

"Sarvashubhamkara"

A former pupil of Friary School, David Charles Manners was at Lichfield Literature (Oct 8) to promote his book "In the Shadow of Crows". Paul Oakley found out more about his intriguing life.

David enjoyed an eclectic European education in Lichfield, Epsom, Paris, Frankfurt and Stockholm. His mother was raised in Sussex, his father on India's North-West Frontier and in the East Punjab, still live in Lichfield.

David told me: "I grew up in a house where Urdu was regularly spoken and my vocabulary was filled with Urdu words and phrases. I assumed this was usual for all homes and because of my parents' backgrounds I became aware and fascinated by the India sub-continent. This formulated my thinking as a child."

David recalls "As a youngster I remember taking myself off to Lichfield Cathedral to discover a memorial to Lt William Hodson of 'Hodson's Horse' in the south choir aisle of Lichfield Cathedral. This tableau illustrates Lt



Hodson accepting the surrendered sword of 'The King of Delhi'. It was incredible to see a part of the Sikh kingdom being celebrated here in this place!" Hodson was the son of an Archbishop of Lichfield. He was killed and buried at Lucknow in 1858, just a year after capturing Zafar.

"In my twenties I went to India to discover many family legends, particularly an enigmatic Uncle Oscar who was reputed to have had an affair with an Indian princess on a tea plantation. Many discoveries were made including the fact that I had 36 blood relations still living. I now spend every winter there living on Uncle Oscar's estate".

After a period in public relations in Pittsburgh and working the harvest in North Pennsylvania's Amish country, he returned to Britain to read Music, specialising in composition. David has been employed as a cabaret and ballet pianist, an English teacher to German bankers, a translator for a Parisian



is the subject of my book "In the Shadow of the Crow". She was driven from her home with her two sons."

David continued "When I got home I couldn't forget those people. The slums are run by the Mafia and many of the charities have their own level of abuse and corruption. The charity Sarvashubhamkara has been set up to help put in an infrastructure along with education to help them become weavers, office managers or in catering. We currently have nine girls becoming nurses and midwives."

professor, a care-worker with autistic children, and as an assistant to a leading theatrical milliner. He worked for five years as a theatre designer, primarily with one of Britain's foremost dance companies, for which he was also commissioned to compose original instrumental work.

David has spent the last twelve years as a massage therapist at Gyndetoume Opera, where he also teaches Shiva Tantra Yoga. He has led courses in the same little-known tradition at English National Opera, for the Jewwood Young Artists' Programme, and with village groups in various regions of India.

Leprosy in India

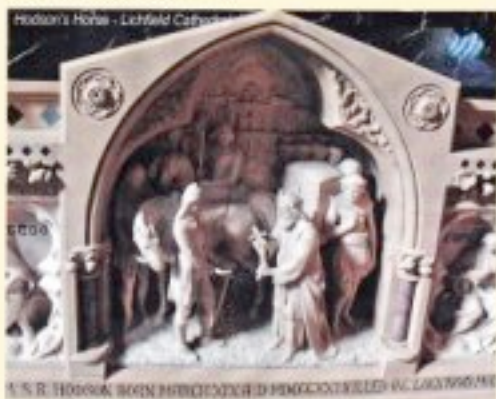
For the past fifteen years, David has spent his life between the Sussex Downs and the Bengal Himalaya. The 45 year old author co-founded the charity Sarvashubhamkara which provides medical care, education and human contact for socially excluded individuals and communities on the Indian subcontinent.

"Many of these people suffer with leprosy. Not only the disease, but the hopelessness of the social stigma that they and their families have to go through. Many of them feel there is no way out for them. I improved my language so that I could live with them in a colony of lepers. One woman "Sindri"

60% of the world's leprosy is in India with the next largest 6% in Brazil. There are 12 million affected in India with a new case discovered every 2 minutes. It is incredible to think that it was eradicated here in Britain in 1798.

Historically, leprosy has affected mankind for at least 4,000 years, and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China, Egypt, and India, but it is unknown if it is the same disease mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. In 1995, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between 2 and 3 million people were permanently disabled because of leprosy. In the past 20 years, 15 million people worldwide have been cured of leprosy. Although the forced quarantine or segregation of patients is unnecessary in places where adequate treatments are available, and can be considered unethical. Many leper colonies still remain around the world, in countries such as India where there are still more than 1,000 leper colonies.

David has spoken all around the world about his book and has recently returned from Canada. The success of "In the Shadow of The Crow" has now gone into a reprint. He is hoping to use his extraordinary stories of India to be the inspiration for his next book.



Hodson's Horse - Lichfield Cathedral