



College Life In The Mankoadze TEABAG Vocational Training Centre

Over the last twelve months, we have undertaken a major project to re-equip all departments of the college. The heat, moisture and dust took its toll on the computers supplied to the college when we first opened the IT department. We now have solid state computers pre-loaded with educational software that have no moving parts or fans. The students are unable to download programmes or store information on these machines. All work is saved to a USB stick for each student. All the other departments have seen similar investment in both equipment and teaching aids. We believe that we are now one of the best equipped vocational colleges in the country and our students are

incredibly grateful for the opportunity to advance themselves. There is an excellent spirit of learning and striving for excellence throughout the college, both from the teaching staff and the students. In the evenings, the students choose to gather in the main assembly hall to revise and study together.

Many of our past students keep in touch with the college. We have a high percentage of our ex-students finding paid employment, particularly in the catering and hospitality trades, and some of our textile and design students have started their own businesses. A few students have kept pushing their education forward and have gone on to further education in other parts of Ghana.

The Trustees wish to thank Castro Amoah, the College Principal, and all the teaching team for their wonderful dedication.

CHRISTMAS CARDS 2016

As this newsletter is coming to you around Christmas time, it is timely for me to ask you to remember your sponsored child. We will be distributing the cards in January 2015 when school resumes following the break. Please try to send a Christmas card again this year. It will probably be the only one the family receives and by putting a £5 note in with the card, you really help the entire family and the local economy. Please address and post your cards as follows anytime before 5 January. We endeavour to photograph every child receiving their cards and gift.

(Name of Child)

(Name of School)

TEABAG

Unit 1, Lyndon Yard

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DONATIONS FORM

Regular donors, under the educational sponsorship scheme, will be sent their annual invitation to renew with this newsletter. 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. Please make your cheques payable to "TEABAG"

I would like to sponsor the education of a school child in Ghana for a year (minimum donation £15 please) £ _____

Please indicate if you would prefer a BOY or a GIRL

I enclose a donation of £ _____ to be used for other TEABAG projects.

Name:.....Tel:.....

Address:.....

.....Post code:.....

Email address:



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Registered Charity No: 1126462

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TEABAG runs the first sub-Saharan Repair Café

One of the TEABAG Trustees, Chris Moller, runs a quarterly Repair Café in his home village in Cambridgeshire, where anyone can bring anything small enough to carry, and a group of enthusiastic repairers diagnoses problems and, in about half the cases, implements a repair on the spot. There is no charge for this service, though donations are welcomed and refreshments and food are sold at a profit.



On 24th September 2016, he took this idea to our Vocational College in Mankoadze. Although there are now over 1,100 Repair Cafés worldwide, this was the very first one in sub-Saharan Africa (<https://repaircafe.org/en/visit/>). A repair toolkit was kindly donated by a UK charity, Tools for Self-Reliance (<http://www.tfsr.org/>). The event was held in the open-air under canopies, with (loud!) piped music to give a sense of occasion:

Repairees and items to repair came from several nearby villages, as well as Mankoadze itself. The five technical and three dressmaking repairers dealt with 108 items during the day, of which 43 were successfully repaired, and 30 were sent away with advice on further action. A separate waiting area was provided, with food for sale prepared by the Catering Department:

We learned some useful lessons (e.g. screws dropped in the grass are impossible to find!) but the day was an undoubted success. It gave the college some welcome publicity in the neighbourhood, and generated a lot of local goodwill. This will definitely be an exercise that is repeated!



RESEARCH PROJECT: HOME LIGHTING

The TEABAG Vocational College has just completed a research project for Nottingham University. Working with UK based student Oscar Wood, we had the College's IT Department design a questionnaire concerning the availability and sources of light in homes in rural areas in Sub Saharan Africa, particularly focussing on the difficulties of students doing homework without lighting. It get dark at 6.00pm everyday of the year in Ghana as it is so close to the Equator.

Carrying out the research and interviews was wonderful experience for our college students. The TEABAG Trustees do already have a keen interest in providing lighting either through solar panels or through low voltage light bulbs, so we were keen to work with Nottingham University in developing low cost individual solar lights to help school children and students complete their homework assignments.

One of the unexpected but equally valid results of the survey was that the school children have difficulties in finishing their homework, not because of lack of light, but because they have to spend so much of their time fetching water for their entire families.

Dear Supporters

It has been another hectic and successful year for our little charity.

Progress has been made with the water borehole and with the foundations for the new college hostel building. There have been a steady flow of visitors from the UK who have been assisting in both the schools and the Vocational Training College.

As a small charity, we do desperately need your continuing support and we, the Trustees, send our sincere thanks to our loyal supporters. With so many excellent charitable causes asking for your assistance these days, please do try to remember our long-term and sustainable work with the under privileged young people in Ghana. We do make every penny we receive go a long way and no expenses are deducted to run the charity.

Roger Gillman
Chair of the Board of Trustees
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News and Project Updates



Ebenezer: Following the serious operations funded through the generosity of TEABAG supporters, Ebenezer Otabil continues to thrive.

He has to attend physiotherapy at the local hospital and his neck muscles are still weak. He is shown here with his younger brother and it can be seen how Ebenezer's growth was being stunted by his condition.

Baby Blankets: It is an amazing story and difficult for us to understand in the UK, but by giving these hand made blankets to mothers who give birth at the maternity clinic instead of having their babies in their village homes, we have been increased clinic births by 40%. This has reduced deaths of babies and mothers during childbirth significantly. One unexpected result is that mother from outside the catchment area are now trying to attend the clinic giving out these blankets. Many thanks go to the ladies of the salvation army Upper Norwood and the members of the Inner Wheel at Barnet who must spend all of their free time making these wonderful and magical shawls and blankets.

Borehole: Water is now being pumped from our borehole into the storage tank. The water is perfectly clear but is salty. Plans are underway to install purification plant when funds allow. At the moment, we can only use the water for washing and sanitary use, once it is purified we will be able to provide the college and the village with absolutely pure drinking water - a real life-saver.



Trustee Vacancy: We have a vacancy for a Trustee on the TEABAG Board of Trustees. All positions in TEABAG are totally unpaid and we do not take expenses from our charity. We hold a couple of meetings a year and otherwise communicate by email. If you have some time, efforts and skills to offer, please be in contact and come along to one of our meetings.



Visit to Mankoadze October 2016 by Trustees Anne & Chris Moller

Water-shortage

It is four years since I was last in Ghana, and it was great to be back. As with many experiences like this – much was the same, and much had really developed. It was sobering to live for a couple of weeks without running water – the normal way of life for most of the villagers, and it made their daily trip to the river to collect water on their heads all the more humbling.

Primary school

Things at the primary school did not seem very different from last time I was there. There are still classes without teachers, though we were told that some had reported and were yet there to actually start.

TEABAG donates uniforms

A good number of uniforms had been made by an ex-Vocational Centre Student with help from the College students and I was able to give these out to about 60 pupils one morning. Each shook my hand and went off with a bag containing a shirt and skirt or shirt and shorts or a dress depending on their age and choice. They also received a pair of shoes suitable for school. This continues to be a really important part of TEABAG's work, and is clearly good for everyone.

Vocational College

At the Vocational College there are considerable signs of progress. The trees have grown and look really established. The site has no litter over it; it looks like a calm, ordered place to be – rare in Ghana, and certainly contrasting with the disorder of the village. There is a regular timetable posted up in the college which is rigorously adhered to. Students all seemed well-prepared and ready to work, and much more likely to talk about what they are doing both with the teacher and with each other – often the best sort of learning.

For me, the really exciting developments are to do with the teaching – there are now heads for each of the subjects who are responsible for making sure that the other staff in the department and the service personnel know what is required of them. They have created a scheme of work that plans out lessons and activities over the term, and which has led to lesson plans too. These can be shared between different teachers and make sure that the syllabus is covered, so that the students can be successful in their exams. The students also have practical sessions and activities that are really important and underpins their theory learning.

Past students

One of the most heart-warming parts of the trip was meeting a number of past students of the college. Students from all of our departments seem to find work after they have graduated. This is partly helped by the work placements they have over the summer at the end of their third year. They had left with qualifications and also a will to support themselves or study further. That was the really important wish that Tom had when he had the vision for the college, that students should be able to support themselves as they graduated and it's really great to find that in the main that dream has been achieved.

There are more challenges – having better space for the students to live on the site will be much improved when the new Hostel is created, and there are certainly plenty of girls who are keen for that to come to completion. But even though the girls are all in a very crowded space which is extremely hot at times, they all recognise how great an opportunity it is to be at the college.

And on a personal note, there are two separate things to say. We had a fantastic team of caterers whilst we stayed at the college. Veronica, Mary and Olivia cooked for us, often three meals a day, which were delicious, varied and beautifully presented. They had some help from the catering teachers too, but the girls were in charge of serving it to us and clearing up as well. We have some wonderful pictures of the food they cooked which are really impressive.



TEABAG Visitors to Ghana 2016

The Ghanaian people are always warm and extremely welcoming to visitors and those coming to Ghana to help with TEABAG's varied work are certainly treated as VIPs. Now that we can provide comfortable, but fairly basic, accommodation to those volunteering for the charity, we wish to encourage students and recently retired people to come and offer some of their skills and experience both to the village schools and to the Vocational College. It is valuable for students to spend time interacting with native English speakers. We can make good use of anyone having skills in: Building and Construction, Teaching, IT, Fabrics, Carpentry, Art and Crafts. We also need assistance in encouraging children to read, to paint classrooms and to have discussions and conversations with our college students. We do have to perform background checks on anyone representing our charity as part of our child protection policy.

Below are photos of Vivienne, Jessica, Wesley, Anne and Chris who all enjoyed their time spent in Ghana during 2016.



School Shoe Project

TEABAG has for many years received generous support from Cross in Hand School in Heathfield, East Sussex. The children develop their own fund raising ideas each year and have been amazingly successful. This year they raised enough money to send many Ghanaian to school with shoes, uniforms and exam fees under our sponsorship scheme. However, there was some money left over and so we decided to visit a small school in another village to buy shoes for every child at the school.

We purchased a foot measuring gauge on the internet before we left London and carefully measured the feet of each child. The following day we took a stressful journey back to the capital city of Ghana: Accra. The wholesalers are situated in the Central Market, a place of crushing crowds, intense heat, obnoxious smells and ear throbbing noise. We had to visit many traders before we fulfilled our order with the right sizes and style for school shoes.

As you can see from the photos, the children were excited and delighted to receive their new school shoes. Many of the children walk about a mile along a stony road to school everyday without any shoes at all, other children are wearing worn out hand-me-downs from their older siblings.

This particular school has a problem with getting the children to attend regularly the parents are not convinced of a need for education and many of the village children are used for labour on the small farms and in the charcoal producing industry. Although there are around 95 children in the village, school attendance is usually under 20. TEABAG is trying to help the school head to encourage school attendance by giving books, food, shoes and other treats to those attending school to make the other children and families feel that there is value in sending children to school.

Many thanks go to the children of Cross in Hand School.





Classroom Block

As the TEABAG Vocational College continues to thrive, there is a need for further classrooms. The picture above shows the latest classroom block. This is being built as and when funds permit and has taken a couple of years so far. Two rooms are completed and a further two needs doors, windows and floors. All the work is being undertaken by students from the Building & Construction Department, which is excellent practical experience for them.



Hostel Building

The largest building project that we have ever tried to self-build is the new hostel, which will provide accommodation for many of the college students and a couple of teachers. We have received a generous donation to enable this project to proceed although we will need some extra funds during 2017 to complete the works. So far we have only had to supply the materials. Thousands of concrete blocks have been made in a single block moulding machine with all the concrete mixed by hand. The photo shows the vast foundations that have been raised a couple of feet from the surrounding ground as the area is subject to occasional flooding.



Sewing Machines

We are still on the look out for donated sewing machines. These old Singer machines seem to go on working forever and do not need electricity. We are happy to receive any make of machine and plan to ship to all donated items to Ghana early in 2017.



The Village Schools

TEABAG is closely associated with five village schools and directly sponsor children to attend four of these. It has to be said that schools in remote villages are struggling although the dedication of the teaching staff is an inspiration to observe. The schools are dreadfully under equipped. Teaching materials consist of a blackboard and chalk, but the government has now stopped supplying the chalk! The children's books that TEABAG give to the schools are often the only books available for teaching the children to read. Most classrooms are short of furniture and TEABAG does contract the local carpenters to make some desks each year. This year we would like to decorate some of the classrooms to clean and



brighten them, then paste some colourful educational posters on the walls. Any volunteers good with a paint brush and roller?

Life for a teacher in remote villages is very tough. Many of the Mankoadze teachers have to walk the six dusty kilometres to get to the village each day as there is no regular public transport.

It is a great experience to visit these classrooms as the children are so polite and welcoming.