

## CHILDREN IN NEED IN IRAQ

delivered to the delighted boys at the Al-Amarah Orphanage. Helena informed us that 18 Staff and 60 orphans were present for the arrival of the equipment from Kuwait and helped to unload it. The rebuilding of the School for the Deaf and Mute was soon completed also and volunteers from BLS and other friends purchased the goods and equipment requested. This second consignment was collected by representatives of the Kings own Borderers from Al-Amarah in mid October.

There was an additional request for shoes for the children of the Maysan Province which the BLS were delighted to agree to and \$5000 was provided for this purpose. However, the extent of this shoe project was only realised when Helena informed us that there were 220,000 children in the Province! Initially, a thousand pairs of shoes were distributed with the help of various NGOs in the area, together with baby baths and clothes. A further 500 pairs of shoes were distributed by the Iraqi Society supporting Childhood in Maysan and through the local Town Councils; the poorest families were identified and vouchers for shoes distributed. Helena Lovell attended this and said she felt that it was a fantastic occasion and the families were extremely grateful. Helena said that it is a significant achievement for all concerned and it is wonderful to see the fruit of the labours of the British Army and the BLS. 'Such projects give the people of Maysan Province that warm and fuzzy feeling that something is really happening and that people really understand their plight.'

Additional projects were completed during the latter part of 2003 including the provision of a much needed prefabricated mosque with a minaret for Az Zubayr in Southern Iraq, in time for the Holy month of Ramadan; equipment for a travelling Community Theatre and money to pay for much needed assistance with the reconstruction of a school and a medical centre in Hashiri, one of the more remote villages in Southern Iraq.

The work continued in 2004 with the collection, at the end of January, of yet another consignment by the British Army for the benefit of Children in Need in Southern Iraq, including 1500 more shoes for the children of the Maysan Province, mainly donated by pupils from various schools in Kuwait, together with a large quantity of text books; computers from the British Embassy, a box of stationery for school children donated by a Brownie Troop of girls, aged 5 – 8, from Maryland in the USA and playground equipment, furniture, toys and curtain fabric for a kindergarten in Az Zubayr. The British Ladies Society owes a particular debt of gratitude to the young son of a diplomat from Oman, Thomas Snell, who, by selling toys and holding bake sales raised enough money to buy most of the equipment for the Kindergarten.



Tragically, many children became innocent victims of the war in Iraq and for these life may never be the same again. One young man however, Ali Abbas, has become the symbol of hope for so many whose young lives have been irrevocably changed by the events in their country. He and his young companion, Ahmed Hamza, became the focus of another very significant project which was pursued by Mrs Wilton's Charity group from BLS. Ali had lost his family and both arms when a missile had fallen on his home during the bombing in Baghdad. The Kuwait government arranged to transfer Ali to the Ibn Sina Hospital where he underwent biological skin grafting surgery since 35% of his body was covered in burns. Ahmed, another victim of the war, was also being treated at the Ibn Sina Hospital, He had suffered the loss of one leg below the knee, one hand and a toe on the remaining foot. A strong friendship had developed between the boys and they gave each other encouragement during their period of recovery. By now, through the media worldwide, Ali and Ahmed had become the symbols of hope for the children who were victims of the ravages of war. Under the guidance of his physiotherapist, Nafisa Kamal, in the early stages of his treatment and recovery, Ali became adept at using his toes and discovered that he had a

