

Rigul Trust Newsletter 9 Spring 2014

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Dear Friends

We would like to share some of the events, activities and highlights of Rigul Trust and Rigul, Kham, Tibet, the birthplace of Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, that we encountered in the past year.

It is with great gratitude, appreciation and heartfelt thanks that we wish to thank all of you on behalf of Ringu Tulku and the people of Rigul, Tibet, for your help, support and generous donations throughout the year. We are able to continue funding the health clinic and the school in Rigul. Funding Rigul school and health clinic is our priority, year in year out and with your great help we are able to successfully fund the school and the health clinic.

RIGUL SCHOOL

We wish to thank everyone for their kind-hearted, ongoing support and generous donations for the children and the school in Rigul, Kham, Tibet. Since the school was built in 2006, many children have benefited from an education, some going on to higher studies and becoming useful members of the community. This progress is even more remarkable knowing that most people in the area for miles around are illiterate. The parents and the community are now witnessing the value and importance of education.

Message from Ringu Tulku in February 2014:

“There's good news in Rigul - the whole winter, for several months they had classes for older students coming back on vacation from different schools in China and different parts of Tibet.

They made classes in Tibetan for grammar and poetry. They really studied well and they improved their Tibetan grammar and writing skills and so on. They also had tests and received certificates and things like that.”

Visit to Rigul by Francois Henrard - October 2013



Francois arrived safe and sound in Rigul, Tibet on October 14th.

Francois' Report of his Visit to Rigul, Kham in October 2013

Last October I was lucky enough to return to Rigul. It was my 7th visit there but the first in three years.

Since it is easier to communicate with the local people thanks to modern technologies, it is not necessary for me to go there every year anymore.

Among the many things that changed, the 1st one I noticed was the condition of the roads once you reach the Himalayas. It is now possible to travel from Chengdu (capital city of the Chinese province of Sichuan) to Rigul in 2 long days instead of 3. On my way, the weather was nice, the sun was shining and from the bus and car windows I could fully enjoy the colours of autumn in the valleys. A lama from Rigul came to meet me at Dzogchen monastery and we drove together for the remaining 2 hours to Rigul.

On my arrival, I was warmly welcomed by the school students and staff who covered me with katas (traditional Tibetan scarves). During the next ten days, I spent time visiting the different projects that the Rigul Trust is supporting there.

THE SCHOOL

The major change at the school is very recent. As the Chinese authorities have decided, about 60 school children have been sent away to a boarding school. The young girls and boys leave every Monday morning for the boarding school in Wangdu, 25 km away from Rigul. They only return on Saturdays at noon. This decision was so recent that people were still adapting to it. Actually, since I was there, some children have been allowed to attend our school again. The young pupils are as cute as always and still as motivated and loud, as you can see on one of the videos we posted on the link below. They still receive two free meals per day that they take with their teachers in the newly built dining hall. It is really nice to see them all, children and staff, live together as if they are part of the same family.

(In November, later news came in after Francois had left Rigul that at the request of the Rigul parents to the government authorities, 30 of these children will no longer have to go to the government school but continue their education at Rigul school.)

The new headmaster, Dura, is doing a very good job running the school with the help of the teachers and cooks. Khempo Karma Senge generously offered a pick-up truck for the school that they use to go to town regularly to get food and other school supplies.

Scenes from Rigul elementary school

<http://vimeo.com/88331377>

THE SHEDRA

More than 60 young monks who attend the shedra do not only come from Rigul monastery ; many of them come from other monasteries in the area which do not have a shedra. Monks sleep 2 per bedroom and there is a shared kitchen (a wood stove and a few stencils) for 2 rooms. They cook their own food, in spite of their busy schedule.

Twice a day, they have debate classes where they practice dialectic and deepen their understanding of the Buddha's teachings. They question each other punctuating their arguments with demonstrative hand gestures.

The shedra

<http://vimeo.com/87765511>

THE CLINIC

Ani Choden and doctor Chuga are still running the clinic. I was told that everything is going well there even if they could always do with more equipment.

Actually, the clinic was very quiet during my stay since Dr Chuga was very busy working at the stupa that is being built in memory of Ringu Tulku's uncle who passed away in 2012.

THE STUPA

Rigul stupa project - to commemorate the life of Ringu Tulku's uncle, Thondup Dorjee, who passed away in September 2012.

Dura kindly put the school car at my disposal and I was able to visit a few places and monasteries in the vicinity. I had a very interesting visit at Shechen monastery. A major learning centre until the 1950s, Shechen monastery is slowly being rebuilt in all its splendour since the last 20 years. I was taken on a tour by the khempo responsible for the construction of the new temple. They also have a shedra, a school and a retreat centre, far bigger than in Rigul. I think people from Rigul and the Rigul Trust could learn from and share experiences with the people who run the projects there. One point I raised with the khempo is very dear to me. It concerns the amazing amount of waste and litter that one sees in Kham nowadays. Soft drinks in plastic bottles have become very popular but disposing, collecting (not even mentioning recycling) is totally non-existent. Even in the most remote valleys, you will see plastics, bottles, cans lying in everywhere, on the open field and especially along roads and in the rivers. I think there is an urgent need to educate local people about home waste.

Francois has also forwarded this message from Khenpo Senge of Rigul, Kham about the Rigul children:

I want to express my appreciation to all the sponsors and Rigul Tulku Rinpoche for the selfless support, love and care to the Rigul children and in school during all these years! Up to now, we have over 50 children entered the public schools and/or monastery for higher grades studies after studying in the Rigul school. Some of them are even in high school or colleges. The atmosphere is very good in our hometown, children are learning languages in Chinese, Tibetan, and English; Studying Tibetan culture and Buddhism.

People in the villages now all understand the importance of the children getting educated, as children are the hope of the future. It's really a wonderful change we can see today, which is exactly in line with the initial intension of establishing the school. We will continue this important work, letting more children receive an education at a young age, help them cultivate good ideology. Please continuously give us your great support!

Best Wishes, Khenpo Senge" – of Rigul, Kham

THE FIRST EVER TOILETS IN RIGUL

These toilets are for the school and there is a boys and a girls section. There is a very good water closet system in operation for these toilets.

The cost of building these toilets is higher than in the big cities in China because of the high cost of transporting the resources, equipment, material and technicians from afar over the mountains to remote Rigul. And this can only be done in the summer months because of the very harsh winters.

CORBY COUNCIL ADOPTS RIGUL VILLAGE - SEPTEMBER

Corby in Northamptonshire has become the first council in the UK to 'adopt' a Tibetan village.

On 19 September, Corby Council voted to 'adopt' Rigul village in eastern Tibet. Council members now plan to raise funds for health and education projects in Rigul, as well as highlighting the human and civil rights issues affecting the people of Tibet. The adoption of Rigul, a remote village high in the mountains of Kham (and now part part of China's Sichuan province) was the idea of Councillor Bob Riley. Councillor Riley came across the idea in France having already been aware of the issue through the annual raising of the Tibetan flag on 10 March in nearby Northampton.



From left, deputy leader of Corby Council Jean Addison, Margaret Richardson of the Rigul Trust, Paul Golding, of the London-based Tibet Society, and Cllr Bob Riley

The adoption process is similar to twinning but requires no funding nor formal approval from the Chinese authorities. As such the council can choose to do what it wishes in terms of promoting the adoption. Members of Corby Council hope to put on cultural and fundraising events in the future, to raise funds for projects which will benefit the people of Rigul as well as promoting the issue of Tibet in general.

Councillor Mary Butcher said, "These are a peaceful people who are losing their way of life.

This is a way of showing that we care." Tibet Society supports the adoption process and congratulates Corby Council on taking this positive step to helping the people of Tibet. No public funding will be used but it is hoped residents and groups in the Corby area will support fundraising for Rigul's school and health clinic, established by the charity, the Rigul Trust.

UK REFUGEE WEEK - JUNE

THE TIBETAN EXPERIENCE - PUBLIC TALK BY RINGU TULKU

Ringu Tulku kindly gave a public talk about his escape with his family from Tibet, and a response to invasion and living in exile that was rooted in Buddhist values.

The event was privately sponsored so that 100% of all donations could go to Rigul, Kham Tibet to the monastery, school and health clinic. Ringu Tulku is still the abbot of Rigul monastery and has to operate from a position of exile and lives in Gangtok, Sikkim, India.

Refugee Week was a UK-wide programme of events that celebrated the contribution of refugees to the UK and promoted better understanding of why people seek sanctuary. Since being invaded in 1949, more than 1/6th of Tibet's population of 6 million have died as a direct result of the Chinese occupation, and over 150,000 have fled into exile as refugees. Despite watching the systematic destruction of their national independence, culture and religion, Tibetans have not looked for retaliation but have sought peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect. In 1989 HH Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this non-violent response. As he says...." Violence can only breed more violence and suffering. Our struggle must remain non-violent and free of hatred. We are trying to end the suffering of our people, not to inflict suffering upon others".

Thank you very much to all the people who have kindly donated, contributed, offered their services and helped Rigul Trust in 2013.

Here are some of the ways that people have helped:

1 Donations by monthly standing orders through the bank, cheques by post and online donations by PayPal.

Offering donations from centres/groups hosting teachings/talks by Ringu Tulku at Totnes, Southampton, Bosham, Holy Isle, Summer camp, Stafford Dharma Group.

2 Art exhibition - The Directors of Crane Kalman Gallery had an Exhibition 'BEHIND THE PICTURE'. Paintings and Narrative by Simone Sandelson from Friday 15th March – Saturday 6th April 2013

Simone Sandelson so very generously donated the proceeds from the sale of her giclée prints to Rigul Trust and The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. And Simone also donated the proceeds from the sale of her painting, 'Tibetan Boys', to Rigul Trust for helping to fund the school and clinic in Rigul.

3 Bodhicharya North America

When Ringu Tulku toured the USA in April, Spafford Ackerley kindly agreed to print some Rigul Trust flyers in the USA and distribute them Denver, Boulder, Brooklyn, New York, Tulsa and all

the centres that Ringu Tulku was teaching at. We wish to thank all those who helped to raise awareness for Ringu Tulku's humanitarian work in Rigul, Tibet where Rinpoche still has his monastery of which he is the abbot in exile.

We wish to thank Paul O'Connor for designing the flyers.

4 Transcribing, editing

We would like to thank Nick Burton, Jet Mort, Mariette van Lieshout and Kate Cunningham for transcribing some audio recordings of Ringu Tulku's teachings and Pat Murphy for offering to edit a Tara text from a teaching by Ringu Tulku.

5 Nat West bank, Edinburgh – kindly sent a generous donation collected as a result of their monthly dress down day. Rigul Trust was nominated by Dawa Harris, a member of this bank.

6 ARTfombra

ARTfombra is a series of artist designed carpets made with well known Basque artists.

5% of sales from the ARTfombra series go to Tibetan charities inside or outside of Tibet. 2.5% has always gone to Rigul.

The shop is called Nómada and is located in the Calle 31 de Agosto, 24 between the historic churches of San Vicente and Santa Maria in one of the streets with the best pintxos (tapas) in San Sebastián (north of Spain).

For further information [click here](#) | Alistair Baird y Nerea Aguirre

7 Home made jewellery and cards

Andrew McConnach, Sue Forsyth from Sussex and Christine Mclean from Glasgow kindly made greetings cards and offered them for sale with all the proceeds going to Rigul Trust.

Christine also donated some of her home made jewellery to Rigul Trust for raising funds for Tibet.

We welcome your service, help, donations and advice.

Wishing you all the very best. Be happy, be joyful, go well,

Margaret Richardson
and the Rigul Trust team