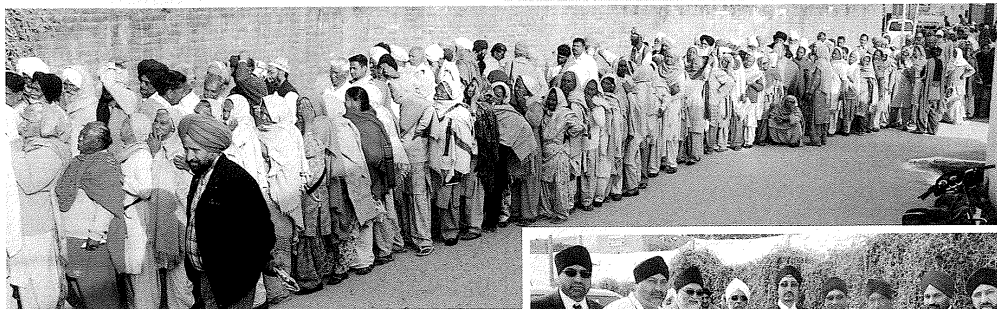


The Queue of Hope

The Lions Club of Fairlop tells of a fabulous annual project



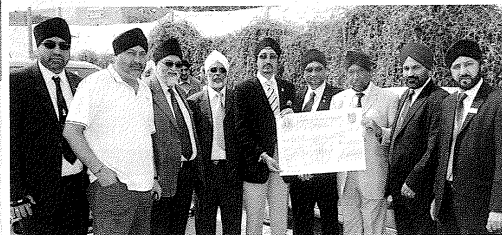
In 1925, Helen Keller challenged Lions to become 'Knights of the Blind'. This enormous challenge was duly accepted and today the Lionistic movement is recognised as the leading organisation in the world for the prevention of blindness. The Lions Club of Fairlop, based in Ilford, Essex have for many years also embraced Helen Keller's words, their leading activity being two Eye Camps they hold in India every year. These camps are attended by several members of the Club at their own expense and very much reflects the spirit of Lionism.

It all started in the mid-nineties under the banner of their mother Club, the Lions Club of London Seven Kings. In 2004, a Branch Club was formed and then in November 2006 the Lions Club of Fairlop received its Charter and carried on with the Eye Camps which today represent their biggest service activity.

In collaboration with the Jagriti Lions Club in India, the first Eye Camp was organised in Jalandar, Punjab. The Jagriti Club made it their responsibility to make all the physical arrangements and put together a medical team to perform the cataract operations. All the helpers and medical staff give their services voluntarily over a period of 3-5 days. The camp attracts thousands of people hoping to have the operation, but sadly many have to be turned away either on medical grounds or because the funding can only provide for a certain amount of operations. A second Eye Camp was set up in 2008 in Gujarat, which is progressing in numbers every year.

The Eye Camps are staged in February and March every year and some of the Club's members returned this spring from another successful event. Between the two camps, about 700 operations were performed at a cost of just under £20,000 which was met in full by Fairlop Lions. The total contribution to the Eye Camps since their inception is around £130,000.

The monies needed to fund these operations is raised at the club's annual Vaisakhi Dinner and Dance held in April each year. Vaisakhi, one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar, is the Sikh new year festival and a long established harvest festival in the Punjab. It is celebrated on the 13th or 14th April, and also commemorates 1699, the year Sikhism was born as a collective faith.



● **Top: Just a fraction of those who come to the 2010 Eye Camps.**
● **Above: Presentation time...**

This event attracts 450-500 guests who enjoy an evening of food, drink and entertainment but most of all generously donate their money to help those less fortunate. In recent years an average of £30,000 has been raised through pledges, raffles and auctions. Several of the Club's members work tirelessly over many months to ensure that the guests have a memorable evening including many family members who help out on the day itself.

Eyesight is something we all take for granted but for the many thousands of poor people in India it is a dream. However, with a simple cataract operation that dream can become a reality. There is only so much we can do in a couple of weeks and it is with great sadness that we have to turn away those people who have come to fulfill their dream and who perhaps may have a chance the following year.

The Club wishes to acknowledge the important contribution made by London Seven Kings Lions Club in setting up and funding the operations for many years. A few of our members were based in that Club before forming Fairlop Lions. In addition we thank our partners in India, our loyal supporters who have donated over the years and the Club members who year on year make their annual pilgrimage to India to help those less fortunate.

At Fairlop we are proud to be Lions. In addition to our Eye Camps we run many projects to serve all areas of need in the local, national and international community. We acknowledge and congratulate Lions Clubs International on the wonderful humanitarian work that it does and will continue to give our support.