

## Chris Anthony India Diary 2014

12<sup>th</sup> January – 17<sup>th</sup> February

*Any writing in italics are just comments about what I am doing at the time of writing.*

**Sunday Jan 12<sup>th</sup> / Monday 13<sup>th</sup>** . *Writing at end of my first full day in Tirupati – waiting for Subramanyam to come for dinner. Feeling sad as my loyal Moin is now on his way back to Hyderabad, a 14 hour journey, luckily with a sleeping birth. Subbu just phoned and said he cannot come as he is at his supervisor's house correcting his PhD thesis. So now writing this after dinner.*

I set off as usual at exactly 5.30am with English Rose Collection Taxi for airport on a cold clear morning. I had my usual regret at leaving, seeing dear tolerant Libby waving goodbye. I was slightly more apprehensive than usual because of my labyrinthitis, but this was balanced by knowing my seat would be more comfortable in Club World Plus. My baggage was just within limits. 23.1 kg(23 kg allowed); and my black bag 13.7 kg (14kg). Arrived in just over one hour. When I dropped my bags I was told that they are now very strict and I would have had to pay excess baggage if it was 24kg. Security arrangements have been changed. It all looks very organised, which it is. But densely packed bags (both of mine) were shunted off for further inspection. I had to completely unpack so they could take my biscuit boxes for a second go through the X rays. Then of course it was difficult to get everything back in. The flight was one hour late so had 3 hrs to fill. Read a lot of Sunday times then watched planes flying off on a bright sunny morning.

My seat was much more comfortable than usual. Plane was packed and I was cheered up by a visit to my usual seat which looked very squashed. The flight seems so long on the way but not so long in retrospect. Watched film - *The Butler* and read more of the paper. My neighbour slept almost all the way, having flown to London from West coast of USA that day. Soon out of my privileged seat into the rapid smooth immigration, money changing, baggage collection, meeting smiling Moin with the hotel driver for the 10 minute drive to the Trident hotel by about 3.00. Moin had had a very long 14 hour journey from Hyderabad. We had intended to get up in time to leave by 9.30 but didn't wake until 10.50, by which time it was too late for breakfast so had hotel complementary oranges with shortbread biscuits which I also fed to the poor Kalyan driver who had dutifully arrived by 8.30. He had recently been told he had a heart condition (I learned later) so drove slowly on the hugely improved roads to Tirupati so it took 4 hours instead of the 3 hours that it would otherwise have done. The new roads were being built last year and had made an uncomfortable journey back. They are now (potentially) fast and by-pass the unpleasant towns of Tiruttani and Puttur. At last the drivers have discovered the Tirupati by-pass which takes us on a fast empty road parallel with the welcome red hills as far as Upurappalli check point near Thumlagunta. It does not seem more than a week or two since I was there last.

We were met at the guest house by Dilli (Venu's brother) and young Lokesh, with a grovelling smiling Sury. Sai Gopal had got most of the necessary furniture and the electricity system has been rewired so it is efficient and safe. We dropped our bags and returned to the Kalyan with the driver and had a late lunch of butter roti and panneer; the driver earned his tip by taking us back

to the guest house. Moin slept while I slowly unpacked everything into its usual places. Tall handsome smiling Venu soon turned up to give tea and a welcome hug.

At 6.30 we set off over the rail crossing, past the entrance to the Thumulagunta road, to the Pure and Sure Super Market where I realised how stupid I was to take half a kg of shampoo when I can get same stuff there. We bought 1 broom, 4 small mats, 1 electric mosquito killer, packets of salted cashew nuts, crisps, biscuits, toothbrush (Moin). Then as I was mooching about a man aged about 60 came up nervously and asked if I am Prof Chris Anthony! I assumed that he must work in the University. "No sir I am a fan of your website. I live near Thumulagunta and wanted pictures so I googled it and found all your pictures from many years. I looked at all your website over many days so I know your face so well. I am so excited now to meet you". He is a Surgeon at local SIMS hospital, called Dr Siddartha.

We took auto down to Gandhi Road by a complicated back road route because they have arranged a rather odd traffic system. The Prakasam Road leading to Gandhi road is one way (out of town) and autos are not allowed in Gandhi road itself. This is excellent but it is still hectic as there are more motorbikes allowed there. Was welcomed into Sindhuri Park Hotel restaurant by usual friendly waiters where we had Masala dosa and ice cream (Special for Moin – 3 boules and heaps of fruit salad). Then fast auto home and much needed sleep.

**January 14<sup>th</sup> Tuesday.** Had a very long sleep with intervals for listening to dogs, trains and traffic, and for reading my book. Got up at about 8.30 and ordered tea and breakfast of idli/wada which was good but also slightly shocking to be slurping very spicy tomato/onion/ chilli soup for breakfast. Sai Gopal said he would be here by 9.30 but he did not come until 11.40. It is a three day holiday festival so very few staff. They suggested that we go out to eat. I did not want to do that as Moin was leaving at 3.30 and we had computer stuff to sort out. Eventually we negotiated 2 'meals' from the usual mid-town restaurant Manasa (they do not do a la carte to take away). This meant we had 4 poly bags each with enough rice for a family for a week.

Sai Gopal is unchanged, friendly and competent. We saw on facebook that it is his birthday. He was delighted with his present of the Birds calendar. Because of strikes last term (related to the division of the state of Andhra Pradesh) they have lost a lot of time. So my plan to teach both Virology and Microbiology together may work as Microbiology may have lost a lot of time.

More chat after lunch and Moin set off home at about 3.30 – a 14 hour journey to Hyderabad to get him back in time for his lab work. After he left I had a brief sleep then tea and a walk up to the little lake and past NCC Nagar. As it is a holiday there were too many people mooching about but it was a nice atmosphere, hot with enough breeze. I was greeted by 4 people on my way who probably know me from University and on the way back I saw Lokesh's sister decorating the road outside their nice house with its marigolds and tethered calves. One of them rushed in to get Lokesh who is now in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of engineering degree, tall slim and neatly bearded; very affectionate but struggles to say anything or understand anything in English. The lake is very green and half empty so just a load of chickens on the refuse-littered shore and a couple of paddy birds. There did not seem to be many birds until I listed them: Indian Tree Pie, Parakeets, Mynahs, Coppersmith (a pair), Oriole, Indian robin, purple sunbird, Little green bee-eater, Paddy bird, jungle crow, House crow, 2 unidentified small birds, one with red eye and shriky sort of beak, other with wing bars.

Had a big beaker of tea on my return then started this diary. Subramaniam (slender smiling high-voiced with earring) phoned to say he is in Tirupati to discuss his PhD thesis with his supervisor so we arranged to eat, but he then he phoned to say he had to stay with his supervisor so I set off down town to Sinduri Park. An auto stopped almost immediately so I went as far as Town club at the start of the one-way system. This should have been 30 rup but he asked for 60 – I had forgotten to negotiate at the start. So I told him he was trying to cheat and gave him 40 and walked away. He waved cheerfully. Prakasam road used to be the worst part of the trip to town but now it is one way it is quite pleasant. Gandhi Road was packed but there is always a nice atmosphere. I was commandeered by a boy aged about 13 with his little brother trying to speak English. “We know English to write but we don’t know speaking English”. It would have been difficult to negotiate the crowds alone but it was almost impossible with him and his brother being towed nervously behind. So I dived off down a side road that led to the back of the Sri Govindaswamy temple which comes out near the hotel. The one way system seems to work there also, so it is much calmer. I had my usual welcome followed by South Indian Thali and Strawberry ice cream. Then a brief stroll to the station to get an auto. The young driver grinned and said 80 rupees. So I laughed and walked away. He drove up beside me and his friend sitting in the front tried to tell me this is correct. I told him it should be 40 but I would agree to 50 so he gave in. At the GH I gave him 40 then the extra 10, wishing him a happy Pongal and got a big grinning happy Pongal back, kissing the extra rupee note.

*So here I am at 10.00, forwarding a message telling me that the window cleaners are coming tomorrow. Good night everyone.*

**15<sup>th</sup> Jan. Wednesday.** I spent a lot of last night awake reading. It was hot and even the slow fan was not enough; when turned up it was too violent. Downstairs had their fan on full noise and vibration mode. No problem. Because I was thinking I might want to walk to Thumulagunta I was lazy and did not go for my morning bird walk. There was so much fuss about breakfast yesterday that I decided to have nice breakfast bars with tea. My decision to go to T was made for me when I had a missed call from Barath (Balu); when I called back he had planned a speech “Welcome to India Chreesh sir; please come to Thumulagunta it is Sancrethi (Pongal)”. I set out about 10. At the start of the T road there was only one auto and he said and then mimed that he was going home to pray. This was fortunate as a few minutes later Badri came up on his bike, very pleased that I remembered his name. Then up cycled Dinesh with Kalyan on the back and then Balu. So a long chatty walk down the hot wide road that is now bordered by small flowering trees. They showed me where Balu and Dinesh had hurt their legs when the motorbike they were on (driven by a third one) “had skid sir skid skid”. Had nice scalding coffee in Balu’s house while the boys played with cameras and binoculars and then a walk around village saying hello to everyone. Balu and family were pleased with the calendar. There is always a nice relaxed feeling on their holidays. Here is a list: Balu, Ganesh (Balu’s brother), Seshu (Balu’s older brother/cousin), Dinesh, Mounish, Bobby, Said, Madhu, Kalyan, Balachandran, Honey Shree and her sisters Sireesha and Lakshmi and neat little brother Nitheesh, Manosh, Dayaku, Prudhvi. They are not much changed; Balu is hardly altered; Said is taller and even more elegant; Mounish does look older as does Dinesh. They were almost overwhelmingly affectionate (only almost) and were very pleased I sent New Year card with all their names on it. Eventually we arrived at Balaji’s

house to say hello to mother and grandparents and his wife (Mamatha) and little girl (Adithya). He is as nice as ever but every year he gets bigger. I fought off half a dozen invites to tea or milk or coffee. After telling Balu they can come anytime I was put on a bike (always means Motorbike) with Balu and his brother, getting off at the top of the road so I did not have to risk the rail crossing as the noon day train arrived. I walked the alternative route where I have to cross the rail line and walk through the next door building site. The guest house has only one staff as it is holiday and that is the very short unsmiling grumpy man. I asked about lunch and he just said Sury later. At 1.30 I tried again with the same result. Twenty minutes later Sury arrived with his children (or grandchildren) and tiffin tins. He had cooked it especially for me. Lovely yellow, nutty rice, good dahl, very tasty aubergine curry, pakoras, crisps, curds. I told him it was best food I have so far in India (true).

After 20 minutes dozing I was woken by shuffling and giggles outside the door and there were Dinesh, Mounish and Said, all dressed smartly. A few minutes later Balu leaped into the room miming that I was crying that he was not there. Not quite but I was pleased he was there. More photos and a short dance by Balu with Dinesh then looking through photos. My cello playing clips were very popular. A pity I did not play better. The iPad video is especially good and easy to do so I will do it more as a guide to what I need to practice. The first bar of milk chocolate was extracted, then off they went after more pictures on the roof; these were mainly a series of each of them with me and then every possible combination. I am very glad that they are as good fun as previously although I doubt if I will be of enough interest to last 4 weeks – except for Balu with whom I seem to be bonded for ever.

I had my sleep after they left and I went for a stroll up to the dairy farm where the small temple was being expanded with big coloured tents and carpets and chairs from some ceremony or function. Perhaps this will be tomorrow when there is a “cow festival sir. In UK also?” Very little birdlife as some crops have recently been harvested and a large area seems to have been left fallow: crows, egrets, roller, mynahs, little brown doves, drongos, bee-eaters, bush chats, but not much else.

I decided that as I had had a large lunch I would have crisps etc as evening snack and not eat out but Subbu phoned and said he was returning to Uppam and may not be here again until March so he came up by auto with a microbiology student that I had taught (Mastam) and we went to Sindhuri park for dinner (Masala dosa and ice cream). The roads were normal again so no problem with crowded Gandhi Road where traffic had been limited because of the large number of extra street stalls of the previous few days.

So here I am at the end of an exhausting day in which I do not seem to have done much except meet up with my special village friends who were not disappointing in their liveliness and enthusiastic affection. After Subbu left I watched the first two episodes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of House DVDs.

**16<sup>th</sup> Jan. Thursday.** Had usual disturbed night with noisy traffic and dogs. I enjoy reading fortunately. Woke at 7.30 and went for bird walk. They have stripped many of the areas of rough bushes where I often walked and have even removed the *bourgainvillea* from near the pig research place. But still a lot of birds with Bulbuls singing all the way. At Lokesh's house they

were washing their 6 cows/calves, reminding me that it is a cow festival day. I returned to have a breakfast of leftover pakora and curds from Sury's lunch with a couple of bananas and tea.

At last I got down to writing to Rajiv Dixit with suggestions on improving his excellent CV etc. A big job but quite enjoyable as I was able to read some of his work. He is now in Canada, hoping to return to a permanent job in a research institute here. I got through to Charlie eventually and arranged for Steven and Teena to come and visit before lunch. Steven was very subdued last year but is now back in his enthusiastic mode. He is now age 16 and starting college, doing physics, chemistry, botany and zoology. He gets full marks in all exams. His favourite subject is the structure of the atom which is a coincidence as I am reading about the history of this in the 1920s in Ray Monks excellent biography of Robert Oppenheimer. Steven's family are moving today to a different house in a nicer area. Teena was very tired and said she is hungry, proved by eating most of a bar of milk chocolate. Charlie failed to come to collect them as promised so they went off hoping to catch an auto home.

I seem to have sorted lunch problem – I just ask for a Meal which is rice and 5 poly bags of stuff, 2 of which are nice dahl and vegetables, followed by curds which I am trying to eat without sugar – after reading all this stuff about how it is bad for us. Talking about this makes me hungry so I shall go off to Sind Park for dinner soon. After lunch I slept for more than an hour, finished Rajiv's work then went for short local garden stroll, collecting a nice picture of a golden oriole. Gopi has just phoned to say he may be able to come this weekend some time. It is now 7.00 so off for dinner. Now back feeling bloated because the portions are too large for me; I had 2 butter rotis and kaju gobi (cashew nuts and cauliflower – excellent). I walked back down Gandhi road and Prakasam road all the way to Balaji colony before getting auto last bit home. Then watched episodes 3 and 4 of House.

**17<sup>th</sup> Jan. Friday.** Usual disturbed night but no problem as I enjoy reading. Now reading *Boy with a topknot* about a Sikh boy growing up in Wolverhampton. Had a disappointing bird walk but saw and heard nice golden orioles. All the scruffy prickly shrubs see me as a great dispersal resource so I have to spend 5 minutes removing all sorts of seeds from my trousers and toes. Inspired, I wrote a note for Sury to get me Pongal for breakfast which he did, and a 'waterbottle' which he didn't. Pongal is mashed up rice with cashew nuts and all sorts of other seeds and bits of veg, slightly sweet and sufficiently appetizing to eat too much. Sai Gopal came to collect me at 10.20, about one hour later than arranged. Drifted with him to various people to arrange lectures. He did not arrange (as agreed) to re-organised the teaching so that the Virology and Microbiology courses are synchronised for me to teach them together. But they all now have a bigger problem as the University was closed for 7 weeks, on strike in protest against the proposed division of Andhra Pradesh into two States. So everything is confused. I will start on Monday with microbial physiology. They have re-organised a bit of that syllabus as I had suggested but accidentally omitted a few important topics which I will now re-insert. It is crazy – they have only 4 students registered. Because of a re-organisation of '6<sup>th</sup> form' teaching, far fewer students do biology with any knowledge of chemistry and this means fewer microbiology, virology or biochemistry students at Universities.

While in the nice cool clean PURSE centre I learned from a visitor that Prof Venkaiah is in Tirupati; he was head of biochemistry when I was in that department – one of my favourite

people here. So I got them to phone him and he arranged to come to the guest house in the evening.

Lunch was my standard 'meal' of rice (eating 20% of the amount provided), dahl and veg (carrots and spinach today) followed by curds and Bourneville chocolate. I then slept more than one hour before getting down to preparing more of my lectures, prepared with Corel Draw and put into Word for the students. The satisfaction is similar to a cross between Sudoku and a computer game.

At 5.0 I went for another disappointing bird walk. I hope this is merely the statistical probability that some days there will not be birds where I walk and is not a reflection of the rather brutal cutting back of the bush/scrub etc. The big trees remain. Again saw nice orioles but not much else.

I read Oppenheimer (wonderful) with my tea on the roof in the evening breezy twilight. Venkaiah then appeared, white haired and handsome and on time. It is probably 8-10 years since he left but we immediately got on well again, although he had replaced his huge store of jokes about Sikhs with the story of his prostate (now treated and well). He has an amazing memory (or I was amazingly memorable), recounting how I had lectured on Mitchell theory, outlining the main points including the brilliant but difficult Q cycle. He stayed until nearly 8.0 leaving me too tired to face the trip to town, so I spent another hour finishing a particularly complicated set of figures of butanol fermentation before starting to write this diary with a bowl of salted cashew nuts. I must stop this, collect a heap of food (crisps, breakfast bar, shortbread, bananas and Christmas cake) to keep me going while I watch a DVD. This was *The Wicker Man* which is a highly rated film telling a famously grim story that I have never watched as I was certain that Libby would not like it. It was so grim I needed to watch 20 minutes of Michael McIntire to recover.

**18<sup>th</sup> January Saturday.** Had another hot noisy disturbed night. Woke slowly and read, deciding to forego bird walk as I planned a long afternoon walk. For the first time I was asked if I wanted tea; my enthusiastic yes will probably ensure I always get it now. Sury brought me my breakfast of Idli/Wada but with no Wada (sort of savoury ring doughnut ). Delicious. I spent the rest of the morning finishing my lecture preparation on fermentation. Finished the morning with a glorious bucket bath and a dry out in the sun. Lunch was usual 'meal'. I seem to be putting on more tummy so I ate even less rice than usual. After a 30 minute sleep Charlie turned up with Steven and Teena who is still not feeling well so promptly fell asleep. At 4.00 they left and I set out for the long slog to the rural part beyond Uparuppallee checkpoint. At the rail crossing a young chap on a bike stopped and insisted on giving me a lift. I tried to resist but failed. I could not make him go all the way so I got off at the start of the road from Thumulagunta and had long hot slog past the village. I have not seen the boys from that village for a few years – since they built a proper road there. But one of the ladies remembered me and ran out to look through binoculars. Just before the really rural part I was called over by a gang of young men who were preparing to play cricket "One group photo sir". One of them remembered me from last year. I continue to get the impression that there are not so many birds as previous. The young paddy fields were a beautiful emerald green and the gentle warm breeze were enough. I saw usual crows parakeets roller mynah etc. Also some of the larger blue-tailed bee-eaters which are very

fast fliers. The old lady I saw last year called me over to take a picture of her cow so of course I included her which for some reason she thought very funny when I showed her it. At the furthest point of the walk I heard, then saw, four Yellow wattled lapwing, a new bird for me, the usual one near the NCC Nagar lake being the Red wattled lapwing.

Fortunately there was an auto at the bypass check point so I avoided the very long trudge back. He was uncertain of where the guest house was so I mimed that I knew and would tell him. He wanted 70 rupees but I said it should be 40 but agreed on 60. This haggling is usually good spirited and we both enjoy me being cheated. I got back in time to sit on roof with Oppenheimer in the twilight, serenaded by returning crows and mynahs, with 2 cups of chai bought by Lokanard, the staff member who had been upset when he thought I did not give him the same tip as the others 2 years ago. He has always been very attentive since then. Gopi phoned to say that he would come tomorrow morning and we should go to lunch. So Sunday morning visit to Thumulagunta is off; I may go in afternoon.

Had a quick auto to S Park for simple dinner of dosa masala and pistachio ice cream then stroll down Gandhi road and auto home. I had had visitors who had left a big notice Welcome to India to our dear Guru Prof Chris Anthony, with 3 flowers stuck into the door bolt. It was from Venkatesh and Koti (last year's virology students). They left their number so I phoned and they appeared within minutes. Venkat has a new motorbike and wanted me to sure that if I ever need a lift anywhere anytime anyplace then I must call him. He has been "working hard to improving my English". So we had a nice chat and off they went "please sir call any time we are always at your service". Could be useful. Watched the end of Michael Macintire and an episode of House where someone had a brain scan – poor choice of viewing.

**20<sup>th</sup> January. Monday.** Usual interrupted night; no problem. My eyes have still not stabilised. On my morning walks and for some time during the day my left eye is not so clear. I have this at home sometimes, probably related to not enough sleep. It was another nice morning, freshened by yesterday's rain with many birds although not as noisy as yesterday. Nice pics of Black headed cuckoo shrike. Also saw: rufous bellied babbler, usual birds, leaf bird, grey breasted prinia.

At clever Moin's suggestion I ordered just wadas (doughnut) without idli. Very good although I still find the onion and tomato soup very very spicy. Sai Gopal came at 10.20 (only 30 minutes late) to take me to the Vice Chancellor. After parking I had to be introduced to Rector, Senior Administrator etc – all standing around in the shade of the wonderful campus trees. Sai Gopal does seem to be very popular. One of the administrators got very excited to see me as I had taught his daughter a few years ago and to prove it he found my picture on his mobile phone. I was introduced to another 5 senior admin staff on way through Senate house and up the lifts to the VC's floor, identifiable by the well-worn dull red carpet down the centre of the corridors which are lined with a range of flunkies who leap out of their chairs to give a sort of salute as we sweep past. Then through a waiting room with nervous petitioners and into the VC's big cool office. He was in a meeting at his huge desk with 7 others. There were 2 empty chairs "especially for you sir". More lengthy introductions, all good fun as the VC (Prof Rajendra, Prof of zoology) is not at all pompous and with a nice sense of humour. He told me last year that being VC is his hobby – his work is his science. After 10 minute chat with scalding coffee we escaped to

drive on to the Department. I was taken to a lecture room to 'interact with the Virology students'. Only 3 out of 4 were there. All were taught in English medium which is encouraging. Lady called Kamakshi, and 2 boys – Tharachand (lives in Tirupati) and dull looking boy Delli. Had nice little chat then was taken to Microbiology where there were 6/20 students. Although they have already covered my topic they are keen to do it again with me as it will be revision for exams. The whole timetable is wrecked because the University closed on strike because of the Telengana split problem. Boys: Althaf Hussain, Suresh, Chinna Thikkaiah; girls - Nirmitha, Sadi, Srivani. Again they were all taught in English and they said they are very keen to come to my lectures which will start tomorrow at 9.30.

I then wandered into Biochemistry where staff were drifting about, preparing to go off to lunch. Appa Rao, Murthy and Balaji who explained that Reddy is now Head of Department so we went to him to get him to arrange my lectures which he says he will do. I then found Thyagaraju in his office, the only one working. He gave me a nice welcome and invited me to his home some day soon. On the way out I was met by Hanuman, the student who has been a bit of a pest wanting me to advise him on things about which I know nothing. He looks very nice and is basically kind but is demanding and has a loud voice. I told him he can come anytime to the guest house (Risky).

Lunch was standard 'meal' where I eat 1/3 of the rice provided plus dahl and one veg, not opening the other three bags. I have become accustomed to eating my curds without sugar. Then a nice sleep while reading a new Rebus novel, before spending a couple of hours finishing off fermentation notes in Word. My evening walk was a direct line from the guest house towards the hills. Saw very few birds (except for my favourite flame-coloured Little minivet) but the evening is always pleasant. I nearly reached the bypass at the foot of the hills then turned East towards the University. Thinly scattered amongst the trees are many new buildings but it is still mainly wild. One set of buildings is the college for teaching Hindu priests. A group of three of them wanted to chat but they had very little English. They have shaved heads except for a small clump of long hair. They wear long clothes which seem to be a mix of lungi and sari, white or orange. They are only 15 yrs old. One comes from Orissa (NE India) and the other 2 from Assam (almost China). They told me they miss their families. Seem so sweet now – but I guess they will turn into the usual fat self-satisfied priests. Of course I had to take photos. They wanted me to visit their hostel but I said I would come another day as Suman (village boy from many years) had phoned to say he wanted to visit in the evening and previously he has done that on his way home from college. Of course he did not come. So I read on the roof as twilight fell, crows flocked home to roost and mosquitoes awoke, then inside for an hour reading my biochemistry of methylotrophs to find stuff for my history article, to be published online on a special website *Methanotropy commons*.

Hanuman phoned to say he wanted to visit and eventually I worked out that he was already at the guest house. He is nice but. He speaks loudly and I always feel he is demanding something. Last year his father phoned when I was in a restaurant and shouted that I must do something for his son. He is now a research assistant with Balaji in Biochemistry. His project is to isolate, identify and characterise materials from plants that can protect against radiation. He will collect plants from up in the hills, separate leaves, roots, stems etc, make extracts and test them on

mice to see if they can protect against the effect of radiation. What rubbish. Such a thing may exist but needles and haystacks spring to mind. I would usually have suggested we go to dinner together but he is a very unsafe driver of his bike and he would exhaust me, so I made an excuse to get rid of him and after half an hour set off for the long slog to town. No problem as an auto stopped even before I got across the road. Two butter rotis and Aloo mutter (potatoes and peas) and Rebus novel and pistache ice cream. Auto home and here we are again. I finished as usual with DVD; first *A time there was* – a film about Benjamin Britten; then another House. I must be careful not to get hypochondriacal watching this.

I have now been here a week and am getting to like my routine.

**21<sup>st</sup> January Tuesday.** Had a disturbed night, which is probably unavoidable as the trains are very loud and traffic is heavy after 5.00. Decided not to read in my wake breaks in case that contributes to my poor left eye in the mornings. I woke about 7.00 and read for 10 minutes then up and out for my walk after ordering idli/wada for 8.45. I went up to similar place to yesterday. Eyes were better. Some sun, some birds but not much. But I am always pleased when I have fought the temptation to slob about. Sai Gopal should have collected me at 9.15 but he left it to Antony Johnson, the very fat research fellow to collect me on his bike – the usual Honda Hero. There were about 30 students waiting for me – virology plus microbiology. Very satisfactory. I did a slow introduction with breaks for chat. They are responsive (laugh at my stories). I asked if the microbiologists – by far the biggest contingent - would come tomorrow and had a sea of waving heads like poppies in the wind. They wanted to stay and chat afterwards and I feel we got off to a good start. I drifted over to Virology where I was greeted by groups of students who I vaguely recognised, all of whom wanted to chat and tell me their news. Mainly staying to do PhDs. Sai Gopal then sent for me to come to the lab to meet a visiting professor from the Agriculture Research place. He was there invigilating the practical exam for final year virologists. As I came in they were all hard at work in the exam but when they saw me they still had time to send me huge smiles and waved pipettes and petri dishes. Very nice to see Suresh and Mallikarjuna again. I then had to sit and eat biscuits and drink tea and chat at a table with the invigilator while they continued slaving.

I was given a lift back on scooter with lecturer Narasimha who did the terrifying thing of driving straight out of the main gate into the busy road without a glance to see if any traffic is coming. After ordering a big beaker of tea I set off to organise my prepared lectures into a format for printing for the students; they say they prefer pdf rather than Word so I am saving as both. Great discovery – if I want to take stuff from my computer to ask students about it all I have to do is to take a picture of the screen with the ipad- genius. I can do all my prepared lectures like this as a source if I need it during my lecture.

Promptly at 1.00 Sury arrived with my 'meal'. I have accepted that there is nothing much I can do to vary it so just discard 3 of the items with 2/3 of the rice. Eaten quickly when hungry it is ok. Then 40 minute sleep and back to computer to work. Twenty minutes in the sun reading Oppenheimer left me appreciating I have a lot of holes in my memory about atomic structure so I am writing a few notes on this from Wikipedia. Alpha particles, beta radiation, cosmic rays, muons, etc etc. I am worried that I might finish it too soon so I am trying to ration myself.

*I am writing this at 7.00 while listening to Beethoven's great last piano sonata (desert island disk and funeral music) which leaves me with faster heart rate and tears in my eyes and feeling that all problems are trivial.*

There was a lot of cloud and I almost used that as an excuse not to walk this evening. I have never regretted overcoming this temptation so set out intending to walk into the sun towards the distant Agric college towards the Zoo hills. As I stepped out of the gate one of the Virology 1<sup>st</sup> year students (Than....) stopped on his (motor)bike and offered me a lift. He lives in Thumulagunta (the upper class bit) and wanted me to go there. I promised I would on another day. His father is retired but worked on the railway (I wonder if he knows Surya's father). He then gave me a lift along the very long hot road to the college. "Please sir you must call me whenever you need anything, anything sir". So I am collecting a set of drivers. It had become quite windy so it was a very pleasant long walk back with the sun behind me, after the initial walk up towards the hills. Got some nice pictures of common iora, a lovely little green bird with prominent white wing stripes. Then home to more tea from Venu. He gave me the phone number of the Manasa upstairs restaurant (near the town club) who will deliver fried rice etc in the evenings. It is actually a Chinese restaurant I think. I shall go there to test it tonight; it would be a good alternative to Sundhuri Park as it is half the distance.

I tested it. Got instant auto down to Town Club. It is dark and clean and serves indian versions of Chinese. I had a water bottle and the most expensive item on the menu – kaju fried rice. Total bill 142 rupees (£1.40). Good but not a relaxing place. Strolled back up to student hostels through the relaxed happy Balaji colony, full of students. I went to C block to the 1<sup>st</sup> year microbiologists who soon crammed 10 of them into a room for 2. Very friendly and helpful as they told me that they wanted me to follow my original plan as they would like revision of bioenergetics. At 8.55 they said they had to go to the mess for dinner so I went to B block to the 2<sup>nd</sup> years who were all working for their 3<sup>rd</sup> practical exam tomorrow. Very pleased to see me (mutual); especially good to see Mallikarjuna. They all did very well in the exams on my subject last year. They insisted that I ate some biscuits and then presented me with a heap of them in a bag. I told them they could eat them tomorrow evening. They decided to visit at 8.30 in the evening which is what I wanted, although pushy Ramachandran tried to bully them into coming at 5.00 (useless time for me of course). After 20 minutes I left so they could continue revision and I went (briskly) the long slog up the hill back to the guest house. Watched the rest of Benjamin Britten film. Excellent

**22<sup>nd</sup> January Wednesday.** I woke in the night thinking I had runny tummy. I did have but it later turned out that it was merely anxiety that I had Tirupati Tummy. Had no breakfast and did not go on walk (precautionary measures). Got to my lecture by 9.35. Almost all the boys were there but only one girl. The rest turned up in the next 10 minutes. I am keeping well to schedule because they seem to understand very well. I asked if they are coming tomorrow and got a YES worthy of Belshazzar's Feast. After the lecture I met up with Dr Rao of the PURSE centre and he arranged for a driver to scooter me home. I am trying seriously to get on with the History work but finding it difficult as I keep losing my internet connection. I had the usual small lunch but the small bag of veg tasted disgusting like nothing I have ever had in my mouth before. After a sleep I did more work and read on the roof in the sun for a bit. I was worried that I might

finish Oppenheimer too quickly but have found that I put a book by the military historian Max Hastings on kindle so I have started reading that in parallel. At 4.30 in rather hot sun I gently strolled up to the dairy farm. It is always welcome and peaceful going up the long drive with the loudspeakers playing gentle devotional music. As before there seem to be few birds there; mynah, cattle egret, paddy birds, babblers, drongo, bee-eaters but no hoopoe, wagtails, prinias, munias, roller, water hen. Lovely evening breeze as I sat on a stone seat looking out at piles of cow dung populated with drongos and egrets.

On the way home I stopped at the supermarket. Between there and the dairy farm there is a nice evening relaxed atmosphere with the attractive smell of cooking samosas and pakoras, temple chatter, and general milling about. The supermarket boss is so nice so it was easy to find detergent for clothes washing. He has 2 lady assistants who answer his calls for help. So, Pears soap, Colgate toothpaste and detergent. I re-stocked on cashew nuts which I then found were not salted but spicy, still very good while sitting on the roof when I got back. I saw the little boy dressed as Krishna with his mauve painted face. The other day he asked for 1 rupee but I had no money with me. On the way back only his father was there and asked me for 100 rupees – for the photo I took, I guess. This time I gave the boy 10 rupees and took a better photo. I had really nice chatty email from Libby. Also an email message saying Hugh has posted a message to say that Kizzy has taken up my chair (while the mouse is away the cats do play); I tried to reply but internet too slow.

*It is now 7.00 so nearly time to go to dinner.*

I went by instant auto to S. Park for my quick dinner of masala dosa and butterscotch ice cream then back immediately as I was expecting a gang of 1st year Microbiologists at 8.30. They did not come but three 2<sup>nd</sup> year virologists came as they had somehow heard that the microbiologists were not coming. These three were better value I am sure. Suresh, Mallikarjuna and 'a new boy sir' Dillip. They had finished their practical exams today and were in nice relaxed mood. They got very excited by the cello playing. At one point I was getting something from underneath the table and wobbled a bit when I got up so had to explain my Labyrinthitis. I got them to do the marching test – all passed- then I did my party piece. I finished my evening with an episode of House.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January Thursday** My new policy about disturbed nights seems to be working. I get up, walk around to stop being too stiff then immediately go to sleep. I always wake at 7.10 when there is an extra strong load of traffic, probably after the 7.00 train. I was very tempted to just lie and read but remembered that I had not walked yesterday so got up to walk, encouraged by a tumbler of tea brought by smiling Venu. It was very clear sunny morning with more birds than ever. At last a coucal has appeared – up near NCC nagar. I got a poor picture of it with a large lizard in its beak. I showed this to a man who came up cleaning his teeth. "yes sir I know this bird – like you I often walk in the jungle here as I live in that house. That house is the single one amongst the trees with cows and calves tied under the trees that I think would be a good place to live. I saw nearly every one of the more common birds so here is a list: crows, both doves, mynah, G. Oriole, Tree pie, both bulbuls, babblers, Rufous bellied babbler, both sunbirds, little minivets, magpie robins, indian robins, paddy bird, Blue faced Malkahar (V. good picture), Grey jungle fowl, brainfever bird, bee-eaters, Shikra hawk, palm swifts and drongos.

Back to breakfast of idli/wada. Sai gopal should have arrived 9.15 to get me to my lecture at 9.30. He was late and we arrived at 9.45. I told him jokingly that he must come in and apologise to the students – which he did, very humbly and head wobblingly, cringing “so sorry to make professor sir late for his lecture; it is my fault only, he is a good man”. The students were both amused and bemused by it all. I did the first of my thermodynamics lectures which are always fun to do – making difficult stuff approachable. I then explained to the students who did not come last night that it was inconvenient and that in future they should phone to cancel. We all then drifted out into the sun and over the road to Microbiology buildings where I had a nice chat with Dr Hema madam who is the most honest & intelligent of all the lecturers. I reminded her that she had left it too late to invite me to her family’s home last year “so I am giving you plenty of time to plan”. Next week probably. Then across to Biochemistry to find the staff but they were all at tea. 1st year students were doing an exam but I had a nice chat with final yr students who I had taught last year. As I came out Sai Gopal drove up with a tall slim man who I half recognised. It was Prof Dayananda who is now very senior in the University of Hyderabad (Moin’s place). I had taught him in 1982 – “you inspired me sir that science is exciting and good fun”. He had shared a room with Chowdappa. So coffee in PURSE centre where more people accumulated to discuss funding problems with him (he is on all the important committees). Dayananda asked if I knew Dr Merrick from the nitrogen fixation unit in Sussex – yes – well I worked with him for 6 years. I asked if he knew Susan Hill – “yes of course she had the bench next to mine”.

I excused myself and went back to Biochemistry where they eventually worked out that I cannot give my lectures as the students are completing examinations for 2 weeks. As there was no sign of anyone to get a lift from I went down to Zoology to see if Subbaiah is there but he is “Out of station Sah”. I met someone I recognised, eventually identified as Malli Mallikarjuna who has confused me on facebook (as he is not my current friend with the same name in virology). “Sir do you remember you could not say my name so when you read the register you called me Abracadabra”.

Setting off to walk home in the midday sun I was picked up by Manohar who I met when he was a skinny teenage dummy security man at the guest house. He now has a daughter about to go to college and works high up in Admin – examinations office.

I had my usual lunch in the half dark during a powercut. Having left clothes to soak overnight I set out to finish only to discover that there was no water, a secondary result of the powercut. Eventually got it sorted and displayed a colourful range of underwear on the line on the roof. After a sleep I tried to do some History work but my internet connection was too unstable. All solved now - I remembered that Moin had found that reception is better on the roof so I put my hardboard thing on the small sink there and found it is comfortable to sit at in the shade and so better than my room. I was able to download papers by Roger Whittenbury, and better still I got the earliest paper on *Ps. methanica* from 1956.

I had arranged with Tharachand, the student who wanted to take me to his home in Thumulagunta the other day, to collect me at 5.00 to visit his home. He turned up at 5.10 (!) and I got him first to take me down to Barath’s to check if he is free on Saturday. The village was empty of children except for Madhu and Bobby, and Barath’s grandfather told us he is always at school until 8.00 including Saturday. We bumped into Balaji’s nice father proudly carrying his

grandson. So we drove off to posher bit of Thumlagunta. In fact it was a good 2 km further along the main Bangalore road. He lives with his parents in a very nice modern 2 storey house with a half storey on the roof. I was given coffee and a snack of dosa –masala dosa without the potato masala filling. Very good. His father then arrived to say hello. He works as a guard on the railway but does not know Surya's father. They were very keen to try to persuade me to live there – on the roof you have your own kitchen etc. But it is far from university and I would have no independence. I promised to return for a proper dinner and escaped. Tharachand was frighteningly fast and efficient on his bike so I explained my Lab...is, so got him to drive in a much more leisurely way home, half of which was on the wrong side of the dual carriageway.

Wondering whether I had the willpower to go to town for dinner, having eaten dosas, I was saved the decision by Hanuman Kumar arriving. He is the classmate of Edwin who tends to shout all the time. He is rather a sad boy who is clever (1<sup>st</sup> in his class) but motivated mainly by a pushy father who phoned me in the restaurant last year insisting that I give advice on how to get his son to work in England. He is doing the impossible project with Balaji in biochemistry. Balaji is good and kind but is bullied by the senior staff. Gradually his voice got quieter and he told me all sorts of sad stories of his experiences of stupid admin in the university, confirming what others had told me. After he has calmed down he is quite sweet. When he asked if there is anything he can do for me I told him he could drive (on his bike) into town and get me a veggie- burger. He said he would go and explore. I had seen adverts for such a place in Prakasam road. While he was out I called Edwin who is starting a new job in Kadappa (where we visited Imran), in HSBC bank and living in a cheap hotel while he looks for accommodation. His bad cold and cough and fever are now better. He will try to visit on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Half an hour later Hanuman turned up, very proud of himself, with a veggie burger, French fries and coke. Excellent. He brought a menu for their delivery service so that could be a good future trick. When I said perhaps he should go and look after himself he leapt to his feet and was out the door and running down the stairs within seconds, only to come back sheepishly for his bike keys. After another episode of House I forced myself to take out the DVD so that I ration myself. I then watched most of the 1<sup>st</sup> act of a DVD of the Met Opera's production of the Magic flute. The production is good with many beautiful effects but it was spoilt for this snobbish man by the strong American accents during the recitatives and larking about. Oddly enough they sing straight Queen's English for the arias.

**24<sup>rd</sup> January Friday.** Usual disturbed night partly because of temperature control problems. It gets quite cool now by contrast with the hotter days. I rejected Tiffen and had a breakfast bar. This allowed more time for a more relaxed bird walk at 7.30. Not so extreme as yesterday but plenty going on. Saw some of the beautiful little minivets but they move too quickly from place to place for me to get a good picture. I got a good picture of a very small bird that I have not yet identified and saw a nice grey wagtail by the NCC pond.

Sai Gopal came on time so I arrived at exactly 9.30 together with only one virology student. Most of the others came in the next few minutes. After, I wandered over to Virology and found slender shy Sunil Kumar. Someone had wrongly told me he had left; a bit annoying as I could have met up in my first empty week. His work has gone really well and he is writing up his PhD thesis already within 3 years. I tracked down Sai Gopal in yet another office and he gave me a lift home. I feel a bit guilty at being irritated with his lateness yesterday – his wife is away looking

after her mother who has had a bad fall and damaged backbone and his own mother is bedridden in his house. So he has to be up at 6.0 to sort her out and get his breakfast and prepare lunch.

I harvested my dry and hot undies and shirts from the line on the roof then started seriously on the History now that I have got most of the papers I need. Enjoying reading some of the papers we always refer to but often haven't read in detail. I am finding my book (I have a pdf of it on my computer) a valuable starting point.

Sury appeared with lunch on a big tray at about 12.15, taken from the main dining hall where there is some function. So had 2 kinds of rice, very good dahl (instead of my usual very watery stuff), very good Okra and a vegetable that looks half way between a plum and an aubergine, chapatis, crisps, sweets and more. I leave the remains on my plate and the tray outside my door which lead to Venu later to say he is worried I am starving. Bloated I collapsed under the fan on my bed and slept for nearly an hour. After more work Venu came in with tea and with his brother Rajesh who is starting to work here. He has already told me that the other nicer staff member is his brother. Perhaps one or both are cousins. He lives in a beautiful country village 25km away where there are so many beautiful birds he tells me; this was in response to me showing him the bird calendar.

At 4.30 I set off to the country area beyond the bypass, encouraging the poor auto driver to keep going along the dusty bumpy tracks beyond the village, for which I gave him an extra 10 rupees. Walking towards the fields I was met by the lady I photographed previously with her cow; she was walking along the track with it on a long rope. Not so many birds but the flock of yellow wattled lapwings were there – about 16-20. I managed to remember how to turn the walk into a circular trip which is quite difficult because they keep erecting concrete block walls. At a crossroads in the path two old men stopped their arguing to look at my bird pictures on the camera and then waved me in the direction of the Upurapalle checkpoint on the bypass. This is the place where you can buy alcohol in rather uninviting shacks and where the resulting drunks come up for their photos. Some little boys appeared by magic at some point wanting photos and this happened a couple of times as I went through the village by the bypass. It seems I am becoming recognised as I get friendly waves instead of dull blank stares. I got an auto by the shacks, the driver immediately setting off hooting up the wrong section of the dual carriageway warning the huge lorries to get out of his way. It was quite a relief to get a lift home; sometimes I have had to walk all the way back from there.

At 7.30 I set off for S. Park but accidentally flagged down a shared auto which was empty – hence the error. They are not allowed on Gandhi Road so I got off at Balaji colony to walk the rest of the way down Prakasam Road and Gandhi road. This goes past the place where there are computer shops so I remembered to go and get an extension cable for my dongle that links me to the internet. This is now rigged up a bit higher so does not disconnect so frequently. As I came out I met three 1<sup>st</sup> year microbiologists that come to my lecture including Suresh. They said they are sorry they did not come last week to my room but they would come when their exams finish. They promised to come to tomorrow's lecture (Saturday). As I walked past the small clothes shop called Surya Clothes a girl came running out "Uncle come in for tea". This was the sister Seshi my friend from some years ago who I met while buying jeans for Madhu. He is now working in

Bangalore. She took my number to give him so he may phone. I was the only guest in S. Park restaurant. I had asked my usual waiter for his name and written it in my book and he obviously was expecting me to say it and then thought it very funny that I had to look it up in the book. Butter rotis, paneer mooghali and strawberry ice cream. Autoed directly back to write this, watch DVD and bed. Moin is coming tomorrow.

**25<sup>th</sup> January Saturday.** I had usual fight to set off for walk but as usual worth it. After I got up past the NCC parade ground I set off to the wilder place where they dig up the red earth for bricks. I was very hot and set off for home past the agric college cricket ground. Between there and the main route home there is an area of agriculture which they have fenced off with access through big blue and gold metal gates. These have sprung up everywhere so I guess someone in the University is making money out of this – recommending construction of unnecessary gates. As soon as I decided to go through to take the longer journey home I was rewarded. A most beautiful golden backed woodpecker flew across my path. Idiot that I am I stood staring where I thought it had arrived rather than follow my own rule to remember that where there is one there may be two. There was, as I found when it flew away. I then remembered that this is an area where I have seen them before so I shall come this way more often. It was so hot but I thought I better hope for continued luck and walk around the field of young sugar cane. My reward was some great pictures of the small speckled bird the Spotted Munia. I then thought I saw a little minivet flaming in the nearby tree. I knew that I am very unlikely to get a good picture but I went and stood beneath the tree and he flew down into a nearby bush and hopped along a bare branch long enough for me to get a dozen good pictures including one as good as my sunbird picture of last year. So home happy to eat a breakfast bar. Only 9 students in my lecture but they are enthusiastic and fun. “Sir you have so many special skills you are inspiring us” – This was after I dropped the dead end of a bit of chalk, stooped to pick it up and as I stood up I threw it about 12 feet perfectly into the tiny chalk box.

Sai Gopal drove me back immediately so I could prepare for Moin’s visit. That is tidying stuff off his bed, sweeping, removing rubbish etc then a nice hot bucket shower and a nice big lunch from the function downstairs. Moin arrived about 3.15 after his 6 hour train ride from his home town. He is so nice and relaxing, easy to chat to but also happy to be quiet. We went for a stroll up to NCC nagar in the cool evening then went along a recently made up road to see where it led, to find us outside the Virology building. So then a sentimental stroll past Moin’s old department and the canteen and admin block. Of course we had to go to S. Park for dinner where the waiter giggled when I remembered his name. We had butter rotis and Nata panneer which was good. I had pista icecream while Moin gorged on Honeymoon special which is big fruit salad and 3 boules of icecream. While he finished the last part of this I went to chat to a white couple who were from France (St Malo). They had lived in the Isle of Wight for a year and had come to like our tv programmes. They had just started their tour and asked if I knew Mahabalipuram as they were going there tomorrow. I specially recommended Rick Stein’s beach restaurant fish curry.

When we got back Suman arrived to say hello. He is the tall slim toothy dark boy who I have known for many years. He now has a job as an engineering assistant with a phone company. He

gets 8,000 rupees a month which is enough in Tirupati. He lives with his grandmother cos his parents have split up. Then finished the day with a long sleepy chat.

**26<sup>th</sup> January Sunday Republic Day.** A bit sad that the Republic day is on a Sunday as we lose a holiday. I had a fairly complete night and woke to order Puri masala and tea. When breakfast appeared it was one Puri masala and one Dosa masala – a result of deaf Sury's nervous interpretation. Both were ok. I would usually go to Thumulagunta on Republic day and on Sundays so decided we better do that (Moin was happy to go) as I needed, if nothing else to confirm my visit to Balu's school tomorrow. There were awnings up around the first house which I assumed was a celebration of some kind but found later someone had died the night before. Balu's granny said he wasn't there and sent a boy to look for him and soon he arrived with Manosh. He was not his usual noisy enthusiastic self, which Moin interprets as his dampening presence. We wandered to Balajis and had coffee as a few others called in, including Suman who was supposed to have called at the guest house. Libby's friend arrived (Thulasi) and after a time we set off home. I fixed that I would come to Barath's school tomorrow at 4.30. He has school every day including Sundays from 8.0 – 8.0. Before we left he pulled me down to his level to whisper "is Moin going soon?. After I told him he would leave about 3.0 he said "please please chris come again at 3.30 so we can go to the park".

Lunch was ordered from S. Park – rotis and kaju nut masala. All good, followed by Bournville chocolate. Then a nice long chat about weddings. Moin is certain he does not want to marry until he has his PhD. This will mean he will have more choice. His aunts on both mother's and father's side have tried to arrange a marriage with one of their daughters. His parents have rejected this and so the families do not now communicate. Moin did not particularly like them fortunately. Asked if had read Darwin on the problem of cousin marriages. He had but apparently it is not uncommon to marry cousins as it is so difficult to find a match of the right caste (or level of Muslims).

At 3.15 he set off for his 14 hour train journey home. I gave him my book about a Sikh boy growing up in Wolverhampton (Boy with a topknot). I set off for Thumulagunta hoping for a more typical reception than the subdued visit in the morning. I arrived at exactly 3.30 to find, at the small temple before the start of the village, a delegation of many of my friends including six of the girls including Honey Shree. Balu took over the main camera and took pictures of the girls. Then nice gentle drift through the village meeting parents of the boys, attracting more and more photos. We then continued nice drifting out toward the park. This is the raised embankment around a huge area containing a cricket ground, with views to the South over the bypass to my rural place and the distant hills. The path at the top is paved and there are concrete carved animals along the way with red and yellow Bourgainvillea. By then we had Balu, Said, Madhu, Manosh, Balachandran, Kalyan, and some of the girls. The boys were their usual affectionate company, taking turns to cling on as we walked. Our destination was a new 'temple' to Hanuman the monkey god. The front was an enormous monkey face. After walking in without sandals there were carved scenes from his story where the boys posed for photos before climbing exposed stairs to go up inside the building for nice views over the village. I find I am a bit careful going up stairs but I do not often notice any problem. One of Balu's new words is Carefully sir. After coming out Balu wanted more pictures of the birds around the little lake down

below us while I tried to fend off a couple of rather drunk men who wanted me to go into their house for coffee. We then met up with the brothers Mounish and Bobby who now wears specs for his headaches. He is more confident than previously and had great fun with the small camera while Balu got good pictures of golden oriole, little brown dove and purple rumped sunbird. I learned after knowing him for 3 years that Said does not pronounce the D of his name so he is Syeee. It was a glorious evening with gentle sinking sun and cool breeze as we came back into the village for more pictures of mothers and new babies. Balu had got me to agree earlier that he could walk back to the guest house with me. We said goodbye to the girls and Mounish and Bobby, then set off: Balu, Said, Manosh, Madhu and Balachandran. I waved down an auto and off we went leaving Madhu and Balachandran behind (they turned up ten minutes later by cycle). I then had to load 176 of their afternoon's photos onto the computer then go through them with the boys perched on and around me, chanting delete delete ok ok delete. I managed to offload my large poly bag of small dull biscuits given me by students last week. I remembered that it was nearly lunchtime in UK so phoned home to find Libby and Hugh about to go to lunch with the Hands. The boys wanted to speak with Hugh but I doubt if he got much out of the conversations. "Hello sir I am Barath". Balu then manoeuvred them out of the room and as they started to leave climbed up to whisper to ask me for his coins. I have collected all the brightest new coins over the last year so he had a good haul, with duplicates to give to others. I tried to give him 40 rupees to get an auto back but he refused most dramatically. As usual I see them off the premises so that the security staff all see that they are my bona fides visitors. This was witnessed by four students in the foyer who leapt on me as I came back in. They are MA students doing English literature. So I sat down with them with a cup of tea brought by the observant Venu. They wanted to practice their English I guess. Nice enough lot, waiting there to welcome delegates to some conference. One of them came up to my room to collect a card and an invite to come anytime. Unfortunately one of my physics neighbours came by and knew that I was not working or going out so invited himself in for 30 minutes boring chat ending with the inevitable request that I notify any colleagues doing fluorescence spectroscopy to get in touch with him. One of his gems: "sir for so many years I have wondered how is it that when we feel some hot thing with a finger then so quickly our nerves tell our brains to tell our muscles to act instantly, isn't it?". "Now I have a biologist of international reputation who will be able to explain how the molecules can travel so fast". Go google it dummy. I told him it is physics and depolarisation across nerve membranes is almost instantaneous and that no molecules move. "At last I am in the light sir thank you".

When he left I decided I could not face the trek down to S Park so sat down to write the diary only to be interrupted by the four English students who are studying Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Dickens etc. They have fair English and do their share of the talking so are welcome. They went off with promises to come again and a request for me to contact them if I need anything – for example sir we will go now and get you food. It may be useful but probably not.

I found that I had brought the opera by Adams *Dr Atomic* about Oppenheimer and the atom bomb – rather suitable as that is what I am reading about now. So I piled up my dinner on the

Sunday Times magazine beside me and watched first part of it while eating salted Cashew, spicy cashew, salted plain crisps, a breakfast bar and a banana. Perfect. Then watched some House.

**27<sup>th</sup> January Monday.** The first day of routine 3 weeks of lectures. Had usual disturbed night, not helped by the person in the room below having his fan on full speed. It would be ok if it was just a loud hum but it has an uneven character rather like approaching helicopters. I woke as usual at 7.20 to a cloudy morning. Set out for walk and enjoyed it in spite of no birds except 2 partridges in a field. Breakfast of idli wada spoilt a bit by being careless with the tomato/onion soup; I cut the top off the poly bag too vigorously with my knife scissors and half of it splurged over my table including the unprotected lungi cloth. Washed it and dried on the roof in 20 minutes. I wish the soup was not quite so spicy as I am blowing my nose for a good 10 minutes afterwards. Sai Gopal was not late so I arrived for my lecture at the proper time of 9.30 to find only one student – the most loyal of the girls, Kamakshi. The others trickled in so I started at 9.40 on the electron transport chain and then started on Mitchell's chemiosmotic stuff which I always enjoy. I set out to find a bike to drive me home and found some microbiology students outside their lab and one of them went off to get a driver. He had borrowed the keys from one of the girls so fumbled a bit trying to start her pink scooter. At that moment Sai Gopal came out "can you trust this fellow?" apparently not as he kick started it in gear and it leapt forward, ushering Sai Gopal into an adjacent bush. Had a predictably horrible ride back, every speed bump being a nervous manoeuvre.

I had a bit of a dull headache, increased (I cannot spell accessabated) by failing to get internet connection. I later worked out that it was because I had run out of credit (Moin will sort it in the evening). Having decided I really must do some work on my history I really enjoyed it. All of the facts are in my book and it is just a matter of extracting the stuff directly relevant to methane and presenting it in a slightly casual way. I decided I would work intensively on it up until 4.00 when I have to go to Barath's school. But after lunch of usual rice and slime I lay down for 10 minutes and fell asleep only to be woken by Barath and his school friend Sai Prakash who had cycled up from school near the Town Club with Barath on the back to tell me his head teacher had a meeting today and wants me to come on Wednesday. His behaviour is yet again remarkable – the usual thing would be to leave me to go there and find out for myself. They were very smart in their white shirts and long green trousers. The boys in the village all seem to go to different schools. Barath is the only one who goes to Sri Venkateswara high school. He usually cycles but his cycle, old and borrowed from uncle, has a puncture so he walks.

After I fed them lunch of biscuits they set off back to school. I do not like to think of them cycling (2 on the cycle) through the chaos of Balaji colony but I guess they have survived so far so are probably safe. After they went I did some solid work on the History, exchanged a cup of tea from Venu for a bar of Bournville chocolate then off for an hour walk in the cooling evening (still hot though). No special birds but still enjoyable. Back to sit on roof for 20 minutes doing nothing, then writing this diary. My internet connection was failing and giving confusing messages so I texted Moin who rang back to say it probably needs 're-charging' and he would do it at 7.00. He had had a 'not very bad' journey back with some sleep. Had dinner at S.Park Aloo mutter and roti and butterscotch ice cream then direct back here for another episode of House.

**28<sup>th</sup> January Tuesday.** Today was half cloudy most of the time. It was very much a matter of duty to go for morning walk but again rewarded by seeing and photographing a great grey hornbill in the same tree where I first saw it. There were lots of singing bulbuls and magpie robins, oddly enough often hidden from view, but I did see a nice little flock of white-browed bulbuls. Back to idli/wada. Sai Gopal came 15 minutes late with a good excuse. He has a new rice cooker which is a sort of low level pressure cooker I think. He opened the lid before it was finished and it threw a third of its contents across the kitchen and burnt his hand a bit. I had my loyal 9 students only but they got a nice lecture finishing of Mitchell theory. They then told me that they would not be at tomorrow's lecture as they have an exam. Actually I have just thought that they were the microbiologists. Sai Gopal later said that the virology exam has been shifted to afternoon so that my lecture will be ok. We shall see.

Had a brief nice chat with old Srinivasulu who has not spoken to Sai Gopal since he retired. He just nods and grunts when he sees him. Wandering about, I came across my nice final year virology friends (Viji, Pavani, Suresh, Mallikarjuna and a few others). They were waiting for their next lecture on viruses and oncogenes. Please do this lecture sir. I arranged that they would come this evening (*now waiting at 8.30 as arranged but they said Indian time so another 20-30 minutes I guess*). Sai Gopal drove me back to carry on my history lecture. I spent a total of 4 hours on this today; very satisfactory. There was some function in a sort of tent in the courtyard – I mean eating function- so I had another specially good lunch. They carried on their chatting on MY roof so I could not use my sink/desk for good internet access. No problem. Venu came up with tea, laughing happily as always and telling me it is my before walk tea. I had thought to slob about with no walk but after that I could not let him down so off I went to the dairy farm. There was no sun and a strongish wind so nice atmosphere. I do like the smell of the cows. Saw little but heard a flock of bee eaters overhead that made me think of Italy and then Italian food and found I had dribbled onto my camera. Got a good picture of a pied bush chat.

I had no will to do anything after I got back so read a bit of Sunday's Hindu all about splitting Andhra Pradesh into Telengana and Seemandhra. Stupid politicians. Then down to S. Park to have small dinner of Masala dosa and pistache ice cream. I was the only customer. Then a stroll through temple area and down Gandhi road to auto for home.

I had arranged with Suresh and Mallikarjuna (2<sup>nd</sup> year virology) that they would come tonight at 8.30 Indian time. At 9.30 I phoned Suresh who said they had an exam and could not come. Very irritating. I watched some more of Adam's opera Dr Atomic then an episode of House.

**29<sup>th</sup> January Wednesday.** I had usual disturbed night. My book – Six Suspects by Vikas Swarup (author of A Slumdog millionaire) is so good that it wakes me up, wanting to read more. I woke at 6.50 and slowly got up to a very cloudy cool morning. As I am scheduled to go to Balu's school this afternoon I won't be having an afternoon walk so I dutifully set off at about 7.50 by which time the sun was coming out and burning off the clouds. The birds obviously appreciated it and came out to welcome me. Saw my first white-fronted drongo and got good picture, and then a coucal crashed into the tree next to me. Up by NCC nagar on the forest edge I stood still for some minutes and in one tree saw all three bulbuls, blue malkohar, magpie robin and rufous bellied babbler. A good morning, celebrated by having my favourite breakfast of Pongal.

Sai Gopal arrived on time on the way to deal with his mother in law at the hospital. The microbiology students have internal exams for next few days so are not coming to lectures. SG had sent round a memo to all departments inviting students to my lectures so, in addition to the 4 virologists I had 2 botanists and 4 fisheries students. I started with a recap of Mitchell stuff then started on the bacterial special systems. They seemed to like it and said they would be back tomorrow. After the lecture I went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year virologist's lecture theatre and asked why they did not come yesterday. They didn't seem at all embarrassed. Fortunately Viji translated when I asked if they want to come tonight. It seems they do not like to say no but they are worried about their exams. So they will come next week. Sai Gopal said that Thyagaraju in Biochemistry wanted to arrange lectures, although the others had previously said it is not possible. I have now arranged to give 6 lectures on regulation of gene expression to the final year students who were a nice lot so it will be a nice re-union and it is a good topic (operons etc). I failed to see anyone to give me a lift back so walked in rather hot sun back for my welcome beaker of cardamom/sugared tea. I washed my pink shirt and had a bucket bath and sat in the sun to dry out before my excellent lunch, provided by the people who are feeding the physics course people in their tent. All made even better by having a phone call from Hugh and Libby. I could hear them well but Hugh said I sounded as if I was talking underwater (perhaps cos I am overseas).

I was due to go at 4.30 to Balu's school today but at about 2.00 he appeared, out of uniform, to say "No come school today sir". He had got a puncture on the way home from school for lunch so decided not to go back and borrowed a bike to come here. This makes me wonder if my visit has been formerly arranged with the teacher or not. Anyway he extracted a promise to come to his village instead at 4.30. I had a sleep, then transferred photos from camera to computer then backed it all up onto my spare drive. Then a doze and off to the village in hot sun at about 4.00. My auto driver turned right into the main part of the village so I stopped him and told him to go straight on. No village there sir. Yes there is. So he called over someone who speaks English who talked to bystanders and assured me that this place I want does not exist. I said he should just continue down the road but they all told me it is not possible. So, irritated I gave him 10 rupees of his 30 rupee fare and stomped off.

I was in the village for about one and a half hours with all the usual activity. I had taken my ipad which entertained all the mothers aunts sisters etc in Balu's house while I drank wonderful sweet instant coffee. The favourite bits are pictures of Libby and Hugh, and my cello playing. This was touted through the village, with friends called out to come and listen. The other boys gradually turned up, especially Kalyan, Madhu and little Bobby. Bobby is much less shy this year and is copying Balu's affectionate possessiveness. This was constrained by the huge rucksack of books on his back – he had not reached his house from school. Balu dragged me up onto the roof to take bird pictures while the others played with my binoscope (!). He has very good eyes and produced my best ever pictures of the Large pied wagtail and, even more impressive, a wood sandpiper. Then down the challenging outside concrete stairs (no rail and drying clothes and pots and pans to negotiate) to collect the smaller Frisbee and out to the cricket ground to play. Some of them were quite expert. Every few minutes a new person would appear, to be photographed and then shown the Cello, playing Bach suites badly. All this in the lovely setting sun with a cool

breeze. In order to get away I had to agree that Balu can come with his cousin Pavan on his motorbike at 8.30 this evening. "Please arrange bojunum (actually lunch) with special items and chicken". Not sure what that was about but perhaps he was wanting to use that Telugu word as he had learned that afternoon that it is the 5<sup>th</sup> word I have in Telugu. At the guest house I had tested his English vocabulary. This is good for common nouns but it is more difficult to test verbs and most sentences need mimes or drawings for satisfactory communication.

*I am writing this while waiting for Balu and Pavan, listening to the great ending of Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier, the most beautiful music ever written. Typing has to stop because of 100% goosebumps and tears.*

As I came out of the village with Bobby and Balu they went berserk as an auto approached on the opposite side of the dual carriageway. I had never thought of trying to capture these but they succeeded by shouting and leaping up and down on the spot waving arms furiously. The auto obediently drove down to a break in the central barrier and came up to us. "SV university guest house sah" they both shouted. A great success. As I arrived at reception Venu leapt up and ran to get me tea. The slightly mad Botany professor was there doing some job, with a shy looking student. He pulled out his phone to show me his grand daughter. I asked the student if he is a botany student. No said the prof; he is my martial arts student. Poor chap.

The thought of slogging down to Sinduri Park was not attractive and I had a brilliant idea. I got Venu to phone the burger place and order a veggieburger, fries and coke to be delivered for 150 rupees. Good plan; they came within 20 minutes.

**30<sup>th</sup> January Thursday** *I am writing on Friday night so will not have a coherent story of today.*

Lovely sunny morning but few special birds until nearly home when I paused to look at a little conclave of rufous-bellied babblers under a bush when suddenly beside me was a young Paradise flycatcher with its bright chestnut back and in the background the sine curve of an adult male with his long undulating white tail disappearing amongst the trees.

I had a breakfast bar. I remember nothing about my lecture. Lunch was another excellent lunch – a spinoff from a conference lunch. Then quite a lot of work on my History. I went for a stroll rather than a walk in the evening sun, near the cricket ground where I was waved over to some security people (randi sah randi). No problem they just wanted to tell me they had seen me taking bird photos and wanted to point out a coucal in a nearby tree but it was too dark for a photo. Then on the way back I came up to 4 ladies all pointing up into a tree at 3 small owls sitting in a row on a branch. When I went to the other side of the tree a man came up to ask what I was looking at. I told him three owls in the tree. "Sah, where? I can see no cows in this tree". They must have been lodged in a different one I suppose.

After my evening walk I had lost the energy for a trip to town so had cashew nuts, a banana and some Christmas cake, followed by a little more work and some Dr Atomic, disturbed by the physics lecturers down the corridor. They had said they would call in at 8.30 but had not done so – so I wandered towards their room and was dragged in. These were College BSc lecturers in physics, attending a refresher course. There were 4 of them, dressed in shabby vests and lungis. Their room was the basic guesthouse room. Tiny desk attached to the wall. Large window (no AC), 2 beds. No chairs no table. My room does appear very de luxe with the same as theirs plus

AC, table, 2 armchairs, 3 small chairs. I had the usual problem of explaining how I am still active at age 74. Then loads of questions about my life, parents etc. As I was having difficulty understanding a bit of physics in my Oppenheimer book I asked about this but found they had not heard of Fermi, Szilard, Rutherford, Chadwick, Oppenheimer, Feynman, Planck, Pauli or Heisenberg. One of them was keen that I should give advice on starting research topics. It seems that they are being encouraged to start research programmes. He knows a bit about fluorescence spectroscopy so I had to explain some stuff in a review about its use in biology. Some of Tony's research stuff must have rubbed off so I could help him a bit. I escaped to bed at 11.15.

**31<sup>st</sup> January Friday.** I had the usual interrupted night but I don't mind. I woke too early at 6.40 so read some Oppenheimer till 7.20 then 10 minutes later off for walk. One of the ladies from the small houses by the path said something in a friendly Telugu so I asked if she speaks English. This was funny apparently as she repeated it to the other ladies who were cleaning their teeth with Neem twigs. So I speeded up and left them cackling by the roadside and went out past NCC Nagar all the way to the bypass road. On the way up a wide track I passed to young men squat/crapping by the side of the road, one each side, leaving me to walk between them; both were on their cell phones, one texting. A beautiful morning with magpie robins and bulbuls and sunbirds serenading. I walked along the bypass a little way hoping to find a path leading off into the hillside forest. Failed but saw a nice pair of Little minivets (the female is yellow where the male is red). A bit further on a man on the other side of the road stood to attention and did a namaste. When I returned it he asked where I am from. Ok sir welcome to india – with arms outstretched. Back to Idli Wada.

Sai Gopal was going for his annual medical checkup this morning so he had arranged for Tharakand to collect me on his motorbike. He was on time so we arrived before the Purse Centre was open. Tharakand from the Virology course and the two boys from botany came, So we had nice general chat about my research. Tharakand dropped me back afterwards where I did some solid work on the History, starting with 30 minutes of downloading papers seated at the sink on the roof. Lunch was back to rice and slime. More History in the afternoon then off at 5.00 for a long walk out towards the Vedic College. It was hot although the sun had almost set. No birds but I did meet Sai Gopal going for a stroll with a friend from physics. He had been pronounced healthy after his check up. On the way back I was called down a path by a student – to see the horses on the NCC parade ground. He is a M tech in electrical engineering called Noah. He came into the guest house for a chat. He told me he plays keyboard for his church. He spoke good English so we have arranged to go for dinner next week some time.

On time at 7.00 Charlie arrived to take me to their new house near Kapilatheertham. Not an enjoyable ride as he is so confident as he weaves in and out of bikes and cows and cars in the dark narrow roads with their speed bumps beggars and piles of bricks and building sand. Always feel very welcome with them. Last year Steven had been very quiet and dull. This year he is the opposite. Age 16 he is now in his A level year (not called that) – it is often called 10 plus 2, grade 10 being the important 'Intermediate' year. Every response he makes it is as if he loves to talk about it. He brought me his chemistry book of questions and answers, including Pauli's exclusion principle, Schrodinger's equation pi orbitals etc – all much more than most of our 1<sup>st</sup> year BSc

students don't know. While waiting for dinner I played some pieces on my ipad including Beethoven moonlight sonata. Charlie knew the slow movement and insisted on singing along with some crude harmonisation. They could not believe the fast last movement. I then played the usual showpiece of the Queen of the Night aria from Magic flute, not believing that it is a human voice. We had a delayed dinner because Charlie was doing a lot of the cooking. It was wonderful with 3 chicken dishes including biryani and puris. They failed to make me eat more than twice what I wanted. I had to look at photo albums which I had seen last year. Then I was led down the street by Charlie, Teena and Steven to get an auto home. Nice affectionate farewell from Steven "I love your visits please come again soon uncle". Mainly so he can have his favourite food I think. Had a very nice fast safe auto ride home through the wide empty downhill streets. Nearly falling asleep so must stop.

**February 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday.** Usual disturbed night, waking at 6.40 for a read of Oppenheimer. I extended this when I saw the day was fully cloudy (as they say here) and misty and no sun. So had nice read with tea and Pongal for breakfast. Sai Gopal came to collect me at 9.30 for a 1 sandal lecture (attendance is indicated by the number of sandals at the entrance). At the same time as Sai Gopal arrived at the guest house Tharachand came on his bike but then he was not there at the lecture theatre. I left MAKSHI to continue with her revision of DNA replication for the afternoon exam but then Tharachand arrived with a microbiology student - the one with a really worried look that turns into a charming smile if encouraged. So I gave a lecture on Chemolithotrophs and cancelled my Monday lecture, to resume on Tuesday when the exams will have finished. Went to find SG in his secondary office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. As we about to leave he said please wait as they want to do Puja "you want to attend". My look was enough, so he said "he doesn't like that rubbish" and off we went. Every Saturday they do a little Puja to the lab god, waving little lighted lamps around it.

So back to tea, shower and sit in the sun waiting for Edwin who arrived exactly as promised at 12.15. Arranging his visit had been slightly confusing with some doubt occasionally that he would come. That was all explained. He has changed jobs to a better bank job in Kadapa (where I went with Libby to visit Imran). He has been living in a hotel for the last 2 weeks while hunting for accommodation. This is very difficult for single men as no one trusts them. He found a place yesterday - a 4 roomed floor of a house belonging to a friend of a work colleague. It is unfurnished but his company pay for furniture. I asked if he has a cooker "no sir, no need I don't know cooking". He is going back tonight so that he can start work in the morning and sort out his house. His salary is good (30k per month). His first month salary was spent on a large Samsung posh phone which he used very frequently. He is expected to help family and friends with money advice and transactions and he is also expected to deal with customers even on leave like today. He is as nice as ever. He has not seen his girlfriend for a very long time. Her father has taken her phone. He is a strict Brahmin priest and is violently against them being together. We had great difficulty communicating lunch requirements to Sury who is completely deaf and does not know written English. We asked for lunch from sinduri park - butter rotis and panneer. But he went to Manasa - the usual place but he got what I have always failed to get so, although it was not as good as Sindhuri Park, I have learned how to get a better lunch.

After looking at photos and chatting we went to big Thumulagunta to the new Hanuman place; I don't think it is actually a temple. We got an auto only to the entrance of the village so had a nice walk through, being directed by ladies on their doorsteps or hanging out of windows. There are part that have not changed much, including a nice little quarter taken up by buffaloes. When I said Come on let's go and see the monkey Edwin called Shush sir they will not like that. Of course I was quoting cheeky village boys who would be forgiven more than me. Then a nice evening walk along the park pathway in a strong breeze out to near the bypass before returning for a wander through my Mallipalle, saying hello to cows goats hens and many mothers grandfathers etc. Manosh appeared early on which was helpful as he has some English and confidence (too much). We saw Honey Shree, for a chat then Suman and lots of uncles and fathers. Then Madhu came up to have a pseudo-fight. As I knew, Barath was at school and will probably be there tomorrow morning. So I left a message with Manosh that if free he should come to guest house at 11 tomorrow and that I would come at 4.00. I then learned that what I thought is his house is in fact his uncle's. His family is somewhere else in the village and he moves between them.

We were lucky to get an auto home immediately so that Edwin's friend Swamy could visit. He was in Edwin's year and has just finished writing his PhD with Thyagaraju. They went off to see someone else leaving me to write this while listening to Schubert's wander fantasy for piano.

Edwin got back a bit late so we immediately rushed off to Sindhuri Park for dinner which was also rushed cashew nuts and roti as his bus went at 9.30 and he had to be there 20 minutes before. So no ice cream. We got an auto that quickly got us to the bus station where he jumped out leaving me to be driven home. The bus station is opposite Fortune Kences hotel where the traffic is most horrible, traffic going both ways around the very big roundabout there. Anyway he was a safe driver and here I am again.

I watched the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Chris Mullins *A very British Coup*. Wonderful then to bed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> February Sunday.** Had a more than usually disturbed night but no matter as I have no plans for Sunday. Woke at 7.15, put on ipod/loudspeaker with a Bach Cantata and continued with Oppenheimer biography – good start to a Sunday. It was clear and sunny with a nice breeze so I went for a slow walk by NCC nagar in the rough ground where I first saw the blue faced malkohar and sure enough there he was again. So a few more photos, and some nice portraits of red whiskered bulbuls. Breakfast was idli/wada which was really good; I think it is only if I have no variation that it gets unattractive. I assumed that I had an empty morning ahead of me so set some washing going then lay down to have a cool read. I had left a message with Manosh at the village yesterday that anyone can come in the morning (although some are school apparently) and I would come to the village in the afternoon. I did not expect anyone but mid morning Mounish arrived with Badri who took over the camera and ipad, discovering how to do videos etc. They are the biggest of my gang and good fun. As I showed them out at about 1.00 I found there was a big lunch about to start and as always when that happens I get a very good but too big lunch. Excellent.

Desperate for a sleep I slumped onto the bed but within 10 minutes there was a scuffling noise at the door and Barath arrived with tall dark Said and Manosh, wanting to take more photos and to look at loads of previous ones. All fun but exhausting. They left after half an hour,

extracting a promise that I would come to the village at 3.30. Again I collapsed on bed and fell asleep before I could pick up a book to read, waking with a jerk at 3.45. So off up the road in very hot sun to get an auto which was immediate. They were all playing their version of cricket with a stick instead of a ball. They all then dived onto my bag, one to carry it, Bobby to get the small camera, Balu the big one and Said the ipad.

Balu set off amongst the thorn bushes to find some birds. Leaving me to wander slowly about in the sun. At some stage I found 4 of them, with 2 older boys sitting looking through binoculars at the distant block of flats where there was apparently a pretty girl on one of the balconies. A man then drifted up, introduced himself and said "Sir they are not eligible for Thumulagunta boys sir". Lower or higher? We then set off for another trip to the park which was a good idea as it is exposed to the pleasant coolish wind. Also many birds for Balu. Said has become very affectionate this year so I have to have him and Madhu and Bobby and little Jogesh taking turns to hold hands or thin arms draped around my waist. From Madhu "he is my darling"; from Said "no, he is my sweetheart". Well I don't know. The beautiful Bourgainvillea attracts demands for photos shoots for them all one by one. Balu got some good pictures including house sparrows and Brahminy mynahs (new this year). At the furthest part of the walk we look down on a large brick-making area with very poor families living in shacks beside the brick stacks and kilns. Having learned that what I had thought is Balu's house is in fact his uncles I wanted to see his father's house. He kept saying it is very small, it has no paint etc. It was on the edge of the village and seemed more like a bit of farmyard with chickens wandering in and out. His father was there sitting on a charpoy watching TV. There was no other furniture but one other room or alcove with cooking stuff. Outside his mother came up and we had more photos. Then back to uncle's house for more pictures of his sister's pretty little girl. I at last collected everything back into my bag and set off with the usual retinue of disciples to the road where I got an auto instantly. He did not know the way but the boys explained to him. He then told me he had only had the auto for 2 days so did not know anywhere. He had asked for 40 rupees at which I had laughed and got in telling him I would pay 30. But he was such a nice chap and good driver I gave him the 30 than the extra with a flourish, rewarded with a big grin. As we came out of Thumulagunta road onto the main road he just missed hitting a scooter who then cut in sharply waving violently; no problem it was Prof Thyagaraju.

I had tried to phone hugh in the village but no reply. On the way back I got two missed calls so called him back only to be cut off as I had only 5 rupees left. They were having lunch near Aberystwyth, on the brothers tour. So I must stop this and stagger down town for small dinner and to find somewhere to charge my phone. This proved to be impossible. Masala dosa and butterscotch ice cream. I wandered about near temple area where I was told I would find a phone centre. I failed so wandered hopefully down Gandhi road, my good spirits gradually eroded by hooting bikes and autos. So got auto home.

Barath had asked if he and his cousin could come at 8.30 so I got back by then but they didn't come. A slight relief as I was Balued out. After writing diary I watched some more of Mullins A very British Coup until I heard a quiet knock on the door and "chris Chris". It was Noah, the Christian student I met a few days ago. I assured him he was welcome and we had nice chat. Typical of the Christian boys, his measure of how good his church is is how many foreigners come

to teach there; their's come from Australia. Again, typical of some of the boys whose English is more confident he comes out with rather personal questions & remarks: "you are looking much better now. Previously you had many red marks and spots on your face and head but these are now gone". I told him that I rarely look in the mirror so would not know. Perhaps he is right and gradually browning skin hides some blemishes. Speaking of which yesterday while walking on the park Said held his dark brown smooth unblemished arm against mine; stroking my blemished pale old skin he kept saying "so beautiful so beautiful". So I repeated it for him leading us to stagger along like two drunk sailors.

Finished the DVD and so to bed.

**3<sup>rd</sup> February Monday.** I had a disturbed but long sleep. As I had no 9.30 lecture I got up slowly and went off for a walk as far as I could go due north over the bypass and toward the hills. It was very hot and no wind and I walked for one and a quarter hours with few stops so was glad to collapse with a mug of tea to go with my Pongal. I finished my washing and put it on the line on the roof to amuse Sai Gopal who tells me he has only 2 underpants while I have 9 (too much info). He arrived at 10.50 to take me to my lecture on the operon to final year biochemists. I had taught them last year so they were accustomed to me and proved to be a very cheery lot. I had my optical migraine during the lecture (first time in india this year) but it did not matter as long as I did not try to read my notes.

I finished exactly at 12.00, receiving a promise that they would be there tomorrow at 11.00 exactly. There are never offers of a lift back to the guest house from Biochemistry and I had had enough of walking in the heat for the day so went to find Sai Gopal. On the way I remembered that Sunil is now back so extracted him from his lab and arranged to take him to dinner tonight. It is now 7.0 when he said he will come.

I had a typical rice and slime lunch, extra horrible after my last few days excellent lunches. This is mainly because Sury is deaf and fairly stupid and refuses to take notice of anything I write. I shall try to get something different tomorrow if Venu or Lokesh are there to give instructions. I fell fast asleep after neutralising lunch with chocolate. I started to do some History work and had typed in a Genetics heading with a comment that I need to contact mary lidstrom. I then checked my email to find that she had just contacted me to find out if I was doing the history. So I sent her confirmation plus some questions that I then repeated to Colin Murrell, who typically replied instantly with some very useful stuff.

I had previously been told by Barath to go to the school to see his head teacher on Monday at 4.30 but that was told me last Wednesday before I saw him at the weekend. So I did not know if the arrangement stands. So braving the sun I set out down to town, fortunately picking up an auto immediately. I purposely arrived at the gate at exactly 4.30 and immediately Balu appeared in his white shirt and long green uniform trousers looking smaller and more vulnerable than when on his home ground. "Sorry sir no head teacher today. Please come Sunday sir to village". He was obviously a bit nervous so off he went with a shy little wave, leaving me in hot dusty Balaji colony. I went to the nearby cricket ground where they were having the annual Tirupati book fair which filled the perimeter of the ground with tents containing books. I failed to find anyone who could sell me what I have long wanted – a dictionary that has the Telugu words in English script; they are always in the curlywhirly Telugu script so useless for me to learn. I saw a

real gem of book arrangements: The thoughts of Gandhi next to Hitler's Mein Kampf. They must have wondered why this was worth a photo. By then it was 5,15 and the whole of the street was lit by the golden sun streaming down the road, so good for a few good pictures including a video of the Balaji traffic lights. Setting off for the 2km slog up the road to home I was saved by a member of guest house staff who gave me a very fast lift home to tea on the roof, reading Max Hastings 'Warriors', his set of short biographies of different sorts of soldier etc from 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As always with him it is beautifully clearly written. I read his account of Muller who captained a German ship The Embden in the first world war, which captured 17 allied ships, always saving the crews, gaining the name of The gentleman warrior, and a place in a school book prize I got at primary school about pirates.

So here I am waiting for Sunil (as in many previous diaries). He came about an hour late. He had a lot of extra work as he has been away for some time. We drove fairly safely down to S Park but with enough near misses to confirm that I do not like bike travel. We had a nice dinner of kaju gobi – cashew nuts and cauliflower. Sunil speaks so quietly it is quite exhausting having dinner with him. I told him that I had some errand in the town so he should go by bike and I would later get an auto. But the plan was changed when I had a missed call from Barath. Sunil helped to interpret; he was with his cousin Sheshu at the guest house so I said I would get there in ten minutes which I achieved by auto. He had come to say sorry about the failed school visit. His head teacher said sorry but he had to play tennis for the TTD team (temple and school administration). Seshu wanted to see pictures so I loaded up the weekend visit pictures to discover that one of Barath's bird photos is likely to be the photo of the year, a feather-perfect picture of a Brahminy mynah. I then discovered that my picture of a bird this morning that seemed like a hawk – shikra- but a bit different is in fact a sort of cuckoo – the brainfever bird; best picture of this so far. Barath goes to bed at 10.30 or 11.00 and up at 6.00, woken by his little girl cousin. They have just left so now I can have the luxury of watching an episode of House.

**4<sup>th</sup> February Wednesday.** Did not feel like getting up for a walk this morning but did so. Good rewards. There is one nearby area of agriculture between the main road up to the agriculture college and their cricket ground with some nice rows of coconut palms where I saw the only 2 golden backed woodpeckers this year and the nice Munia pictures. So I strolled gently there in the clear morning sun with the red hills providing their stable background. I think I got some nice pics of the long tailed prinia which advertise themselves with a gentle little song while staying hidden low down in the grass. Saw coucal and saw and heard golden orioles. Good pictures of white fronted drongo which seems less nervous than the common one. No woodpeckers but some nice butterflies.

Breakfast of two breakfast bars. Prepared my second lecture for biochemists – lac operon. Sai gopal arrived at 9.30 so we were only 5 minutes late to find the PURSE Centre shut. The research scholar who opens it came zooming up on her scooter with her 'scarf' flying prettily behind her. By 9.50 I had 2 virologist (the usual pair of the nice girl, Karamakshi and Tharachand whose house I visited. Plus the microbiology boy I saw in town yesterday, telling me that he had turned up to my cancelled lecture, plus another virologist. Had enjoyable chatty lecture about fermentation. Then drifted over to biochemistry, chatting with Hanumar's PhD supervisor Balaji on the way. I had a full house there – at least 30 students so had worthwhile lecture. While

looking for someone with a bike afterwards I was captured by Thyagaraju who offered inviting coffee. This took 20 minutes to arrive from the canteen so we had time to chat while he signed endless heaps of papers brought to him by his minions. After this there was still no sign of anyone I recognised with a bike so walked back in the very hot sun.

Earlier I had tried, through Sai Gopal, to arrange a different lunch but my suggested idli wada is not available at lunchtime so I managed to tell sury to get mushroom fried rice from the upstairs part of Manasa. It was good but slightly dull (better than slimy dahl). After a brief sleep I forced myself to get going on the history – genetics now. There is a problem with this because the ‘driver’ of so much good genetics is Mary Lidstrom who claimed to work with a facultative methanotroph (almost certainly not, but a contaminant bug like mine that does not use methane). She had emailed yesterday to ask if I was getting anywhere with the history contribution so I had asked her a few delicate question, and sent the same ones to colin murrell. Found I had instant replies from both with loads of useful information and references and a nice review by colin who had found a delicate phrase to dismiss mary’s confusing work. I worked on this in rather hot room (I don’t like noisy AC), successfully downloading some good papers. Just as I was getting going at about 3.30 one of the demanding physics people from down the corridor appeared in the open doorway and asked if he could sit down (in his white lungi and shawl flapping in the wind). Again he wants me to help him find a collaborator in the uk and he wants me to give him my book – so he can show how he met this wonderful inspiring English man. I told him he could buy it on Amazon for £178. Then I had to try to tell him what proteins are and how you purify them. He is completely out of his depth. When I told him he could find collaborators in the indian institute of science he said this is impossible because he is from the lowest ‘Scheduled caste’. This is likely to be an excuse as some of the top people there are from these lower castes. Eventually I had to tell him I must continue.

I had intended to work through till 7.0 but then decided to go for a short walk and work in the evening.

So I walked up to the green lake which is hardly more than a rubbish tip with some green water in it. At last I saw a water hen – but the usual view of its red rear scuttling into hiding. I was then disturbed by someone who insisted I must remember him from last few years. He lives on the corner house near the lake and I think it is his father who is so friendly some mornings. I accepted an invitation for tea or coffee and got Horlicks. A rather dull looking and dull sounding boy in his 2<sup>nd</sup> BSc year doing microbiology at a private college. The usual questions – can I get a job with microbiology, how do I get into SV university course etc. After making grateful noises for the Horlicks I was able to escape and stroll back down past Lokesh’s house to home. I decided to get them to order a burger but they did not know what I was talking about and Venu was at home. I phoned Tharachand who came on his bike. I found a website giving me the phone number of MFC the burger place but there was no reply so Tharachand went on his bike to get one which he brought 20 minutes later, forgetting the chips. So I had veggie burger with banana and Christmas cake. I did a little more work but ran out of willpower. As the students had finished their exams I tried to lure some up to the guest house but failed. One of them was very keen to come but now they have the threat of national exams. No reply from Mallikarjuna (2<sup>nd</sup> year virology) but he sent very apologetic txt later to say he had been in cinema and can he come

next day. I was tired of sitting with laptop on my lap so arranged it on a chair to watch from my bed - Forster's *Howard's End* with Emma Thompson, Antony Hopkins, and all the usuals. Very good. And so to bed.

**5<sup>th</sup> February Wednesday.** Had a disturbed night as usual, waking early at 6.10 with a back ache perhaps from too much time with computer yesterday. Went for a stroll at 8.0 to my agricultural area. Took a long time to get there as I was stopped by birds as soon as I got into the campus. The golden oriole I thought I saw turned out to be a black headed oriole which looks exactly like it says. Saw my favourite little minivets and Ashy prinia, which did their usual thing of hiding in the grass. A beautiful clear sunny morning, getting very hot by 9.00 when I returned for idli wada tiffin. Good. Sai Gopal got me to my virologists lecture which just had usual two plus two from microbiology – Chinna and one other. I finished fermentation and started on photosynthesis. I found that the large numbers in the biochemistry lecture yesterday were due to a lot of biotechnology students who were not there at 11.00 for the start of my second lecture on regulation of gene expression but they drifted in; late because their lecturer would not stop on time. They are a nice responsive lot. Before going in to the lecture Hanuma (biochem res scholar) came up on his motorbike to tell me he had emailed me to tell me that he was back from his Mumbai conference which was a success. He was pleased that I want him to drive me home after the lecture which he did. I had ordered Kaju fried rice from Manasa Chinese bit and it was good although I only eat about 2/3 of it.

I then slogged away at the genetics bit of my History, mainly trying to collect all the early papers. I think I broke the back of it and it should now be straightforward.

A few days ago I got a message on facebook from Raff. I had emailed him a few times during the year but got no reply. He has had some big problems (?) but things are ok now so he was sending me a message to say he wants to get in touch and personally apologise for seeming to forget me. Then today he sent email to say that he had looked up PQQ for old time's sake and there is a whole load of new stuff on Wikipedia where my website is quoted and disagreed with. I am sure my blood pressure goes up when I read all this stuff. I don't know who writes it but they are clearly not practicing scientists. They claim there are at least 4 PQQ enzymes in humans and give references so I better get looking at these. Colin Murrell's colleague sent a load of stuff on the novel type of methanol dehydrogenase, or rather the genes encoding it for me to evaluate. So I wont run out of things to do here.

Not wanting to sit at computer all day I had a refreshing 'shower' and sat in the sun at 4.00 with a beaker of tea before going for my evening walk near NCC nagar. I am at last realising that I rarely see birds of interest in the evening but the walks are nice anyway.

After loading another 200 pictures on the computer and sorting out the bird ones I went off to Sindhuri park for dinner of kaju/vegetable and rotis and pista icecream. I have never seen the

roads so crowded – from Balaji colony to start of Gandhi road. We were taken over by a policeman – who jumped and sat by the driver, who suggested bypassing Gandhi road by going the wrong way up Nethaji road and through the little backstreets. It was quicker but more hair-raising.

Now back in room waiting for Chinna who was keen to come tonight. I told him that he must let me know if he decides not to come. So far only 10 minutes late. I don't mind if he does not come as I have started a cold. It started with huge bout of sneezing in the middle of the afternoon and now is at the runny nose stage. I will not be able to lecture tomorrow if it remains like this but there is probably going to be a strike anyway. The students union organises these strikes without discussion with the majority of the students. In this case it is the usual problem of the division of the state into two states. No one could tell me if the strike will be one day or prolonged. The last one was 7 weeks which is why my timetable is so muddled.

Chinna came with 5 others including one boy from Zoology, one who had toothache and was quiet and one who I had not met before; they told me he was Scheduled (lower) caste. I showed them some of my pictures of course including the one of the two books at the book fare – Hitler and Gandhi side by side. I asked if they know about Hitler. 'Yes, the rather obnoxious low caste boy said = he was a great leader@. Good or bad? Good sir. The others clearly felt this was going too far. I got the impression that the boys did not like his behaviour but were being kind to him. About 5 times his very noisy phone went off and he usually answered until Reddy turned on him and told him to 'off it'. They did not know what Jews are so to tell about that was difficult. The other two were Reddy (sad=looking but with nice smile) and Suresh. These three did most of the interacting. My nose stopped running so it was tolerable and they were good company. The three 'spares' left after half an hour leaving the others to have very nice chat with essential photos. They left about 11.30 so I had an early night.

**6<sup>th</sup> February Thursday.** I had a good night with only one stop. I woke with no runny nose (I had the nose but not the runny). Went for short bird stroll interrupted by small boy in school uniform who had often said hello but had not had the courage to ask for one photo. Today he came up with his dad or big brother who asked for photo. In my agriculture part yet again I was rewarded by pictures of a new bird which I think is the other common sort of Munia as found around farms. This time they were in the top of the little minivet tree and they were there as well. Had a phone call from Sai Gopal to say the strike was postponed so had to prepare lectures on photosynthesis and gene regulation. Only the 2 boys from virology were there and only the Biochemists (not biotechnologists) were there. Enjoyable but daft. After, I went to find the final year virologists (Mallikarjuna etc) who were having a lecture from big fat Antony Johnson who came out to chat. He let me have the class for a few minutes so they could explain that they have other exams until Monday but then they will be free to visit.

I got a lift from a PURSE centre man. Lunch same as yesterday – kaju fried rice. After brief sleep I had another go at finishing the Genetics bit of my History. I decided I would not go out at 5.0 but keep going to try to do a thorough job. I had a brief sunning period on the roof and so had missed 9 calls from Barath's number. No reply when I called back. My plan was not too successful as Hanuma from biochemistry arrived to tell me about his conference in Mumbai. I am writing this at 6.30 wondering what to do. Perhaps Barath was wanting to arrange about school

visit but maybe just to say hello (the phone is his uncles I think). I have not yet been to Ravi at Kalyan residency to pay for our car and order one for home journey. Surya phoned this morning and said no urgency about that.

Went to Kalyan to pay. Ravi was not there at the travel desk but they said they would phone and he would be there so I went to have dinner while waiting. I was the only one in the restaurant. They have new printed menus on stiff laminated card pages. Everything is much more expensive and about 50% more than at Sindhuri park. I had channa masala (chick peas) and one butter roti – good snack. Ravi was as nice and relaxed as usual. He did not want me to pay with credit card (about £30) because (as Surya later explained) he has to use the Kalyan system and they charge 5% extra for it. I booked our ride to Chennai but he did not write it down. When I said write it down please he laughed and said no problem I will write it later.

I failed to get an auto immediately and then accidentally hailed a shared auto. He then cheated and pretended he is a real auto and asked 50 rupees; then he accepted 40 but then kept stopping to try to pick up other customers – he got one who then paid his 10 rupees. It was horribly juddery which was uncomfortable as I have strained my lower back slightly. In the shared auto the seats are higher so you can only see people from waist down and cannot really see where you are going. Not to be repeated.

I had a nice phone call from Libby and Hugh and from Edwin. He has now moved into his 4 room house. I asked if he has the furniture there yet but no it won't be there for 2 weeks. So where do you sleep? On the floor sir. So he works all day and comes home to sleep on the floor. Suman phoned and came at about 9.30 and bullied me into copying onto a pen drive all the pictures he has ever been in and also quite a few of the village girls. Then had a slow struggling chat and off he went. Watched an episode of House and then to bed.

**7<sup>th</sup> February Friday.** Woke again to a bright clear sunny day so went for a bird stroll to the dairy farm. By the small stream I was held up for 10 minutes by a group of small birds who seemed quite oblivious of me so got nice pics of 2 types of prinia and the funny little dumpy rufous bellied babbler. No rollers or hoopoe or even bee eaters. I was about to take a picture of a sandpiper but waited for the tractor to drive by but it didn't "I came this way to see you sir as I often see you from time to time here". Down he jumped to shake hands, scaring off the sandpiper. I got back for a nice breakfast of 2 breakfast bars while preparing photosynthesis and gene expression.

Sai gopal was on time and there were 5 students: one nice botany student, Kamakshi, Tharachand (also called Chendu), and two microbiologists including small enthusiastic Chinna. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in the month is usually a holiday but because so many extra days were given at Pongal this Saturday is a work day. But by lecturing for 1 and 1/4 hours I finished photosynthesis so could cancel Saturday lecture. That is the last of my lectures to them. Then hurried over to Biochemistry to give my last lecture to them. They are a nice lot and asked if they can come to the guest house, then wrote down 6 of their names with phone numbers. I now have a whole week with no lecturing. This time a dozen biotechnology girls came to the lecture and they were very keen to get photos with me and to arrange to come and visit next week.

On the way out I saw Prof Reddy (Head) so I could report that I had finished and then up came Thyagaraju to arrange dinner for Sunday night. Sai Gopal gave me a lift back and accepted my

invitation to stay and have tea. When I told him about Thyger's invitation I was immediately invited to his house for Saturday evening (tomorrow). Lunch was mushroom fried rice from Manasa Chinese. After a sleep I did 3 hours work on History and think I have sorted the genetics part. With my week free I should easily complete it.

After 15 minutes sunbathing I had tea then stroll around local agricultural bit. Very few bird except for my minivets in the usual tree. But the usual wonderful evening light to stroll home in.

Sai gopal had told me where to buy good steel stuff so I went by auto to Gandhi road and found the place. It is in the road opposite garland road; the first part is a long series of jewellers selling and buying gold mainly. I paid 90 rupees (90p) for 6 small pots for putting spices in during my cooking. I shall probably return next week for some more things. Wandered thro the temple area to Sindhuri park where the tank area has a lot of constructions with lit up gods so perhaps there will be another festival. Had very good but excessive dinner of stuffed alloo (potato) with butter roti and pista ice cream. Then real auto home to write this.

**8<sup>th</sup> February Saturday.** Had good night (that is only 2 waking parts). It gets quite cool at about 5.00 when the traffic starts its attack so I even need to have a blanket. Waking at 7.30 it was tempting to lie and read and not go walking. Once again I resisted temptation and was duly rewarded. Within 400 yards/metres of the guest house, I saw palm swifts, parakeets, crows, koil, babblers, bulbuls and a beautiful oriole showing off its gold high up in a tree where there are always birds on its fruit I guess. Then directly opposite Lokesh's house I caught a glimpse of chestnut and there beside the path was a paradise flycatcher – a juvenile with short tail. I stood in the same place for at least 15 minutes trying to get a good picture but failed. There were 2 of them, the second had grown its long tail but only just getting a hint of white. While waiting for them I saw for the first time (and photographed) this year the cute little Asian Brown flycatcher and then, creeping jauntily about (can you creep jauntily?) the lovely little Forest wagtail who wags his tail side to side. I thought I would not see him as he was always more or less only at the place on the path where there used to be a stream – now dried up; this was also where I could usually see the Paradise flycatcher. Sure enough when I had given up and they seem to have moved on I found there was a small filthy stream there. In the middle of this process a student wandered up to ask what I was doing, causing me to be atypically irritable, waving him away (actually eventually almost shouting Go away). Towards the end of my vigil there was a roar of a motorbike pulling up behind me and a great blast of horn. I just managed to remove my look of fury as I saw it was Lokesh. So I gave up and chatted and showed him my rather poor picture. Then on for the rest of my stroll. I had intended going a long way out into the hills as I have no lecture to get back to but this episode had used nearly 20 minutes and it was getting very hot so I went on my rough walk near NCC nagar, seeing the Forest wagtail again (must be a different one I think), also on a previously hidden stream of black sludge. I was accompanied all the way by both bulbuls and hopping Indian robins to the devastated area behind the pig research building which is now almost derelict. This is where I usually went to see interesting birds. Stupid me - I just started walking across it without looking, so missed a beautiful bird, or rather getting a very good view in flight. Like our kingfisher but more heavily built (anyway no water) and with little tail. I think it might be the Pitta. Then a good view and pictures of a shrike (I have to check which one). Back home in strong hot sun at 10.00 for tiffen. As he bought in my little carrier bag from

Manasa he kept saying “you are so late sir, so late”. Wonderful Idli/Wada with hot red soup. It is so good when I am hungry and have not had it every day.

I had intended to finish my work on the history of the methanotroph genetics but there was a long powercut so I finished reading Oppenheimer on the roof then back in to potter about tidying up then resorting to lying on the bed playing games on the ipad (first time I have done this). I had such a late breakfast I rejected lunch and as the power came back on I finished the genetics section with its huge list of references, which I then emailed to Colin and Mary for checking for errors, omissions or insults. At about 3.30 I had tea in the hot sun on the roof, building up a good supply of vitamin D. I then collapsed on bed to read (finishing Oppenheimer) and doze. I was wondering what would happen tomorrow as Sunday is usual day for Thumulagunta visit and I had not had a call from Balu since his missed calls. Then disturbed by banging on door which I assumed was someone coming to collect my used tea glass. But it was Mounish with a school friend Hare Krishna, a very neat good looking boy from Tirupati itself only sir – not Thumulagunta. Mounish had come to show me off I think. We had to go through all the usual stuff looking at photos, hearing me play cello on ipad, looking at laser pointer (always a favourite but not so impressive in day time). Then off they go with my camera. I asked Mounish if Balu is coming – no sir at school. Will he be at school on Sunday? Yes. Should I come in the afternoon? Yes. All a bit confusing until there is a knock on door and Manosh and Balu are there. So I was able to relax a bit while the four of them did their things while I lay dozy on the bed, with little darting visits from Balu to check I am happy. After photos on the roof, Mounish and Hare Krishna left. I then found that Balu has a holiday all tomorrow. I think there may be a bit of rivalry between Mounish and Balu. I am always assuming that this may be my last time here and wondering if there is anything I can do for Balu and the boys and have decided I should get Balu a bike (about £50). He usually uses his uncle’s or his cousin’s (both rather decrepit). As the bikes are shared then this can be a present to Balu to be shared with others. But how to deal with it? Yesterday Hanuma had helped me find a bike shop by calling a friend. While he was phoning I found one by Googling.

I managed to get Balu alone on the roof to ask about bikes. “Would you like me to get you a bike?” “Ok”. I wanted more than that. Is it a good idea? Are you very pleased? His look of delight was a reasonably good signal. Where do I get one? He told me same as Hanuma had said (and Google). “When? Wednesday -it is a holiday”. So I may have achieved something. I was then informed that the boys are planning to collect me to go for a walk on the dairy farm at 7 tomorrow morning. Apparently Balu’s uncle works there and had seen me yesterday and assumes that I go every day. Good plan. I wanted Sai Gopal to meet my friends so they waited till he arrived; this should have been 5.45 but he didn’t come until nearly 6.30. I used Balu’s skill to take a photo of me with Sai Gopal, something I always regret not doing previously. So Manosh and Balu very courteously and respectfully shook hands with Sai Gopal and me and left, with Balu rushing back in for a hug and a “sorry uncle” to Sai Gopal. He was very impressed with them.

We then drove out to Sai Gopal’s house near Kapilatheertham for dinner. Cars really are not suitable for the little roads around his house. The last bit of the journey involved driving off the road into the car park at the bottom of his block of flats. The only way in was to nudge another parked car out of the way. We had a really nice veggie dinner cooked by his wife who sends

madam her best wishes (I had already given madam's). Then a nice drive home, discussing how there are too many boys who drive bikes after drinking. At the next traffic lights (Balaji colony) bikes were being stopped by police and drivers tested for drinking by sticking a machine into their mouths. Whatever else it did I am sure it spread a few colds if not worse.

**9<sup>th</sup> February Sunday.** A similar Sunday to others I have had here, in being enjoyable, but otherwise different. After only one traffic wake up I eventually was fully woken at 6.50. This often happens due to the release of frantic drivers from the level crossing. I then remembered the dairy farm plan and slowly got up, assuming they would come about 8.00ish. But no sign so I had my ordered excellent idli wada and chai. At about 10 Balu turned up with a medley of friends who varied during the day but included at some point: Manosh, Dayakar, Badri, Mounish, Yaswanth and, most important, dark handsome brooding muslim Said. "Sorry sir no dairy farm sir, baby dead". A very small baby had died and so they cancelled dairy farm. The main project from Balu (Barath) was to copy all the photos from this year to a pendrive to get them printed. This was a long job with me operating the delete buttons while he did scrolling etc "ok ok delete delete ok delete. At the same time the others were exploring ipad and phone and camera, Said showing them the controls. At some point Said and Balu decided the place needed sorting so they tidied up bed sheets and blankets (videoed by me on ipad) then did another Lillian job on my papers. They then went off to Balaji colony to get prints with 1000 rupees. They came back a lot later with different combination of friends to say it was 1500 rupees (300 pictures) so can they have more so they can collect them later; no problem. I sent them off for lunch with a promise to do my usual Sunday afternoon trip to the village. Gopi had arranged to come from Chittoor with wife Lakshmi in time for lunch but phoned to say he would be late, subsequently modified to very late (3.30) as they had a puncture. I didn't want to waste the short time with them by hunting for an auto and going to town so got Lokesh to send Avi, (the old silver-moustached willing chai maker) to Manasa for kaju rice and mushroom rice. Lakshmi is very nice and had been thoroughly briefed about me and family and sends her love especially to Liz. She has a nice sense of humour so spent a lot of time laughing which was very good. I find it difficult to imagine any wife can be good enough for such a special friend but Lakshmi passes the test. They left at about 5 ish for the 3 hour journey home on the motorbike.

Within two minutes of Gopi leaving I got ready to go as promised to the village. Fortunately I needed time to find a spare battery as within 5 minutes the boys were back – Balu, Mounish, Said and Manosh- with the prints. All excellent quality. They did a fantastic job of sorting them out into sets for themselves and for Dinesh and other friends. When I asked for my change (200 rupees) Balu said he had bought photograph albums like the ones they used for the pictures last year. It was very gratifying that they were so pleased for themselves and for their friends and families. A good spend of £15. Sometime during their day Balu had had a haircut.

They told me that there is now a 3 day strike (Telengana division problem) so they have a holiday. I have changed plans for buying bike to tomorrow instead of Wednesday. I have asked others about my plan and they think it a very good idea. At last they left at 5.30 with grateful hugs for their pictures, leaving me to read on the roof until mosquito time – The Geek Manifesto; why science matters by Mark Henderson (excellent).

Prof Thyagaraju turned up 20 minutes early to collect me for dinner, so we will not be held up by the rail crossing. He lives in a 5<sup>th</sup> floor flat just off the main road 1km past the dairy farm. Wife called Rani is a post doc in law department and daughter Jyothi is a physiotherapist. The house is nice and cool with comfortable big chairs. A bottle of Napa valley Merlot was brought in, especially brought from USA last month because he remembered I am likely to come to dinner. Also specially bought on a trip to Bangalore was a levered cork remover which they were pleased to have demonstrated. Very nice indeed. He drank fizzy mineral water. We were then brought a big plate of spicy roast chicken bits and spicy roast fish bits. And a plate of carrot slices and cucumber slices. Good but worrying that I could see in the open dining room area more dishes being put on a table. Sure enough I then had to eat chapatis and 2 more meat dishes, one mixed up with rather revolting slimy spinach. Then offered rice which I succeeded in rejecting saying I would be ill if I ate more, balanced by agreeing to eat very welcome frozen blackcurrant yoghurt. After a bit more chat I put the cork in the bottle and we drove home.

So here I am with half a bottle of red wine inside, both sleepy and twitchy. I was planning to watch some House but felt a bit dozy so lay down, only to wake with a jolt at 12.30.

**10<sup>th</sup> February Monday.** I have a week stretching ahead of me with no real plans but some work and hopes of nice walks. I slept badly – that is I woke frequently. Today is the bike day but I woke not feeling like any challenge at all. Went for duty bird walk and was rewarded as always. At the same place as I saw Paradise flycatchers and forest wagtails I saw them again, complicated by a black drongo doing the same flycatching thing, very brilliantly manoeuvring. I succeeded in two fairly good pictures of the flycatcher but only a ‘record’ picture of the wagtail. But as I was thinking that last year I always saw these two at a stream in the forest where I also saw the Fantail, a Fantail appeared very close but as difficult as always to photograph as it never stayed in one place. My efforts were interrupted by Lokesh’s younger brother who just came and stood beside me, pointing energetically if anything came usefully near. After he left I got a picture of the little Brown Asian warbler which gives a general appearance of being grey. I was just about to get a good picture of the wagtail when I had a violent thud into my stomach – I had been ignoring a large cow that was sharing my rubbish dump and she had decided to leave and headbutted me. Time to move on up past NCC nagar. As I approached the place where there used to be the stream under the bamboo forest, where the flycatchers were previously, I saw a little bird on the path by the dry stream bed and found it was the other special bird from that place last year – the beautiful blue Titchell’s flycatcher. A bit later I saw a new bird – a huge owl called a .....

On the way home I had a call from Sai Gopal ‘where are you’; near guest house so wait. When I got there he had forgotten there are no lectures today, one reason being the exams and the other that there is a sort of half-hearted strike. So off he went leaving me to have a breakfast bar for tiffin and to wait for Balu and Seshu his cousin to get the bike. We got a shared auto which they directed to the bike shop. This was not the one I had planned but a much nearer one. Balu very soon chose a nice looking white and green sort of mountain bike with front suspension and mid suspension. I got a lock and bell fitted and arranged an ‘airpump’. The shop owner was a nice man and very helpful. Three minions leapt onto the chosen bike checking brakes etc and checking all nuts were tight and the tyres hard. I asked what discount can I have – only the usual

– 10% so it cost 4,900 rupees (£49). Altogether a good decision. We three returned to the guest house by auto while they came with a second auto with the bike.

Of course we then had to have photos and videos of us all riding it. During this my 2<sup>nd</sup> year virology friend Mallikarjuna arrived with a little bag of Papaya for me and a request to come this evening as their exams are now finished. That has been a disappointment this year - that I have not spent any time with him and the other final year students. Then the usual thing of looking through old photos that Balu wants printed. Off they went for me to collapse and wait for my lunch of kaju fried rice at 1.00. They had some problem with a lot of visitors arriving so forgot me so I had lunch at 1.50 with a small amount of Thyagaraju's wine, followed by a sleep. Then a couple of hours useful work before preparing to go for my evening 5 o'clock stroll – thwarted by Mounish, attractively dressed in white trousers and shirt for cricket with the same friend who came last week (Hari Krishna) and a new friend called Mohan; older seeming than them with swarthy face and heavily built and cocky about his understanding of English. All the usual questions – how much is this, how much is that and what is your salary. Missing my evening walk and having this bully provoked me into a lecture about English feelings about privacy. I was also irritable because I had earlier wanted to use my Swiss army knife but could not find it anywhere. Yesterday when Manosh's friend (Aswanth) and 3 others were here they were all inspecting everything and his friend was playing with the knife, obviously very interested. I have come to trust the village boys. When Balu came they said all the boys were my village friends except for this one boy (who was likable and spoke some English) so they said it must be him sir. So I told them to ask the other boys and to tell Manosh that I am very angry.

My brief stroll took me to the NCC Nagar lake where there was a noisy Red wattled lapwing, 2 kingfishers, paddy birds, a Wood sandpiper – seen only rear view with its white rump, rushing off when it saw me. And the Fantail again. When I got back from my brief stroll I saw the Balu bike waiting and two other bikes with Manosh, Madhu, Dayakar and little black Kalyan. They had asked if they could come in the evening at 6.0 and I had reluctantly agreed as I guessed that Balu would want to visit on his bike. With my 2 cameras and ipad with its camera there are plenty of toys. Balu asked me to go out on the roof with Manosh where he was rather upset with problems with the bike. "The brakes don't work and the front suspension doesn't work". So we went down to test it. I think he just needs to be stronger on the brakes and they will bed in. He was concerned that they were leaving black marks on the shiny rims. I explained this means they are working. The suspension was working ok when it needed to. Manoj is very useful with his bits of English and this year he is not so pushy. So I told him that Balu should not worry about the bike. He has to take it to the shop after 3 weeks to get everything adjusted etc and I will leave some cash for any problems. Then, more relaxed, back to chaotic room where they wanted some dancing which was to the music of *Oh for a closer walk with thee* – favourite of my Preservation Hall Jazz band music. So Balu danced with 3 people filming him. It starts quietly and slowly so Balu was imitating the instruments and then getting worked up during the faster section when it goes into double time. Later Madhu spent the whole time lying on the bed listening to something on my ipod while I had to do the usual downloading of pictures onto the computer.

They had brought the two photo albums that they had bought with the leftover rupees from printing to show they are so happy sir. They are a really appreciative gang and completely

unselfconscious . However fond Carl (similar age) might be I cannot imagine him hugging and kissing goodbye while his friends looked on (they all queue up for a hug anyway). I am writing this while waiting for Mallikarjuna (now 45 minutes late) while listening to the slow movement of Mahler's 4<sup>th</sup> symphony and getting irritated by some giant black ants that seem to be taking over my room and even the computer keyboard. The boys had left at nearly 8.00 leaving no time for me to go and get food so I tried to get the guest house staff to call the MFC (My Favourite Chicken) burger place but there was no reply. So I phoned ever helpful Hanuma and got him to go there on his motorbike and get me a veggieburger with French fries and free coke which I have just finished – with a small glass of Thyagaraju's Merlot. I feel I rather exploit him but he does ask for it (literally) "Sir please ask anything I will always be here within 20 minutes to do anything for you sir".

This time next week I will be home!

Mallikarjuna did not come after all that! So watched episode of House then sleep early.

**11<sup>th</sup> February Tuesday.** As I had no plans at all for today I decided on a long walk to be followed by work. I set out at 7.45 for the hills. I paused opposite Lokesh's house and again was delayed by the Paradise flycatcher. Then on past NCC Nagar to the bypass, then on towards the hills. I disturbed a small herd (6) of spotted deer who went crashing off into the undergrowth. On the further side of the bypass there were more deer which I only see as they are moving away. The same goes for the partridge –like birds I saw as I moved slowly up the hill; they were again new birds -..... By 9.00 it was very hot with little wind but fortunately mainly in shade so I had a fairly rapid walk home, with shirt off. As I came onto the bypass road I saw a sign to the NCC Officer's Mess and guessed it might link up with the entrance on my way home. It did - so that is a quicker neater way of getting out as far as the bypass. Sai Gopal phoned to say he would come at 10.30 so I hurriedly swept the floor and had a shower. Hanuma turned up at 11.0 with a friend of his and friend of Moin, with the draft of his PhD thesis on something related to Moin's-transgenic millet with a salt resistant gene. A slightly aggressive boy who would not accept that there is no English word Bibliography "but it is in Word sir". Of course it wasn't . Sai Gopal did not come at all.

While the boys were here I got a call from Moin: "so sorry sir, I have bad news". He cannot come with me to Chennai as he has to present the work of his department to the government funding agency. This cannot be avoided. A good thing that he has no choice really. He asked if I would like Edwin to come – of course. So he phoned Edwin and explained and somehow got Edwin to agree to take over the job. I phoned a bit later to confirm this. Two years ago he wanted to come but I had arranged Moin already (anyway he would always have first priority). So sad for me and Moin. His new computer (a great success) is set up for Skype and he made me promise to set mine up so we can keep in touch.

I got a lot of work done – mainly sorting out all the references for my history. I had sorted out which I needed but many of them still needed the titles and last page numbers. Lunch was early and good, from some meeting downstairs. There was another strike today and the mob came to the guest house, disturbing my peace. I looked downstairs to view the shouters and found they were surrounded by security/police who were trying to drive them out. A bit later a noisy mob of them came upstairs to stare at me sitting on the roof throwing biscuits to monkeys.

They then went away. They had wanted to close every part of the University including the guest house but the Steward (Naidu) told them that there is an important Nobel Prize-winning scientist staying upstairs. Their view of me presumably confirmed my importance. Later I found security people had locked one of the gates to protect us.

I spent the afternoon writing and felt that I should get out at about 5.00. It was very hot with no breeze and the only birds I saw were babblers mynahs and crows –and a Shikra hawk. And my feet hurt a bit. I went down town earlyish as I had arranged with the final year biochemists that they would come to the guest house. The Govindaswamy god festival is now happening so I joined the noisy crowds for a while at the water tank next to Sindhuri Park then into the welcome quiet cool of the restaurant for mogal paneer which is slightly sweet, with butter roti and then butterscotch ice cream. While eating I got a call to say the biochemists are not coming and then one from Venkat who is in Hyderabad and says he wants to come tomorrow night. I just called Mallikarjuna yet again who was very apologetic about last night (I don't know why he did not phone); he cannot come now sir as I am in Tirumula. I think that is where was also yesterday." I will come tomorrow sir". Perhaps.

I must plan my last few days. I have promised to get some more prints and to put all india pictures on a pendrive for Balu and the rest of the village. It has been 33 degrees the last few days (92 deg F). So fan on all night. I shall stop this and watch a DVD or House. [I watched the first half of Donny Darko].

**12<sup>th</sup> February Wednesday.** Woke at 6.30 and read to the end of my serious book The Geek Manifesto by Mark Henderson. Excellent. I set out at 7.30 for the hills, stopping for a look at the Paradise flycatcher and the fantail. This is impossible to photograph as it never stays in one place, twitching constantly with its fanned tail doing its stuff. There is a very tall tree just 100 metres into the NCC Nagar walk with some fruits at the top of it. There is nearly always a group of birds there. Today there was golden oriole and then a branch turned into a Great grey hornbill. Then up through the grounds of NCC Nagar (yesterday's discovery) to the bypass. I was stopped by a senior sort of soldier on a magnificent 500cc twin Royal Enfield. He was very excited that I knew the make. Had a nice conversation about the birds about which he knew something. He offered me a ride but I wanted the walk. There seemed to be fewer birds than yesterday but still very enjoyable walk uphill through the forest. There were a lot of walls surrounding deeply dug ponds hidden deep in the forest all over the side of the hill. I think they must be for water conservation. A pity there was no water or there might have been something to concentrate the birds. It was mainly silent up there with the uncanny coughing cackling sound of the grey jungle fowl. Back on campus the Magpie robins are at full song now, rather like a weaker-toned blackbird. By the pond on the way back there were the usual kingfisher and paddy birds and also a couple of water hens on the far side and the elusive wood sandpiper. All around the campus they are digging up the roadsides to lay pipes. I tried to surreptitiously (Sp) photograph one of the deep narrow trenches with its tiny workman frantically manoeuvring pipes. I was caught out by a gang of 4 ladies sitting outside the house opposite all shouting SMILE. So then of course I had to take their picture. They often wave as I pass them in the morning, as do the two men with their carts doing the ironing; took their photo also.

Had excellent idli wada and tea for breakfast. I just started to get going on my history at about 10.0 when Sai Gopal phoned to say I should be ready immediately to come to the department to sign papers. So I got rid of shorts and got respectable. Fortunately I ignored his stated time and got on with my work as he did not arrive until 11.30. There is a bund (strike) again today and probably tomorrow. While he was here having tea with me the shouting aggressive strikers arrived again and tried to get the guest house closed. Apparently my presence again helped to persuade them that it would not be feasible. I then continued work until 4.0, with a short break during a powercut for lunch of kaju fried rice with Merlot. Balu turned up at 1.0 in school uniform of white shirt and long green trousers with two of his school friends Umaphati and Devendra. This was just to take their photos then off back to school. They had all come on their bikes. They set off towards the closed gate then circled in formation back to me and out the other gate waving frantically. The look of pure joy on Balu's face convinced me that the bike was a wonderfully successful plan.

As my visit is ending soon I have the usual thing of making sure I do the best thing with my time so I stopped work at 4.0 and set off for the fields to the South of Upurappali checkpoint. Very hot of course. Took some nice pictures of people at work, including 4 rather elderly looking ladies bent double, hoeing the ground with small pickaxes. As usual there were few birds but nice rollers and swallows (our type), yellow wattled lapwings, parakeets, coucal, indian pipits, drongos. I came the circular route past the small village where there was a house being built, apparently held up by its complex system of wooden scaffold poles. As I went to take its picture a man appeared within the structure shouting to stop while he combed his hair then "photo sir". Near their nice little temple a very grubby bearded man came up and in good English asked where I am from etc. We shook hands, after apologies for his cement covered hand "I am now only a labourer. I used to work as a lab technician in Mumbai but I came here for my family". I said it is so peaceful here at which point a gang of children, two of whom were his, appeared for photo. Such a lovely friendly place. Just before reaching the track by their village a large bird swooped just overhead – my favourite Black winged kite which I had not seen this year.

Then the long slog through the village leading to the bypass. I seem to have become accepted there now as I get fewer stares and the children all wave and want photos. Just before the bypass an auto stopped. Just what I needed. But he seemed as if he might be drunk (that is what Upurapalli checkpoint is known for) and he wanted 100 rupees to go to Thumulagunta (he did not understand SVU guest house), so I laughed and walked off, a classic cutting off nose to spite face I think. So I set off on the long trek to the Thumulagunta road, accompanied some of the way by a rather ugly aggressive young student of Business studies practising his very poor English on me. As we approached the junction I saw 2 small black figures in the twilight running across the field towards me, then coming round the corner I was jumped on by little Bobby and Madhu, so excited that they had seen me from the edge of their village. "Where is the bag uncle" from Bobby; "no little camera". Then Manoj came by on the way home from school on his bike, then big shouts encouraging Balachandran (Dinesh's younger brother) to climb over the wall and run across the field to us. He is always so affectionate when there is not so much competition. When we arrived at the small road leading to their village I had no choice but at least go and look at the little temple where little dark Kalyan was doing some cleaning up there. So off came sandals

(nice) to walk in and take photos. Up came a motorbike with 5 member (4 adults and a little boy); I was told who they are but did not catch much of it – mainly X's father etc. So photograph was essential – with flash.

Anyway I was so tired by then I decided to try to get an auto but at that moment there was a deep sort of actor's voice and there was Balu's father telling me that his friend (Ram) would take me home on his scooter so off I went for a lovely welcome slow drive up to the main road. I made some excuse to get off there to avoid the level crossing. A train had just left and I had to wait 10 minutes until I felt the traffic had diluted enough to risk crossing against the flow of buses bikes and autos. I thought that if I sat down at the guesthouse I may never get up again so I picked up my bag and set out for dinner but there were no autos until the km down the road past the university entrance. There is always a little gaggle of autos there. I got in one which was facing upstream into the path of huge pounding buses autos and bikes with either no lights or full headlights. The other drivers tell him when it is safe to break out from behind the other autos "GO GO GO" and out into the stream, turning in our own length and getting washed along with the rest. Down to Prakasam road to buy a pendrive (8Gb £4). This is so I do not have to spend ages copying stuff onto CDs. I shall put all my India photos on to it for Balu and the others.

Then a walk down crowded Gandhi Road, Tilak Road and into the crazy tank area where they are playing with their amphibious god, the blasts of auto and bike horns competing with industrial level devotional songs from the loudspeakers around the tank. So into empty restaurant for Masala dosa followed by Pistache ice cream and a fast auto home. Mallikarjuna had said he will come tonight but he is not answering phone. His mate Venkateshwarlu called from his village to say hello and sorry he could not visit. I don't really care as I am tired and looking forward to being home. My room has a colony of large ants crawling over the floor and occasionally over me and the computer. I shall watch the end of Donny Darko and then to inviting bed.

**13<sup>th</sup> February Thursday.** Good night then woke at 6.0 and read my serious novel. It is by Robert Harris based on the story of Dreyfus. Set out at 7.30 for a gentle stroll past Paradise flycatcher then through the NCC horse parade area where I was stopped by one of the cadets who wanted to ask the usual questions. His English was good and he was genuinely interested in bird photos, so much that he wanted to come with me. I wish I had met him earlier in my stay as he was keen to be friends. But I had a timetable today so I explained that photography cannot be done with 2 people so he sadly walked away; sad. Then home through my small agricultural bit where I stood completely still for about 5 minutes trying half successfully to get a picture of Ashy tailed Prinia. At 8.0 the sun was almost unbearable on my back. The last few days it has been about 33 deg. Back home to Pongal and tea and then immediately onto the last part of my history project. Had nice emails from Libby and Hugh. I was then disturbed by Noah (Christian accountancy student) who came because he is bored. We arranged to have dinner on Friday evening.

After 20 minutes we were invaded by Balu, Badri, Kalyan, Manosh and .... I said that I thought they told me it was a school day "Yes sir but now there is a bund (strike) so we have a holiday. Where is Said? They all laughed as he goes to non-government school which is not affected by the strike so no holiday for him. Had a nice chat with Balu, with Noah as interpreter. Balu

understands a lot of English even if he cannot create sentences. I am trying to sort out plans for leaving. Part of this was easier thanks to Noah; I want to leave 500 rupees with Balu for looking after bike if there is any problem, so that was easily fixed. I am also leaving about £50 with the student who lives here so that Balu or other boys can get help if needed for emergency – all this was explained to Balu out in the corridor. He made a huge impression on Noah. After sending off Noah the boys wanted yet more photos before going off on their 3 bikes, Balu carrying little dark Kalyan on the back rack. Balu came up with a plan that they (he) would come at 4.30 to go to the dairy farm. Then more history before lunch of dull mushroom fried rice with Merlot. Long afternoon of history then a wait on the roof for Balu who did not turn up but it was a nice change from walking. I sent a missed call to Surya who instantly phoned back – for help with paying at Kalyan for my car. He called back a little later to suggest I leave the money in an envelope at reception.

After an hour of transferring pictures to Balu's pendrive I got auto down to Kalyan where Ravi had decided to come in person for the money. I had dinner there (panneer and chickpeas) but no ice cream as I had left a note on the door to say I would be back at 9.0. Got a very good driver back home, He only asked 50 rupees (they often ask for 60 or 70 from there. He did not use his horn once and waited to let walkers and incompetent scooters to get out of his way. So I gave him an extra 10 rupees which he took with huge grin, kissing the notes before putting in pocket. It feels very strange, eating alone every night and having no visitors but I seem to be surviving.

**14<sup>th</sup> February Friday.** Woke at 6 and read Dreyfus novel which is very good. As I had a lot to do today (sorting out photos for Balu and trying to get finished with my history project) I planned to go for short stroll only. It was hot and humid and cloudy so although the place was alive with the sound of bulbuls I had a very short stroll, enjoying a tree load of Golden orioles (10 of them) and a good photo of common iora. Back to early tiffin of idli wada with sweet tea. Then down to work. Sai Gopal had said he would come early in the morning. Fortunately he didn't as some village boys turned up – including one of Balu's cousins and Dayakar who is same age as the others but seems older and rarely smiles but is very vain. While chatting indoors with Balu and Manoj those two went outside on the roof with camera and took loads of photos, posing like models; since deleted. They had had no breakfast and so wolfed down a pack of shortbread biscuits. One of their bikes had been loaned to an uncle so the 5 of them had walked, balu and manoj in bare feet- Balu's sandal had broken and Manoj took his off to keep him company. After they left with instructions to come to the village in the afternoon Sai Gopal appeared. He had been prevented from getting the papers printed for me to sign because the strikers made him close the department – or they would break the windows. He then drove around for nearly 2 hours to find a bank that was open to get money. He is slightly embarrassed that there have been no farewell lectures or functions or my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

Had kaju fried rice yet again, as usual in the half dark as there is always a powercut from 1 to 2. After lunch I at last finished sorting out photos and putting them on a 16 Gb pendrive for Balu. Then more of my project. At 4.15 I set off for village to say bye to many friends there and especially to see Balu's mother. Somehow I had learned that she has a bank account. As it is my last day I was aware of things I had intended to photograph so got nice picture of the pretty

friendly lady selling melons near the guest house and then the 3 old crones who sit where the bike mender used to be; only derelict bikes there now.

I stopped for a couple of photos of the little temple at the entrance to the village where small dark thin sweet Kalyan, in rolled up jeans, was washing the forecourt. A motorbike rolled up with heavy weight Venkataramana – one of my first Thumulagunta friends. He looks even more villainous now with his misaligned eyes and heavy face. Still nice to see him of course.

Balu was not at his home (uncle's house ) and his grandparents (mother's parents), both very old and deaf, communicated that he wasn't there so I set off slowly to see who else was around to be met by him hurtling up ringing his bell furiously. He then rather unkindly woke his sister (20yrs Chandu) so she could make me coffee. I said he should have made it but that seemed to be very funny. I heard him giving strong instructions how to make it so it was not too hot to drink. He was sent off to get a little plastic packet of milk. Excellent coffee – actually it is a sort of Camp coffee made from a bottle. Honey Shree came in for a chat. I had not realised that she is only 9<sup>th</sup> class; being able to speak English makes her seem more mature. I then wanted to take a photo of the girls which was welcomed but Chandu had to hunt for her favourite special clothes. Yet another photo session, including one with very old granddad. Eventually Balu's mum came home from work (in a college somewhere). By then Mounish and Madhu had appeared so I had to separate Mum and sister from the rest by ushering them into the bedroom. My plan worked well. All the time I am aware that this might be the last time I am there and I really do want to somehow look after Balu. So I gave her an envelope with 6,000 rupees (£60) to put in her bank account for emergencies and serious things. Chanda understood very well and said it can also be used for books. Exactly. We had earlier exchanged full addresses with promises to write. I explained to Chanda that they should keep me informed of any problems and good things also. I then explained it must be really secret.

We then drifted off towards the park, running the gauntlet of mothers and babies needing photos. One lady put down her one year old boy, ran into her house and came out with a tiny puppy in each hand which she then put on either side of her boys face. The sight of the camera overcame his panic. Then more photos of the ladies carrying puppies. At last free of the last house we crossed the rough area towards the raised walkway around the park. Little Bobby had brought along the big Frisbee (a hollow circle type). Manoj then showed how good it is by hurling it nearly 100 yards into the thorn bushes on the far side. He and Madhu cantered off to find it while we climbed up onto the walkway. Balu, Manoj, Madhu, Bobby, little X with a high scratchy voice, and the older Mounish – yet another cousin, age 17 and pleasant chap. I was feeling tired and end of trippish, looking forward to going home but knowing it would be sad to leave my gang. "Sir you are feeling dull sir?" As good a way of describing it I guess. I had to stop at the little temple on the way out of the village –"for photos for Kalyan sir". It was specially decorated and hence the need for photos. The boys pose for photos with the god with hands saying Namaste. The priest presented me with a banana that had been offered to the idol.

I was not looking forward to the walk home so was delighted when Balaji arrived on his scooter to give me a lift back, with slightly nutty Madhu crouched down in the well of the scooter. I asked them to drop me at the top of the road so that I did not have to endure a fight over the level crossing but in fact it was fairly clear. Madhu always makes an affectionate fuss of me when the

others are not there to compete. So back to tea. Noah was supposed to be coming with me to dinner tonight at 7.0 but no sign of him and he did not answer phone. Eventually he phoned me to say he could not come. So I exploited Hanuma again and filled up with veggieburger and French fries, keeping the coke for tomorrow. This morning the boys saw the coke and I told Balu he could have it so he carefully poured out exactly equal amounts into 5 of my nice plastic glasses. I had a nice chat with Hanuma who is inadvertently entertaining as he tells me obvious things with great seriousness and hand gestures. One of things is that there are 5-headed snakes in the forest; he really seems to believe it. More believable is the fact that people are usually happy to have the large black ants that I have crawling over my floor. They are a good omen.

Slept through half a House episode (last but one) then to bed

**15<sup>th</sup> February Saturday.** Last day in Tirupati. I woke too early at 6.0 and read Dreyfus novel. The morning was cloudy and hot and clammy. Went for a last walk not feeling sentimental but rather dull. I decided that this was because I am more or less sure I will not be back. This is only because of the number of times I think this should be last time and the number of times I feel illogically anxious about things. Age I guess. I then tried seeing how I would feel if I am coming back and immediately felt more positive. I walked past the vvv old couple who live in a makeshift shelter under the big water tank by the entrance to NCC Nagar then thought how daft it is that I am spending cash easily and giving away bikes and out of potential embarrassment have ignored these people. We are now on little wave terms now. So I went back and tried my Telugu – Randi (with appropriate gesture) and the old man tottered over. I put 2 100 rupee notes into the pocket of his filthy shirt which made him go into humble Namaste mode. So like a true brit I shook hands (both still clasped together) and walked away, trying to stifle tears.

Then on past (or rather through) the rubbish thrown over the wall from the very clean NCC houses. The bulbuls were noisy but not much other sign of bird life, partly because of man trying to get hold of his cow, which was difficult because a dog kept frightening it. So he was throwing stones at the dog. On the way back past the bamboo thicket I dutifully paused in case there were any of my special birds there and amazingly there was the little blue/orange Titchell's flycatcher. I struggled to get pictures – hindered by the strands of bamboo that the camera chooses to focus on. Then 5 minutes later by the NCC Nagar there was another one posing perfectly for me. Then home happy to idli wada and tea for tiffen.

I had two arrangements for the morning; Sai Gopal was planning to visit to get me to sign stuff and to give me the balance of my money. And Balu was coming to collect me so we could go to Balaji colony and print off the last lot of photos. He came first with Dayakar, Balachandran, Kalyan, Manosh. I showed him the arrangement of his 14 Gb of pictures and which ones needed printing now. I wouldn't let them take more pictures. They were teasing Balachandran (Dinesh's brother) as the black boy. I pointed out that if he left then Kalyan is the black boy, then if he left it is Dayakar etc. I then realised that Balu is in fact the lightest in colour. Balu had forgotten to bring my laser pointer or a bag to put bedsheets, lamp or mats in. So he took my bigger rucksack with it all in. They had 3 bikes so off they went to get another 112 pictures printed. I was relieved that they did not press me to come with them. The plan was then for Balu to come back in the afternoon with bag and laser.

I spent a couple of hours finishing off the history and posted it by email to Colin Murrell. His post doc has just sent me a load of stuff for a review they are writing and I think it is assumed I am helping as a co-author. All about comparing protein sequences etc. So I won't be left with nothing to do back home in rainy uk. The sun came out of the clouds so I spent half an hour sitting outside on the roof. There were guests here so I had a good lunch but although it was good quality I feel I do not want much more of this stuff. I slept and read after lunch then woke to find Barath, Dayakar and Manoj here again (the agreement was that Balu would come alone). There had been a power cut in town so the prints would not be ready until 5. They then decided I must pack and in a chaotic sort of way I guess they did help. At 4.50 Sai Gopal arrived and the boys went off to get the prints. I had to sign half a dozen forms and then receive the balance of 4,000 rupees. Sai gopal then went off pleased that I insist that he does not come in the morning (last year he came late, missed my departure and rather resented this). He saw the big bird calendar, put aside for Edwin and asked if he could take it to give to the Vice Chancellor so of course I had to say yes and then sign it with a message spoiling the picture on the front. Earlier the last of the small ones had attracted the attention of the boys who both wanted it. Balu arranged a draw with bits of paper with their names on. Manosh won but Dayakar had a consolation prize of a similar calendar from some company that Moin had left behind for me.

While the boys were gone I checked on Amazon to see if it was possible to get a replacement for the green laser pointer; it wasn't but fortunately Amazon is obliged to list other companies selling similar products and I found the company where I had bought my good one. The three boys then returned with the prints and the laser pointer. The change from the prints was 400 rupees, and Balu had used 300 to buy (at my insistence) new chappals (cycling in bare feet never seems a good idea). So what about the rest? You said we must have ice cream while we wait and there was 30 rupees left to buy a bun to give a gift from Kreesh Anthony to a beggar woman. Time to say goodbye. So sent the others onto the roof so I could say goodbye to Balu. I then presented the laser pointer to him, explaining that I had found somewhere I could buy a replacement, and that he had been so good to look after it and to go back to the village to get it. Then a secret gift of 500 rupees (£5) to cover cost of printing a big framed picture of us (his idea). So a last hug and a few tears and off they went.

All now packed, including many empty plastic bottles, writing this while waiting for Edwin to come. He finished work at the bank at 2.00 and the bus takes 3-4 hours. He wants to eat out.

He called at 7.30 to arrange that we meet at Sindhuri park as soon as possible. Good idea and I was lucky that an auto pulled beside me as soon as I stepped into the road. It is even more difficult this year to identify autos in the dark. Looking to see if one is coming what is seen is masses of brilliant lights from weaving motorbikes. The auto that stopped had an occupant – a tiny grey haired man about the size of Mike (tiny neighbour). He got out at Gandhi road. Although this was my last ride into town I felt no sentiment. I think my time here is about over. When we arrived the driver said he had no change for my 100 rupee note, although I saw him looking at his big wad of bills. So I took my rupees back from him and waved him away to get change while I went into the restaurant. Anyway there was Edwin in the restaurant. He wanted me to get change and go and pay the man so I did. This was partly because he was charging the correct fare of 40 rupees. So I gave him 50 for his pains.

We had roti, naan, kaju masala and some sort of paneer. Then my last ice cream. Home by a sentiment-killing drive through the busy backstreets which is so stupid as the main road is usually fairly clear. It was good to hear Edwin saying how much he liked Tirupati especially walking on the road to the university and down to Balaji colony which are my favourite bits of the town.

I finished my last bits of packing while chatting with Edwin. He has moved to a different house because the ladies upstairs did not like a man in the same house. Still no furniture so he sleeps on the floor.

I had a nasty disturbed night – disturbed by me waking up anxious and having to pee. Then I fell asleep to be woken by Edwin, saying it is 7.30. The car should have arrived then but had not. At 8.00 we phoned Ravi who said the car had left 40 minutes ago so he gave us the driver's number. He had gone to the other university (Padmavhati) guest house. When he soon arrived we loaded up to go. Only people to say goodbye were a couple of the oldies. I had said goodbye to Sai Gopal the day before and forbidden Barath to come. The driver was small and about 25 yrs with inch long eyelashes. The first driver ever to know the sensible route out of Tirupati – the bypass I go out to near Upurapalle checkpoint. So I had a drive over the rail crossing and down the Tumulagunta road, past my usual entrance to the village, so a last look at my friends' houses; at last some feeling of sentiment at leaving for the last time. I am so pleased that I did something useful for Balu before leaving. I hope he soon stops missing me.

Today was a really dull day and we could not make out the hills to say goodbye to. The roads were good and the driver excellent. He used his horn no more than a dozen times, all essential, and amazed me in Poonamallee road where traffic is dense and competitive by 3 times waving a competing car to go in front of him. So within 3 hours we were checking into the Trident hotel, where I was handed a 'personal' letter from the manager welcoming me back. We wandered down to the pool which is surrounded by beautiful flowering shrubs. Then lunch of chicken curry for Edwin and a Margherita pizza for me. A rather oily waiter tried to get us to use the buffet which looked very attractive. I asked him how much? £18 each including beer or wine. That dampened Edwin's enthusiasm. After lunch Edwin went off to visit a friend, strongly encouraged by me as I am no company on my last afternoon. Very sad to see him go.

I spent the whole afternoon sitting or lying by the pool reading Ian Rankin's Rebus crime thriller in alternate sun and shade. It is very strange to hear the planes flying low overhead mixed with very noisy Koils and crows and mynahs with occasional kingfisher and sunbird. Then at 6.45 for dinner of chicken/pesto risotto followed by strawberry ice cream. Not as good as Sindhuri Park. Then arranged wake up call for 12.30 and to bed at 8.0. Woken by text messages so had to turn off phone eventually, causing poor Moin some grief; I had tried to phone him to say goodbye but he was not answering then I did not answer when he called. He is so upset that he could he could not be with me (as was I) but this did have the merit that I did not have to say goodbye at the hotel.

I had a call from Barath "hai sah this is Balu – then a few word and he stopped". Then came the text messages: bai sah; miss you chrish; please come soon; etc etc. Sadness.

All my alarms went off obediently together at 12.30 so down to checkout for a chat about being a teacher of chemistry – the girl on the check out desk seemed proud that she could could not

get to like it. They like professors I think. The car took 8 minutes to the airport which is all very easy, made even easier by the number of BA staff lurking around to help anyone. No wait at the BA check in “Can I interest you in an upgrade to Club class for only £350?” “I would be very interested in a free upgrade from you to thank me for my loyalty in coming on this flight for the last 20 years”. So a nice smile and a bit of chat and “have a good flight professor”. All this was over by 1.05, 35 minutes after waking. Then the slow queue for immigration then queue for security followed by a long walk to find my gate. It is all well organised and clean and comfortable. I checked out the loos which were clean so things have improved greatly. I then had nearly 2 hours before boarding so did some card patience and a bit of reading and long periods of slowly walking around. I was at the far end of our bit of concourse when I saw 3 queues forming at my gate. I wandered up to the front and asked the BA lady which is my queue and she smiled and pushed me into the front of my queue (it works every time). We were the last to board as I was near the front of the plane with my row 13 World traveller Plus ticket. Then more showing of passports and boarding cards. At a final check of boarding cards just before the plane entrance I was asked to wait as they had an important message for me (car crash? Cat died? Brain tumour?). We have changed your seat professor – to Club class so I was shown to my personal ‘cabin’ with instructions how to fix everything to make a bed etc. Got nice and settled with none of the usual fighting to get baggage stored. Then up comes a polite attendant offering me champagne or fresh orange, I had the orange.

Then off we went on time. Classy as it tried to be, breakfast is not good. Wrong, the orange was wonderful especially as I tend to dehydrate to avoid peeing pressure, followed by beautiful coffee which brought tears to my eyes but then ‘full English breakfast’ of scrambled egg, bacon (good), sausage and what seemed to be roast potatoes. Then another 9 hours flight to home. I slept for about 2 hours then tried to watch movies. Blue jasmine by Woody allen which won a Bafta for best actress; she was good but did not like her or any other character so I gave up and tried Gravity. I guess it needs a big screen but I just got irritated with the female scientist screaming and flapping about just because she was adrift in space so I gave up and read more of excellent Rebus (Saints of the Shadow Bible). Lunch was served on white table cloth with real cutlery: roasted king prawns with chilli followed by Salmon and veggies with Pouilly-fumee Loire white wine, followed by cheese and bickies (wonderful). Had some more sleep then down to Heathrow. Off the plane almost before it stopped, with a backward glance at those poor ordinary passengers. I handed over £10 in envelope (for BA help children campaign that asks for your change and raised many millions of pounds) to my nice attendant “in gratitude for my free upgrade” which he thought was good idea. Met my driver (same as last year) from English Rose collection and off we went to be home in just over an hour through damp waterlogged grey countryside. Wonderful to be home with Libby and my banner from 2012 welcoming me on the floor.

### **Summary:**

Teaching: This was affected very much by the Telengana dispute strikes. These had meant that there had been no teaching for 7 weeks during the first semester period. So the exams had not been held. As these were due to be held in February many students used that as a reason for not

attending lectures. Then strikes while I was there (never certain when they would be held) meant uncertainty about lectures, so students did not come and some went to their homes.

I taught less than 50% of what I have done previously. A week of lectures on Regulation of gene expression to final year biochemists (friendly from last year) augmented by a field of beautiful varied biotechnologists (total 30). There were only 4 first year virology students for my bioenergetics and physiology lectures and usually only 2 of them came. They were augmented by 2-6 Microbiology students who had done the subject but whose exams had not yet been held. Plus occasional botanists and a gang of oceanographers for one lecture. The students were rarely the same so all a bit frustrating. In my first week I finished preparing comprehensive lecture notes (the complete lectures) for everything except photosynthesis. I gave a printed version to Sai Gopal to pass on to the lecturer who is responsible for it and the pdf to one of the 2 loyal virology students (Tharachand) who were a pleasure to teach. He will print them out for Kamakshi.

My work: This was to write a history of methanotrophy for the Methanotrophy Commons website. Because of the other problems this was highly successful. The internet link (thanks to Moin) through a dongle in my room was stable (when the dongle was hung out the window) but very slow. This meant that I could download most pdf files that I needed. I sent off the complete history to Colin Murrell on the last day. I must just tidy up the references and check formatting and it will be done.

Health: perfect. Two migraines. Balance thing rarely noticed. Bad back for 2 days. One night of streaming nose but alright by morning. No gut problems.

Birds: Excellent as always. Saw almost all that I have previously seen except for the rare orange thrush that I saw twice last year. The damp area with stream that it liked had dried. Got excellent pictures of Brahminy mynah (by Balu), Tictchell's (blue) flycatcher and little minivet. And lots of other good pictures.

Food: Got as bored as before with the rice and slime lunches served from poly bags from Manasa hotel, but gave these up and had kaju fried rice and curds from the Chinese part upstairs but these got dull. Evening usually alone at Sindhuri park. Once at Chinese section of Manasa but not comfortable atmosphere. Student Hanuma 3 times brought me veggie burger plus fries plus coke from MFC (My friendly chicken); I resisted the chicken. A few times I made do in evening with crisps, cashew nuts and Christmas cake. Breakfast was usually ok as I got to like idli wada and occasional pongal, and sometimes breakfast bar.

Students. Only went a couple of times to Hostels as so few students were there. Students only came twice (early on) to guest house. When I did arrange for people to come they did not usually turn up.

Friends: My main friends, excluding villagers, are not now in Tirupati. My dear Moin is in Hyderabad where his duties meant that he was able to come only twice which was wonderful for me but involved much horrible travel for him. And Edwin who I would have seen for only one day if he had not been noble and come to help get me home. Gopi I saw twice as he works in Bangalore.

Village: the one unqualified success. I was always asked to come to village. Most of the boys (and the few girls) I knew previously were there and they and their families were all very

welcoming. Barath (or Balu – his ‘cute name’) who last year was very affectionate and possessive (in a good sense) came frequently, always bringing friends to entertain me. Others: Mounish and brother Bobby, Said (muslim boy), Dinesh (only saw him a few times at beginning – I think he was at a residential school ‘hostel sah’. Madhu, Badri, Dayanakar (always dull looking, no smile, and vain, but popular), Balachandran (Dinesh’s brother, small very dark and always smiling), Kalyan (the darkest boy in the village, always happy and smiling), Manoj (biggest of the boys, good friend of Balu, speaks some English), Honey Shree. Also of course Balaji and family and Suman, still thin and dark but a bit taller; he has a job in electricity company (repairs) and a motorbike bought with a loan. We all went on 3 or 4 walks to the park with many extra boys and girls from the village.

The bike I bought for Barath was a great idea for him and also the other boys. I gave a gift of £50 to his mother (she has a bank account) for any ‘problems’ and books (suggested by his older sister).

**My last visit:** The last 4 times I have thought that this will be the last visit. I often find myself thinking this as I am walking or driving through town or eating lunch. This year I thought it far more often than previous years. This was more often when there were problems or just bored with food and the noise. Or feeling unwell and thinking how awful it would be to be really ill here. I often feel illogically anxious, linked with associated feeling that I need a toilet; this was ‘treated’ by immodium (half pill when possible) taken every other day. The irritating anxiety remained but I knew I could safely ignore it. This becomes an overwhelming feature of my visits when near the end and leading up to going there and during travel.

Each year the noise from the traffic worsens. There are far more small cars than previously and far more bikes and these have spilled a bit onto the peaceful university campus (this remains a great place). In the town it is rare to have a pleasant walk although I still love the atmosphere walking down Balaji colony. I more often find I am feeling irritated rather than euphoric. Although there were reasons for the student problems I am not as rare a creature as previously I think, and so not so important to them. The teaching is worse. The numbers are going down in all biology subjects and the standard of the students is going down. Sai Gopal did not do as promised and rearrange the timetable so that I could teach virology and microbiology students together. Even if there were no ‘political’ problems, it would still have been crazy to just teach 4 students. Of course for the few enthusiasts I think I do something useful.

Research there is not really improving. The PURSE centre has so much equipment but little of it is used. Although the students and staff say they want to ‘interact’ this rarely happens (with a few good exceptions). So, in summary I do not feel much use. It is unlikely I would be able to get a grant to go again. This would mean expenditure of about £1200.

My village friends are all growing up and I will not be so interesting to them in future I think – except for Balu ( I should hope). Huge blocks of flats are being built nearby to the East on the far side of their rough ‘play ground’. The expansion of expensive individual houses is creeping nearer along the road from the main part of Thumulagunta, and worse, huge residential blocks have almost reached the low caste part (‘My village’; Mallipalle or Harijan colony). I fear that the village has not long to survive.

If I do not go again then I will miss the sun and the walks and the birds. I will miss the town but have so many good memories that it will always be part of my life. The dairy farm is diminishing with a lot of new apartments planned for the south side which is just north of Mallipalle.

Reason for going again: the only driving force is to see my Moin and Barath, and to a lesser extent my other village friends. Moin's duties in Hyderabad mean that i am unlikely to see him for more than a few days. This is the saddest thing. We will have to work hard to get him to UK.

A very strong reason is to be with Barath and friends But that is a dangerous reason; if Barath were not there or too busy then a very big reason for being there would be gone. If I do not go again then I leave him and the village as a very strong and positive memory. IT would be a bigger problem if they spoke English. We communicate quite well but obviously very limited so our friendship is based on very strong affection. I never seem to change in my affections but I will become less important to him. I will arrange that the mature student Tharachand (Chendu) visits occasionally and reports back and if necessary arranges funds to be transferred. I always remember my feelings at the end of the movie Shane. A loner cowboy appears on a ranch run by a widow and her young son. He helps them with their problems. The boy becomes very attached to him. Then he rides off alone into the sunset, leaving the boys in tears. Not quite like that, as Balu is a very strong character. He will forget me sooner than I forget him, except that he is left with the bike which will become more important than I am.

I think it best to retire from India with good memories and not risk having a bad final experience (village gone, too many cars/bikes, too few students, illness).

*Note: As predicted by Surya this resolution only lasted a couple of months*

### **Birds**

New: Golden fronted leafbird (?); Little egret; white throated fantail; Good pictures of old favourites –Blue faced Malkoha, roller, paradise flycatcher; Hornbill; Tickell's flycatcher; Brahminy Mynah; Little minivet. Not seen: Eagle; Hoopoe, rosy starling, zitting cisticola, orange thrush,.

Full list: Great grey hornbill, Black shouldered kite, shikra, kestrel, House and jungle crows, Coucal, Tree pie, Grey jungle fowl, parakeet, paddybird, cattle egret, partridge, water hen, wood sandpiper, mynah, brahminy mynah, roller, golden backed woodpecker, golden oriole, black headed oriole, Koil, Black drongo, white fronted drongo, little brown dove, spotted dove, coppersmith, Little green bee-eater, blue-tailed Bee-eater, Indian robin, red vented bulbul, red whiskered bulbul, white browed bulbul, black headed cuckoo shrike, magpie robin, pied bush chat, white browed fantail, white throated fantail, Tickell's flycatcher, common iora, paradise flycatcher, blue-winged leafbird [=jerdon's leaf bird], other leafbird, Indian pipit, yellow wagtail, grey wagtail, tree swift, palm swift, common swallow, White-backed munia; Spotted munia, indian prinia, ashy prinia, Tailor bird, purple sunbird, purple-rumped sunbird, Yellow-billed babbler, rufous bellied babbler, white browed babbler, house sparrow, Blyth's reed warbler, small minivet, black-headed cuckoo shrike, large pied wagtail.

**Books:** Ray Monk: J. Robert Oppenheimer; a life at the centre. Henderson, Mark: The Geek Manifesto: Why science matters. Rankin, Ian : Standing in Another Man's Grave.

Tyler, Anne: Breathing Lessons. Chris Mullin: A very British Coup and The year of the fire monkey.  
Boy with a top knot (left with Moin or Edwin)  
**Kindle:** Hasting, Max. Warriors. Ian Rankin: Saints of the Shadow Bible (Rebus)  
Harris, Robert. An officer and a spy (novel about Dreyfus affair.  
?Fitzgerald, Penelope: Offshore, and The Bookshop. Michael Kerr  
A Reason To Kill (DI Matt Barnes). Ghost in the Machine (Scott Cullen Mysteries) Ed James