

TEABAG

SEPTEMBER 2004
NEWSLETTER

THE EDUCATION AND BOOK APPEAL: GHANA

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DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

The big story for this issue of the TEABAG Newsletter is the report on the recent visit to Mankoadze of the Schoolteachers from Goose Green School in East Dulwich.

It was the first time that I had been to Ghana during our summer months and I was surprised to find the weather quite endurable. Usually, I am there in October or February when it has always been unbearably hot and humid. In August (towards the end of the rainy season in Ghana) the weather was just comfortably warm and one didn't feel exhausted by mid-day. In fact, upon our return, we found that it had been hotter in the UK!

I am pleased to be able to tell you that our projects are all progressing well and that everyone, from both sides, enjoyed the visit of the schoolteachers.

Roger Gillman

GOOSE GREEN VISIT

The party travelling from the UK consisted of five teachers from Goose Green Primary School and five students. It was the first visit any of them had made to Ghana. They were accommodated in near native conditions in a cultural centre just outside the main village of Mankoadze. They did have the wonderful luxury of a shower and flushing toilets! We brought in an outside caterer to prepare all our meals and these were taken in the Queen Mother's house, who had converted her living room into a Mess Hall for us!



The welcome that we received was fantastic. On our first day, after they had settled in at the accommodation, the party walked into the village and was greeted by cheering schoolchildren. They literally marched us around the village accompanied by drums and singing. We were marched firstly to the Queen Mother's house and then on to have a formal audience with the King. We were greeted as though we were royalty ourselves and were presented with specially made native sashes, necklaces (made by the children) and bead bracelets.

Following the introductions, we were marched on to the school grounds and there we were treated to the most incredible display of dancing, singing and drama. This event continued for hours, until the light faded, and I was astounded by the tremendous performance of the children. I had never witnessed anything like this before. The performance was so full of energy and enthusiasm, the dancing was obviously well rehearsed. I later learnt that the children had been practicing for this event for three months, dedicating two hours everyday (except Sundays) for practice. Apart from their own local dances, they included displays of dances from other regions of Ghana. Each dance was a drama in itself and told a story with humour and pathos.

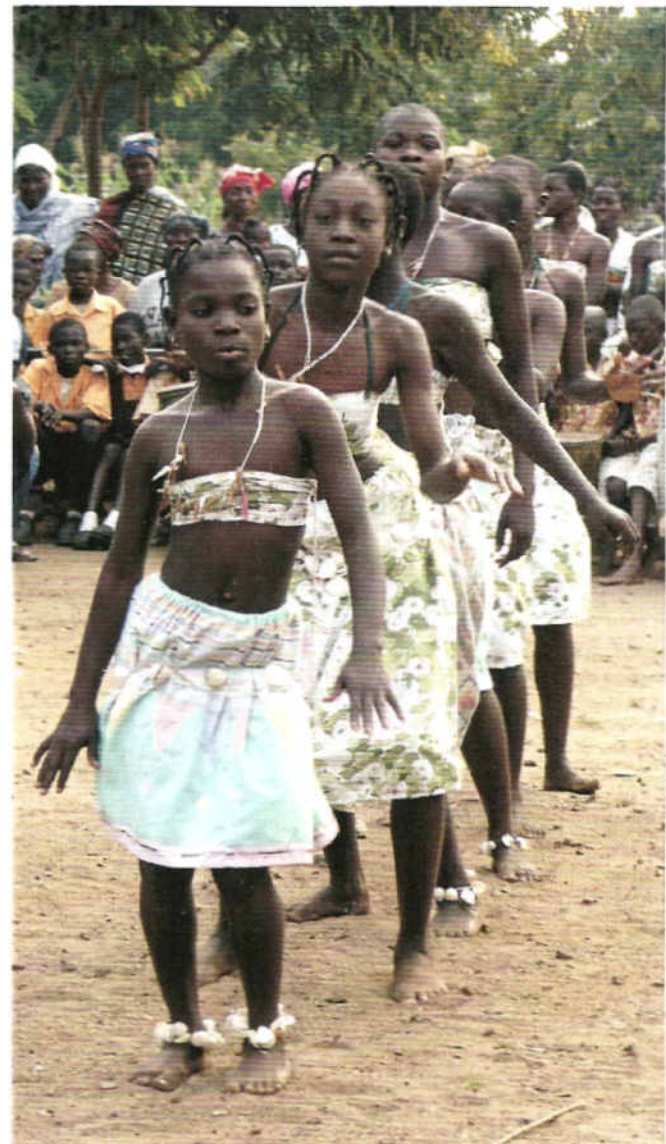
The evening finished with welcoming speeches and further gifts were showered upon us. It was the most incredible welcome that one could imagine and, perhaps, left us all a little stunned!



Nana George, the King of Mankoadze, sits on the raised dais; Ama, The Queen Mother, is to his right. The chap with the totem in the front is the linguist who talks for the King purely a ritual as Nana George speaks perfect English.

The Goose Green party became closely involved with the work of the school. They had shipped many boxes of teaching aids which were introduced and donated to the school. They also purchased paint and used it to brighten-up the classrooms. Teaching methods were discussed in meetings with the local teachers and the headmaster. There developed a real feeling of warmth between the children and the overseas teachers that will continue for the future and further strengthen the relationship between the children attending Goose Green School and the children in the village.

Appreciation is due to the British Council (through the Specialist School Trust) for their partial funding of the visit. And the biggest "thank you" goes to the teachers who gave freely of both their time and themselves to help the children of Mankoadze.



Performance of traditional dances. Preparations for the welcoming ceremony included the making of the costumes for the dance and drama.

Ebenezer Otwe continues to make good progress following his operations last year. He is always a part of whatever is going on in the community and still always wears his trademark smile. We have now raised enough money for him to make another trip to the hospital. This time he will be fitted with adjustable callipers. Since he has been able to walk upright, he appears to be growing at an incredible rate. His English is improving now that he is back in full-time education.





The day starts early in rural Africa, the wake-up bell is rung about 4.00am and everyone starts on their daily tasks. The children can be seen sweeping the area around their homes and the school grounds, they also have to fetch the water and firewood for the family. By 7.00am they are ready to start school. In the photo they are seen leaving morning assembly where they form into class groups, sing hymns and the national anthem and then, in military fashion, march off to the classroom

WATER SUPPLY

We, in Europe, take water for granted. Water quality and supply is a major problem in much of the third world where shortages and poor water quality are a life threatening issue. These photos were taken recently, at the end of the rainy season when the local lagoon had been refreshed by heavy rainfall. In the dryer seasons, three months can pass without rainfall. When local supplies are exhausted, water arrives in the village by tanker but this has to be purchased and is beyond the means of many families.

Woman and children are responsible for fetching the water, achieved by carrying heavy buckets and bowls on their heads for several hundred of yards. Once arrived at the home, water is treated as a most valuable commodity and is used sparingly.





LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECT

Due to lack of funds, the work on the building has been suspended. Obviously, the architectural and planning costs have been paid and considerable work has been completed to excavate and build the foundations. Some further funding has now been identified and the building of the ground floor will be able to commence soon. We did have

some problems with the regional government over the position of the building but these have now been satisfactorily settled and the regional administration have now pledged their support and have kindly offered to supply some building materials free-of-charge to the project.

In addition to being a village library, it is aimed that the building will house telecommunications and internet access. To provide ongoing income, there will be a couple of shop units and a village administration office. By including an undercover bus stop at the front of the building, it is hoped that this building will become something of a focal point for the village. We are still very grateful for any donations towards this vital project.



DONATED ARTICLES

We have now sent over 13,000 books to Ghana. The school libraries and classrooms are well stocked and we are storing plenty of books to equip the village library when it is completed. Given this position, we are now only collecting children's books in good condition that can be given to children to help with their reading skills

There have been some problems with the bicycles that have been sent. Many of them required extensive work which was beyond our means to carry out. Once again, we are having to be fussy now and can only take children's sized bikes in good condition.

The sewing machines have proved to be very useful and we are now expanding the sewing machine appeal to include electric models in fully working condition. Second-hand mobile phones have been very successful for us in raising money for the charity.

We did have problems with the importation of the last shipment into Ghana and it proved to be quite a costly operation getting through customs, so perhaps you can understand that we have to now be a little fussy to make sure that our future shipments are cost effective. Thanks are due to the many people and organisations that kindly donated various items to TEABAG.

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:.....