

BibleLands

.....Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

Birds' Nest Home

How it all started

The Birds' Nest Home provides a home for children who have lost a parent, or who are unable to live with their families due to other reasons. Many children come to the home with sad stories of death, illness and family problems. Birds' Nest ensures their education and enables their social and psychological rehabilitation.

Birds' Nest was founded by Maria Jacobsen, a Danish missionary. During the First World War, over one million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were massacred and a further two-and-a-half million fled from their homeland. Maria Jacobsen gathered many orphaned Armenian children into a safe hiding place to avoid detection, while she cared for them and gave them medical help.

In 1928, she opened the Danish Birds' Nest Orphanage in Byblos, now named Jbeil. In 1970, the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia took over the management of the home and continues to oversee it.



Key facts

- Founded: 1928
- Location: Jbeil (Byblos), Lebanon
- First BibleLands Grant: 1929
- BibleLands' Grant: £23,736 p.a.



Current Activities

The 40 children who live at Birds' Nest are all from Armenian Christian families. Until 2003 the home ran a primary school for the children. However, whilst the kindergarten children continue to receive lessons at the home, the older children now attend a local school as day students. This enables them to meet, play and work with other local children, thus helping them to integrate more fully into society.



Above: Girls at the Birds Nest Home

Byblos is about 20 miles north of Beirut. It was a Phoenician port in Bible times and, like Tyre and Sidon, it sent its traders all over the Mediterranean area. It was famous for exporting Egyptian papyrus to Greece, and eventually byblos began to mean 'book'. This is the origin of the word Bible

The children live at the home during the academic year, and visit their families during the holidays.

The home has its own chapel, where the weekly Sunday services are held and where the children attend Sunday School.

The Armenians tried to keep out of Lebanon's civil war, from 1975 to 1990, but a great number were killed, injured, or made homeless. Birds' Nest itself did not escape damage and in the 1980s, BibleLands raised considerable funds for its repairs.

Lebanon's recent history has been deeply unsettled. Just as the country was emerging from the civil war, she was plunged into renewed turmoil by the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri in 2005 and war with Israel in 2006. However, successful parliamentary elections in 2009 led to the formation of a coalition government which, it is hoped, will usher in a period of stability, unity and co-operation.

The latest news, prayer points, and other information are all available from BibleLands.

Below : Some of the younger children saying grace before their midday meal



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