

TEABAG

MARCH 2004^S
NEWSLETTER

THE EDUCATION AND BOOK APPEAL: GHANA

971 GARRATT LANE, TOOTING, LONDON SW17 0LW 020 8672 4231

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

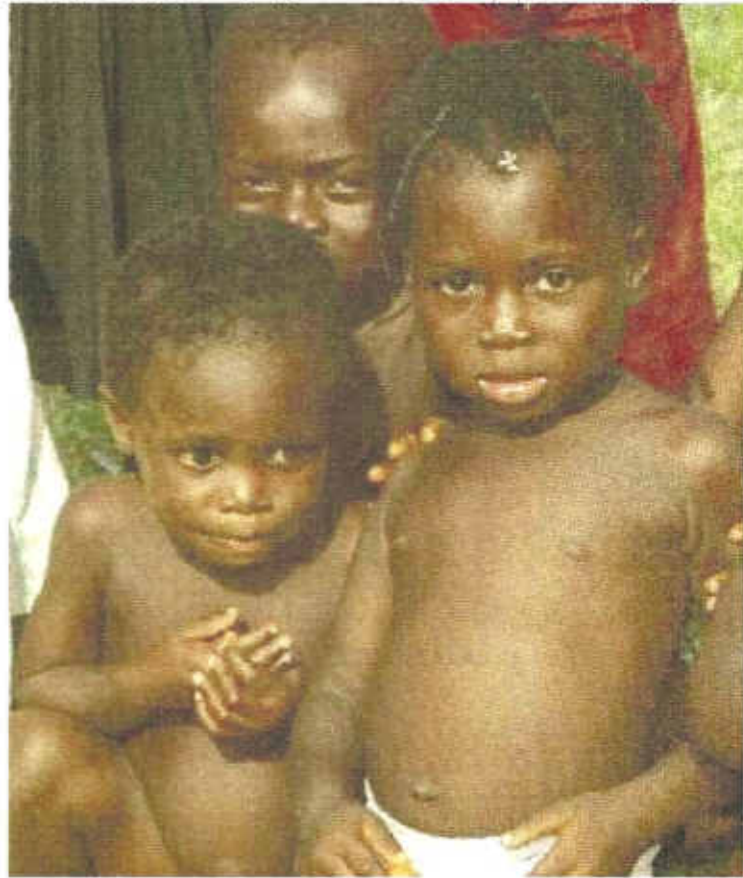
I must apologize for being so late sending our renewal invitations this year. During January, I wanted to avoid asking for money while everyone was occupied with the Tsunami appeals, and since then I have been too busy with work in my office. My last visit to Mankoadze took place in November and early December. We celebrated Christmas early and had a wonderful time. I am hoping to travel back to Ghana in April to check on how all our projects are developing.

Roger Gillman

PO BOX ADDRESS FOR TEABAG IN GHANA

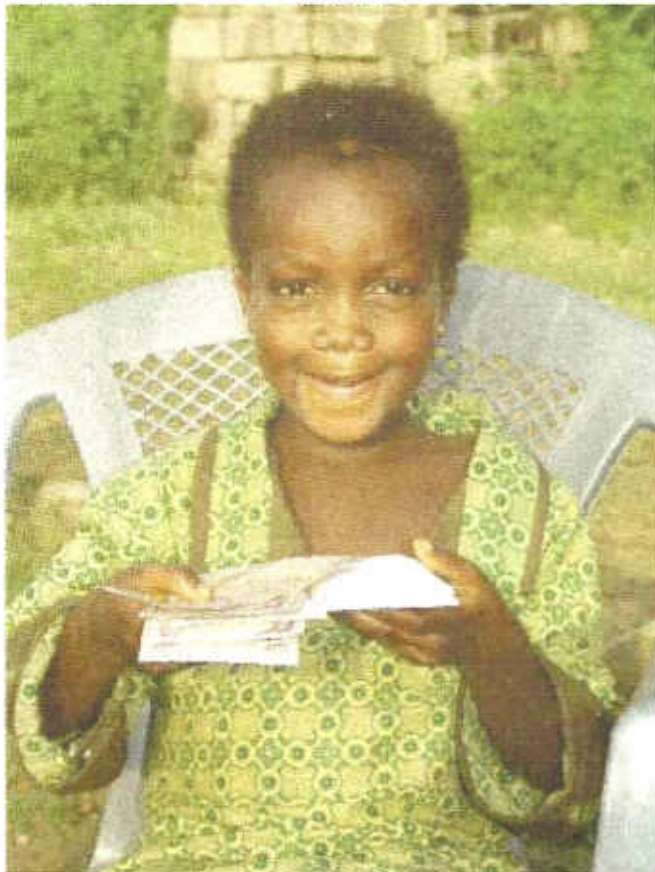
TEABAG now has its own post office box in Winneba, the town nearest the village. We were previously sharing a box with the school, a box that the whole village seems to use. So if you wish to write to your sponsored child, please use the new address:

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



Around 120 children received Christmas Gifts from their sponsors. These mostly consisted of small gifts and/or small cash presents. I managed to photograph about 85% of the children receiving the gifts and if a photo was taken of your child, it will be included along with this newsletter. A few children were away from the village or couldn't be found on "photo day" and one child was in hospital, so I do apologize to anyone who sent a gift but I couldn't take a photo for.

These small cash gifts really do total a considerable income for the village. Even the children who did not directly receive money will benefit from the boost to the local economy that is generated. I do realise that some of our sponsors are pensioners and schoolchildren. Please don't worry if you couldn't contribute, the very fact that you are helping with the child's education is a wonderful thing for which I, and the community in Mankoadze, are very grateful.



The picture on the left shows Alicia Arthur receiving her Christmas gift from her friend in Earsfield, London.



FATHER CHRISTMAS VISITS MANKOADZE

The children of Mankoadze, near Winneba, have been very well behaved this year. They have been attending school and working hard in their studies. Therefore, Father Christmas decided that he would make a special visit to the village to reward them.

As reindeer are pretty difficult to find in Ghana, Father Christmas decided to arrive in the fishing village by boat. Ten strong warriors were engaged to row him all the way from the North Pole to the Central Region community.

As the boat approached the beach, 420 cheering school children greeted him. He was carried ashore and welcomed by traditional drummers and dancers who escorted him to the village school. The able ladies of Mankoadze, organised by Queen Mother Ama Mensah, had prepared a huge feast. The children eagerly tucked into the traditional food washed down with endless fizzy drinks. After the dancing, each child received a special Christmas present from Father Christmas.



The singing, dancing and celebrations continued on into the hours of darkness and the festivities were completed by a wonderful firework display.

Thanks are due to the many supporters of the TEABAG charity in England who contributed towards these celebrations. TEABAG (The Education And Book Appeal: Ghana) helps with the education costs of children in the Central Region and is involved in building and supplying school libraries.

The picture on the left shows Thomas Mensah getting to the front of the queue to receive his Christmas pressie from Santa!



The article on the previous page was sent to the Daily Graphic, Ghana's leading broadsheet newspaper, along with photos of the event. The idea of a big party came from the fact that our appeal for Christmas funds produced the amazing amount of £510. The money was far too much to simply buy each child in the school a Christmas gift and so it was decided to throw a huge Christmas Party. Someone in my office said that Woolworths were selling Father Christmas outfits for £10 and the ideas started growing from that point onwards. At the end of the day, because of my own self-indulgence the party cost £750. I was happy to make-up the difference, as I couldn't have wished for a better Christmas present for myself than to witness all those children's faces when they saw Father Christmas arriving on the beach.

Just as an aside, I will tell you about the two scantily clad German young ladies who happened to be holidaying in Mankoadze on the day of the party. They were lying on the

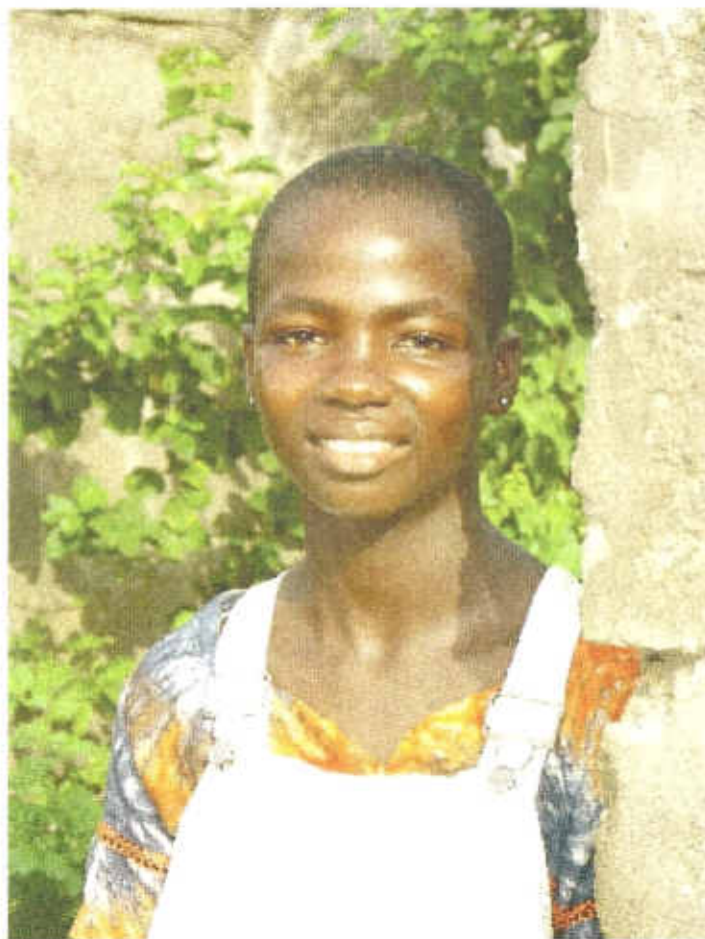
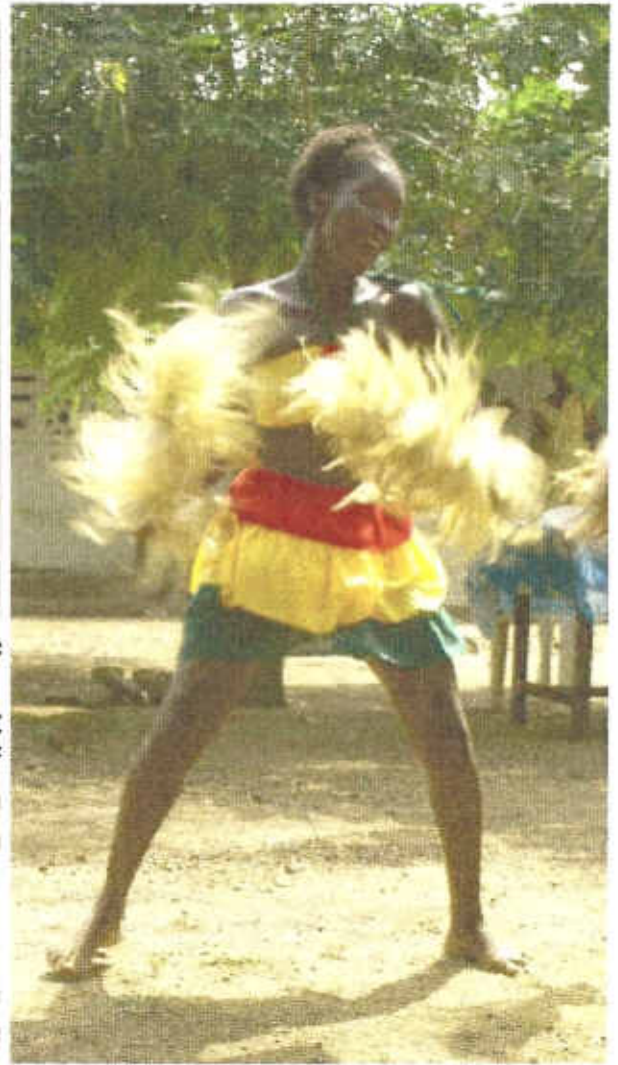
beach enjoying the sun and the perfect peace and quiet. They were the only two people sunbathing along the whole beach with around five miles of empty white sands stretching in each direction either side of them. It might seem, therefore, slightly unfortunate that they had chosen the exact spot where I had arranged for Father Christmas to land. The first sign of their disrupted day was the arrival of a troupe of professional dancers and drummers who were noisily warming-up and getting into the swing of things. The next indication that the peaceful afternoon had disappeared was the arrival of 420 screaming schoolchildren who had run from the school grounds and swarmed onto the beach. In a state of bemused shock, the girls, surrounded by children, abandoned their beach towels and stood up to try to understand what the heck was happening. At this point I approached them, pointing out to sea towards a small canoe breaking through the waves and said "Santa Claus is coming!" after this they were happy to join in with the festivities and came up to the school grounds with us to watch the dancing. The little girl in the photo is clearly not too happy about her first meeting with Santa, I think she felt better after she got her gift!





The Ladies of Mankoadze spend two days preparing the Christmas feast for the children's party (see photo above). Turkey and Brussels sprouts were not on the menu! But there was plenty of food and drink for everyone. A bottle of pop is a rare treat for these children and, with the inclusion of hundreds of bags of sweets, the introduction of tooth decay was joyously welcomed by the kids!

The dancing girl on the right was one of the professional troupe hired in Winneba for the party. The dances are energetic and i can't understand just how they can dance for hours in bear feet on the rough and stony surface.



EUREKA

There can be little doubt that the books that we have collected and sent to Ghana are a fantastic resource for the school and the children. The schools that I have visited just do not have any books and teaching is mostly "parrot fashion" off the blackboard. However, because the books are perceived as highly valuable, there seems to be an inclination that they are too precious to let the children get their hands on them. We managed to address this issue last year during the visit on the schoolteachers from Goose Green. Books are now available in each classroom. However, ultimately the children have to WANT to read! Ernestina Buabeng, pictured here, is one of the children who came onto our sponsorship scheme from the very beginning. She is sponsored by a kind lady in Balham. She is a quiet but bright girl and seems to be progressing well at school. I was immensely pleased when she approached me and asked, in her best English, if she could have some more books to read by herself. It was at this point that I knew we had actually started achieving one of our main objectives.



EBENEZER

Little Ebenezer Otwe is not such a little boy these days. Since his TEABAG sponsored operation in 2003, he seems to have made up for lost time and has grown at an incredible rate. The smaller picture

was taken in 2002, when his party trick was demonstrating strange contortions, made possible by his disabilities. More recently we have paid for new crutches and adjustable callipers. Ebenezer joins in all the games with the other children now including dancing and playing football.

CHARITY REGISTRATION

We have, at last, taken steps to get TEABAG proper registered charity status. We have now found people, from within our existing sponsors, to become Trustees of the charity and another sponsor, a chartered accountant, has volunteered to conduct the annual audit. The Trust document has been completed and soon we will submit all of our papers to the Charity Commissioners. Once this has been successfully completed, we will be able to open a bank account in the name of TEABAG. In the meanwhile, please continue to make your cheques payable to "Gillman Funeral Service". I extend my gratitude to the sponsors who have come forward to become Trustees and for the interest they have each displayed in the work of our little charity.

FRESH WATER WELL

We are investigating the possibility of digging and equipping a well for the village. From advice received so far, it seems that this is not a simple thing to do. Being a coastal area, there is a danger that the water could be contaminated with sea salt. We are trying to discover if there is a water table nearer the mountain that may produce fresh water, which could then be piped into the village. Provision of a fresh water supply would have a major impact on the lives of both the children and the adults. More news as it develops.



DOVE LUGUCHEGI

Dove has been working for TEABAG for a year now. She lives in Accra, the capital of Ghana, and is a student of French. Recently, she has been travelling to Mankoadze fairly regularly to help progress our projects there and to extend our work into other schools in nearby areas. She is currently trying to get to grips with using the digital camera that I have left there for TEABAG use. If you would like to contact her to ask anything about your sponsored child, please feel free to use her email address, she may be able to email you a photo soon! Email address:

Luguchegi@hotmail.com

Tel: 00233 244 360761

(Dove's small retainer and expenses are not taken from TEABAG funds)

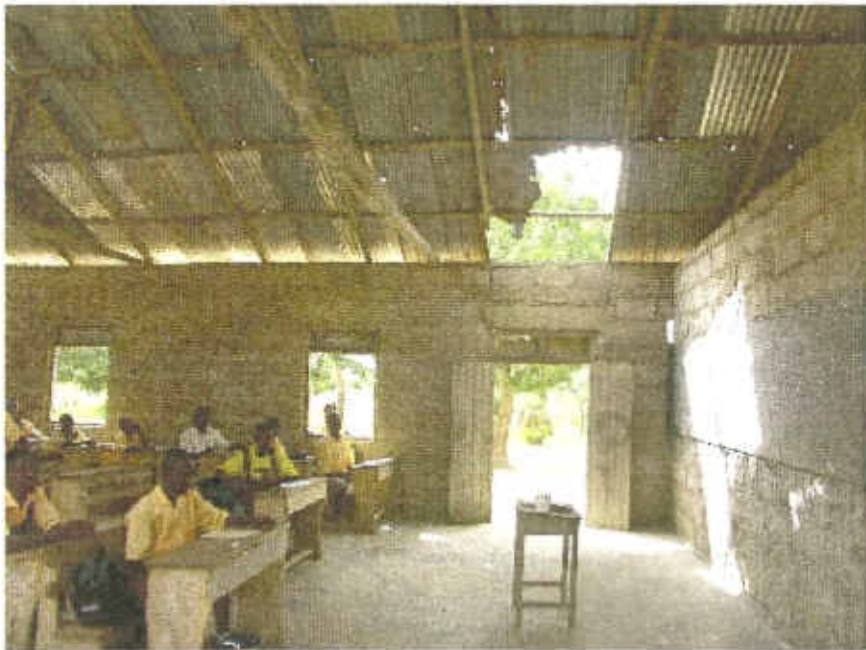


THE FUTURE FOR TEABAG

We have now been helping the children of Mankoadze for three years. It has been a vertical learning curve and perhaps now is a good time to review our successes and failures. Certainly, the educational sponsorship has been our major success. Many children are now receiving an education who would not otherwise have that great opportunity. Other families have had the burden of school fees and uniform costs removed from their limited family budget. Our book scheme has wasted some effort in sending too many books of an unsuitable nature. Now that we are only collecting good condition children's books, everything we send will be of immediate use, actually for adult as well as children's education. We do also have a good supply of general reference and adult books for the great day when our library is ready. With the clothes and shoes, we have learnt to be selective prior to shipping so that we are only sending suitable items, bearing in mind the climate of Ghana. Perhaps our biggest failure has been the bicycles. We put in a lot of effort in collecting bikes from many areas of the UK. Shipping costs were quite high and duty had to be paid upon arrival in Ghana. I must stress that none of these costs was borne by TEABAG, but money was unwisely spent in this activity. The problems really occurred in the village, where a bicycle was truly a luxury item and we clearly were never going to have enough to give one to each child. The rough ground soon caused punctures

and mechanical problems and anyway many of the bikes were in pretty poor condition before we even sent them. The result is that we have a storeroom full of broken bicycles in Ghana! I am now thinking of selling these to raise money for the building project. The building of the library has been another problem. I can see now that my initial plans were too ambitious and that the structure will need to be simplified. The plans are now to complete the ground floor and get the library open. Perhaps at a later date we will be able to consider building the second floor to provide the other facilities originally envisaged. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will be able to read about the expansion of the education sponsorship to two more schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Now that we have a board of Trustees to guide TEABAG, decisions for the future will be made by this group of people and I am delighted to have a team of great people from varied backgrounds whose opinions and ideas will drive TEABAG in the future.

The picture above shows the school and children of Gomoa Abrekum, one of the schools into which we wish to extend TEABAG support. On the very day that we visited, some children had been sent home for non-payment of fees, so our support is clearly needed. The teachers told us that they were in desperate need of books, a problem easily solved by TEABAG, and a good initial supply was delivered to them within a week. We are planning to start by taking ten children from Abrekum onto the sponsorship



scheme. The town of Abrekum is another fishing village, along the coast and adjacent to Mankoadze.

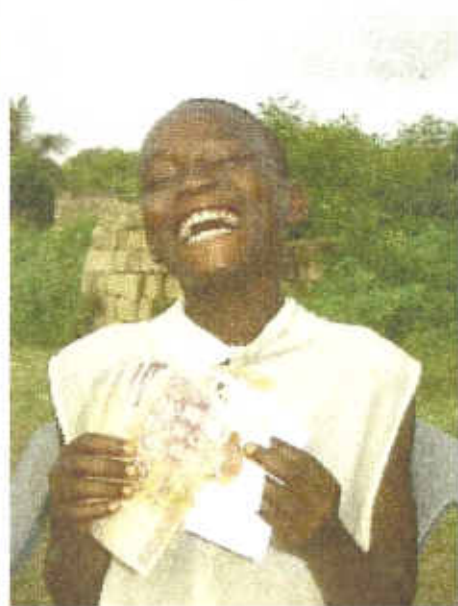
The other school that we are adopting is in the settlement of Onyadze, a northern neighbour of Mankoadze. The junior and secondary schools are in separate sites either side of the coastal route, about four miles from the sea. The photo above shows the children of the secondary school. The children all look very smart and were well behaved during our visit. Their most obvious need is shown in the extremely poor state of the school building. Many of the roofing sheets are missing and classes must be disrupted every time it rains.

Again, I am sure that a supply of books would be welcome and perhaps we can buy some roofing material in the future. During our visit, one poor boy was obviously on punishment duties and could be seen hacking down tall grass in the school grounds using a 30" machete! Imagine such a weapon being given to a child in the UK!

WANT TO HELP A LITTLE MORE?

Your support is fantastically appreciated by the people of Ghana. If you feel that you would like to do a bit more to help the work of TEABAG, here are some suggestions;

1. Encourage others to sponsor a child's education, consider giving a sponsorship to someone for their birthday
2. Keep an eye out for good condition children's books and lightweight clothes, ask parents if they have any to spare that their children may have grown out of
3. Think about displaying a TEABAG poster at your workplace; perhaps have a few copies of our newsletter available in case someone shows interest.
4. Ask around for old mobile phones, get the charger if you can
5. Oh yes! And when you win the National Lottery: don't forget your favourite charity!



Six of the lucky children who received Christmas presents and cards from their friends in the UK (and one in Germany!). I think that you can see the happiness in their faces when they are remembered. The money boosts the local economy and helps everyone in the community. Thank you.

Quite a few of our loyal TEABAG supporters have casually spoken of a wish to visit Ghana, and Mankoadze in particular. I would be quite happy to arrange a small group to travel together if dates could be tied up. Please give me a call if you are interested. I can promise you a warm welcome and an exciting break. I have an information pack ready to post out!

DONATIONS FORM

Regular donors, under the educational sponsorship scheme, will be sent their annual invitation to renew in January each year. As this newsletter is read by other people, this form is included to attract new sponsors and to encourage general donations towards the work of TEABAG. Until we have completed the work involved to register the charity, please make your cheques payable to "Gillman Funeral Service"

No administration or shipping costs are deducted from donations. Every penny is used directly to help the children.

I would like to sponsor the education of _____ children in Ghana @ £15 each per year £ _____

I enclose a donation of £ _____ to be used for the building and other TEABAG aims.

Name: Tel:

Address:

..... Post code: