

TEABAG

FEBRUARY 2006
NEWSLETTER

THE EDUCATION AND BOOK APPEAL: GHANA

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CHRISTMAS IN GHANA

The cover story for this issue really has to be the wonderful Christmas Party that was held in Mankoadze in December. This was the biggest event that TEABAG has held. Children and School Teachers from the villages of Mankoadze, Abrekum and Onyadze attended - nearly 600 people in all. Every child received a gift of sweets, biscuits and toys from Father Christmas. There was traditional drum music and dancing, hot food and soft drinks for everyone. The day finished off with a spectacular firework display on the beach.



Behind the scenes, it was a huge organisational nightmare and I extend sincere thanks to the whole team involved. Buying the presents from the wholesalers in Accra was a story in itself as wholesalers in Africa are nothing like you would find in the UK. We hired young female porters to carry our purchases on their heads and they had to follow us around for an hour with these heavy loads as we moved between the tightly packed stalls in the wholesale markets. They were amazed at our generous tip that we gave them when we finally reached the car.

The cooking for the party took the efforts of six ladies over three days. Remember, there was no gas or electricity available for the cooking. Even the cooking utensils had to be borrowed from outside the village to cope with the demands of preparing food for so many mouths.

We had booked the same Father Christmas as last year but, on the day, he failed to show up. I was amused that Paul (the sponsor who travelled to Ghana with me) couldn't wait to dress up and act the part. He was a great success and the children all loved him. I think that I will book him for this year's party. Father Christmas's report appears elsewhere in this issue.

The biggest thanks are due to all of the TEABAG supporters who contributed so generously to the appeal for money to finance the party. This appeal raised nearly £800.

The children enter the party in class groups, guided by the prefects



The ladies of the village prepare the food over three days of hot and hard work



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

It has been a busy year for TEABAG since our last newsletter. We raised £6,565 in 2005, the Honorary Treasurers report is in this newsletter. I have made three trips to Mankoadze and we have now expanded our area of operation into two new villages: Abrekum and Onyadze. Both of these villages have shared boundaries with Mankoadze. Abrekum is another coastal fishing village and Onyadze straddles the main road between Accra and Cape Coast. All three communities are exceedingly poor and truly appreciate the help that we are giving to educate and care for their children.

When I produced the March 2005 newsletter, I reported on the poor state of the roof over the Onyadze School. I can now report that the school building itself has collapsed and lessons are mostly taking place in the shade of the trees in the school grounds!

In a very positive move, the Ghanaian Government has introduced a plan to provide funding for the basic education of all children in Ghana. This amounts to a grant per child of c30,000 per annum (about £1.80). I understand that this promised money has yet to reach the schools and so, as always, our additional support is still vitally important. Uniform, books, educational aids and writing equipment still have to be provided for.

There has been some rearrangement in the management of schools throughout Ghana. Abrekum and Onyadze are to remain as Government schools, controlled by the District Assembly at Apam, while Mankoadze reverts to Church administration and comes under the control of the Methodist Bishop in nearby Winneba. One result of these changes is that every child on the scheme now needs a new uniform. TEABAG has recently placed an order for 220 school uniforms to be produced locally, which will provide work and income for local people.

Apart from those sponsors who joined our scheme since September 2005, you should find a renewal reminder enclosed with this newsletter. Please send your donation back to us pretty quickly as I will be travelling to Ghana in late March and would like to deposit the money in the TEABAG bank account in Winneba. The cost remains £15 per year and cheques should be made payable to "Gillman Funeral Service".

I thank each and every one of you for supporting this little charity that is succeeding in helping 220 very deprived children in Ghana to receive an education.

Roger Gillman



With no TV or other entertainment, a Monopoly set seems like fun again. The locals soon learn the essence of the game and proceed to beat me on the first game!

***** NEWS IN BRIEF *****

NEW ROOF

The school building in Mankoadze now has a splendid new shiny tin roof, thanks to a donation from the military following a NATO exercise held in the area.

SCHOOL VISIT

In March 2006, a group of students and teachers from the prestigious Gordonstoun School in Scotland are planning to visit the village. The children from each culture are going to perform traditional music in an interesting mix (clash) of styles (can you imagine the tribal drums trying to beat the bagpipes in a contest of who can play the loudest!). The Gordonstoun group are members of the school choir and are touring Ghana to perform at important venues around the country, including the residence of the British High Commissioner and the Palace of the Ashanti King. Mankoadze is extremely lucky to have been included in their itinerary, perhaps because we promised them a beach party!

DVD PLAYER

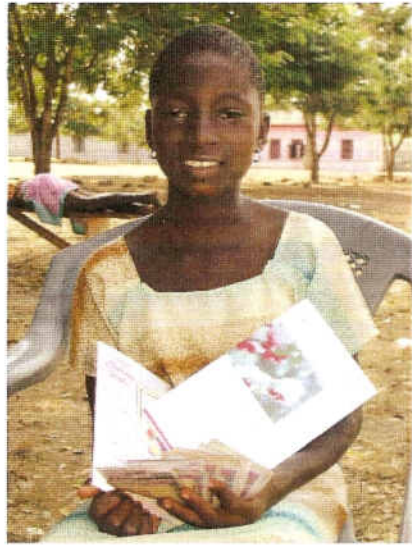
In a complicated deal that involved selling tinplate toy boats on Ebay, TEABAG has become the owner of a complete set of home cinema equipment: projector, screen, DVD player, sound system and all associated cables. We hope to use this (if we can find an electricity supply) as an educational tool. In our wish list, we will now appeal for suitable DVDs.

CORRECT ADDRESS

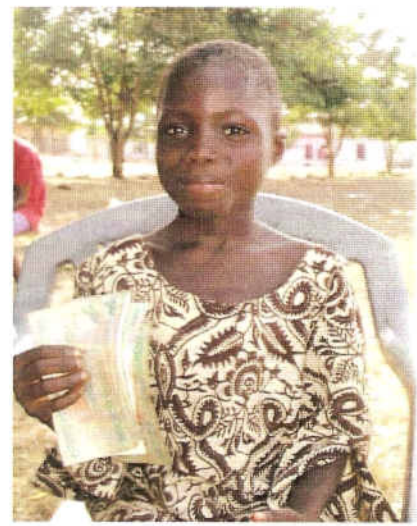
In my letter to sponsors just before Christmas, I made a mistake when I typed the postal address for TEABAG in Ghana. The correct address to write to your sponsored child is as follows:

(Name of Child)
TEABAG
PO Box WB 429
Winneba
Ghana

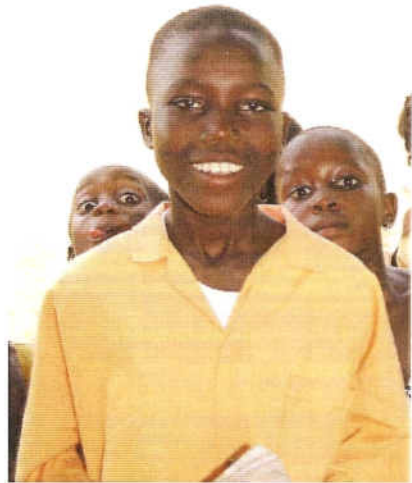
PHOTOS OF THE CHILDREN



As some of the children hadn't been re-photographed for a couple of years, I made the effort to try to take fresh pictures of all of the children on the sponsorship scheme. There were a few kids absent from the village in November as they were representing the region in a sporting event. A few other children were away or just couldn't be found. I managed to take photos of 190 children and I have enclosed your child's photo with this newsletter.



Generally, I seem to be getting good results with my new digital camera and it occurs to me that some of you may like to have a larger (A4) sized photo of your child. Each time I go back to the village, I take photos back photos from the last trip. The parents are so very excited to have a picture of their child, perhaps the only one they will ever have. I have noticed that photos suffer from the moist atmosphere of Ghana so I now laminate them so they will last forever. So I am offering to print two A4 photos of your child for a donation of £5.00. One will be posted to you and the other will be laminated and given to the family in Ghana.



It was a massive job to gather all the children together to take these pictures. So that I can identify each individual, I took a photo of their name written down on paper or from the envelope containing their Christmas card. However, I have a problem with the two girls shown at the top of the page. I must have missed the identifying photo for the girl on the left. She is holding a Birthday card, a Christmas card and some money. Does anyone recognise her? With the girl on the right, I have a photo of her Christmas card which has a red envelope, the photo is out of focus but I can read her first name: Mary, but I cannot make out the

surname. Do you recognise her from your sponsorship photo?

The photo of the smart looking boy shows how children are the same all over the world. I didn't notice the cheeky urchin poking his tongue out over the subjects shoulder when I took the picture but it made me laugh when I printed it out back in London.

SANTA'S REPORT

It was quite a change to come from the freezing North Pole to the sunny climate of Ghana. I forgot to bring my summer suit and had to wear my winter clothes in the African sunshine!

Ghana is a quite different from where I normally live and the thing that struck me the most was the happy open faces of everyone that I met. People who have nothing material offer you a wealth of friendliness and a warm and genuine welcome.

Mankoadze is a small fishing village with none of the modern services that we all seem to take for granted: no running water, no waste water disposal and no telephones. It was like stepping back in time 100 years. After coming from the land of plenty where the average Christmas request is for computers, X-boxes, mobile phones and other expensive consumer goods, it was refreshing to see the delight in children's eyes when handed a simple pen or a small packet of sweets, and to know that they were really were appreciated. More than anything, this is the one memory that I will take back with me to tell my friends the elves and dwarfs.

The work carried out by TEABAG had a humbling effect on me and left me with a deep feeling of contentment and well being. I am looking forward with relish to returning to Ghana next Christmas where, once again, Father Christmas will bring a little joy and happiness into the lives of some of the most deserving children it has been my pleasure and privilege to know.

