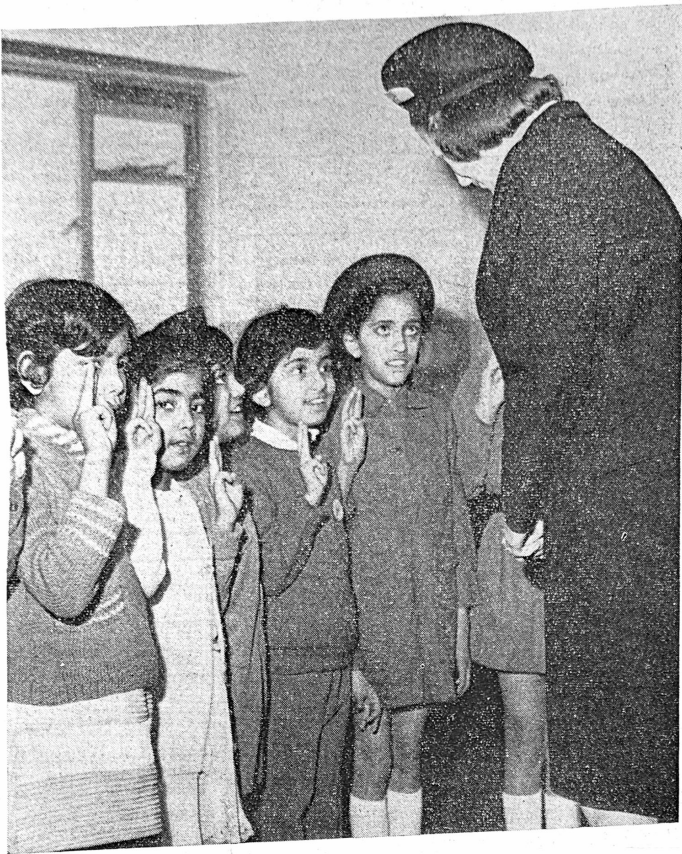
The question hanging over the heads of the candidates at the moment is whether the camp will stay open long enough for them to be able to take their exams. Brig. Beyts is confident that it will.

One particularly bright scholar from Greenham has recently moved on to attend public school at Marlborough. The governors were so impressed by his ability that they agreed to provide money for his clothes and other needs as well

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19.4.73.

Asian Guides greet a VIP



A VIP welcome was laid on for Mrs. Derek Parker Bowles, the Guide Association's Southern division president and Chief Commonwealth Commissioner, when she visited the recently formed Guide and Brownie companies at the Asian resettlement camp at Greenham on Wednesday last week.

The companies were formed in December and since Christmas they have been run by Miss Lillian Curtis and Miss Nellie Pritchard, both from Andover Road, who were once Middlesex Guiders.

Miss Pritchard said all the girls were very keen on the Movement, and there were more children than could be coped with.

Mrs. Parker Bowles was accompanied by Mrs. Elizabeth McCaig, Guide Commissioner for the Southern division. It was the first such visit to the camp and the visitors spent their time looking at the activities that the children were engaged upon.

Miss Curtis and Miss Pritchard have introduced the girls to most of the aspects of Guiding, and many of the neighbouring companies have helped by sending uniforms.

The children meet every Wednesday evening and it is hoped that when the children leave the camp they will continue in the Movement by joining companies near their new homes. At present there are about 20 Brownies and 40 Guides at the camp.



While men looked for jobs and children went to school there was little for Asian women to do at Greenham. So Volunteers set up a special recreation room and here they enjoy a cookery session.

3,700 start a

Asian camp closing next month

THE Greenham re-settlement camp for refugee Asians is to close on June 30, it was announced yesterday.

Refugees still at the camp on that date will be transferred to one of the three remaining centres elsewhere in the country.

Announcing news of the closure, a re-settlement board spokesman said they were very pleased with Greenham's "excellent" record in finding new homes and jobs for the refugees.

Camp administrator Brig. Bill Beyts said "This has been one of the happiest and friendliest camps of them all and our re-settlement record is by far the best."

In the months since the camp opened at the beginning of October nearly 4,000 Asians have arrived at the camp and only 587 of those remain there.

It was also revealed this week that there is no prospect of the barrack blocks which have housed the Asians being used in the future to help the local homeless.

In a letter to local MP Mr. John Astor, the Parliamentary under-secretary of state for defence for the RAF, says the accommodation at Greenham is "unsuitable for civilian housing."

Mr. Astor said he was "disappointed" by the reply.

LAST ASIANS LEAVING

GREENHAM

28.6.73.

The Asian re-settlement camp at RAF Greenham closes tomorrow when the last of the refugees will be moved to one of the two remaining centres.

Yesterday a fleet of removal lorries was busy taking the Asians' belongings out of Greenham.

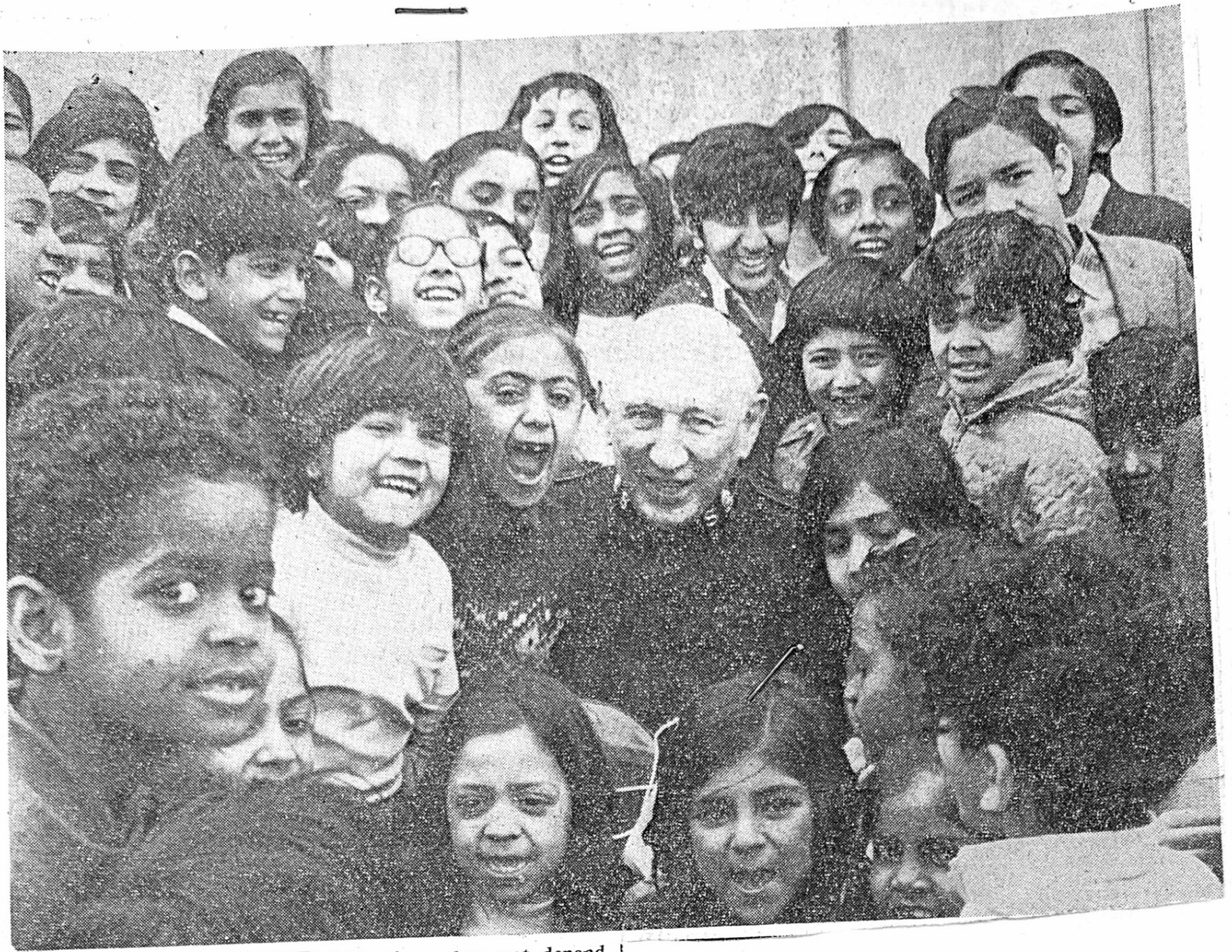
A batch of 91 refugees left on Monday and the remaining 263 will be moving today and tomorrow.

Mrs. Ruby Beyts, wife of administrator Brig. Bill Beyts, said yesterday that many of the refugees are sad to be leaving the camp but realise that it is inevitable.

"My husband and I have very much enjoyed our work here," she said. "We have a very good re-settlement record with 12 out of every 13 Asians found new homes and jobs."

Brig. and Mrs. Beyts will be staying at Greenham until the middle of July to supervise clearing up arrangements.

28.6.73



"Happiness does not depend on where you are . . . it depends upon the state of your heart," the British Commissioner of the Salvation Army, Kaare Westergaard, told the Asian children when he visited the resettlement camp at Greenham on Wednesday of last week.

Mr. Westergaard, who arrived at the resettlement camp in time for lunch with Brigadier Bill Beyts, the camp's chief administrator, was made British Commissioner in 1972, and has spent a lot of his life working with young people.

After lunch the Commissioner was taken to the school buildings where about 250 Asian children were already seated on the grass awaiting his arrival.

He talked to the children of his native country, Denmark, and of the country's famous author, Hans Christian Anderson. Many of the children had not heard of him before and so the Commissioner promised, when he returned to London, to send some of his stories to the children.

He also made visits to the Asian Committee, who help run the camp, as well as to the South Berkshire College in Newbury, to meet the Asian students studying there.

Later in the afternoon the Commissioner and his wife met the Mayor, Coun. W. Cannings at the Municipal Buildings.

In the evening he led a service of Thanksgiving for 91 years of Salvation Army work in Newbury, at St. Nicolas Church. Music was provided by the United Salvation Army Bands and Songster Brigades.

*Greenham
Camp. visit.*

April 5th 1973