

Ghana School Aid



GSA Chair, William Spooner with the headteacher and Baako at Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute
[see pages 3-5 for an account of William's visit to Ghana]

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER...

**COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS,
INCLUDING SOME RECENT
PROJECTS - P.2**

**WILLIAM SPOONER IN
GHANA - P.3**

AGM 2022 REPORT - P.6

NEWS - P.9

**MR. KWASI ABANKWA,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION -
P.9**

UPDATE ON PROJECTS - P.18

TREASURER'S REPORT - P.25

OBITUARY - P.26

**COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS OF
RECENT PROJECTS - P.27**

AGM 2023 DETAILS - P. 28



Baako's retirement celebration (see also p.15)



New tablets donated to Afrikids (see also p.17)



New desks for the Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute (see also p.20)

WILLIAM IN GHANA

Our Chair, William Spooner, travelled to Ghana in March 2023 and managed to fit an enormous amount into his short time there, including visiting 22 schools supported by Ghana School Aid (GSA) in three days! Here he describes the highlights of his trip.

Visit to Accra, Cape Coast, Tamale and the Northern Region

Friday 17th March to Sunday 26th March, 2023

This was my first visit to Ghana. Later than I would have liked, but - as with so many things - the pandemic put plans on hold. The purpose was to get to know Mr Kofi Ohene and Mr Alhassan Salifu Baako (fellow Committee members and Ghana School Aid's representatives in Ghana) and to see some of the schools GSA has supported over the years. To pack all this into nine days was demanding, but well worth it. I sincerely thank Kofi and Baako for their generosity, guidance and time.

Part 1 - Accra and Cape Coast

I arrived late Friday on the Brussels Airlines flight. Kotoka International Airport has a new international terminal, to rival any in the world and with space that makes Heathrow feel cramped. **I was delighted to be met by Kofi Ohene.** Having only met over Zoom - a poor substitute for 'real life', to me at least - this was something I was greatly looking forward to. I stayed at the Yiri Guest Lodge on the University of Ghana Legon Campus.

On Monday, Kofi and I took the 6-hour return trip to the University of Cape Coast. The University's Registrar kindly provided a vehicle and driver which was much appreciated. The University includes a primary school, and within the school the **Alan Mayhew Centre** (2010). Known to many on the Committee and a 'flagship' Ghana School Aid project, the Alan Mayhew Centre is a substantial classroom: light, spacious and well ventilated. The Alan Mayhew Centre is now used as a science block and we saw pupils learning about filtration. To the credit of the school and its headteacher, the building is well maintained and clearly valued. [See Newsletter 2009-10]



Learning about filtration with the headteacher and pupils at the Alan Mayhew Centre

Kofi and I visited **Mfantsipim School** to present to the headmaster, The Reverend Ebenezer Kobina Aidoo, a letter with details of the late Sheila Gilbert's bequest. To do so in person on behalf of the Gilbert family was an honour.



Kofi and William with Rev'd Aidoo at Mfantsipim

It was a delight to meet and be welcomed by Mrs Ohene and their granddaughter. I was treated to Ghanaian hospitality and my first taste of Ghanaian jollof. The latter I can recommend wholeheartedly.

Part 2 - Tamale and the North

I flew on Tuesday to Tamale. **Baako met me at the airport with a Ghana School Aid newsletter. Immediately, I felt welcomed.** Together, over three days, Baako and I visited twenty-two schools across the Northern Region. There were many highlights; however, space is limited so I have shared only four.

Our visits included a warm welcome with dancing and drumming at **Gung A.M.E. Zion Primary School** (Kumbungu District). Ghana School Aid has funded the renovation of a 3-classroom block (2022) and recently announced funding for dual desks. To see first-hand the impact and value of our work was humbling. Ghana School Aid makes a real and meaningful contribution to the lives of teachers and pupils in the North. I am grateful to Mr Issah who accompanied Baako and I, and for the welcome by the chief, his elders and the community.



With Baako, meeting the Chief, Gung A.M.E. Zion Primary

Baako and I paid two visits to **TAMASCO (Tamale Senior High School)**, to thank the headteacher for his kind and generous loan of his vehicle (a 4x4, essential for some of the roads) and to visit the **Ken Strong Washroom (2022)**. The Washroom is truly an amazing project, providing girls with essential facilities. Built to a high standard and well maintained, it was also a pleasure to meet some of the senior pupils and hear their plans for their future.

Baako and I also visited **Mr Ibrahim Mahama**, former attorney (the third in the North), scholar of the Dagbong and pupil of the late Ken Strong. Now in his 90s, Mr Ibrahim Mahama's career is the history of Ghana since independence, and a living link for Ghana School Aid and our foundation.

We visited **Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute** (Kumbungu District). Formerly, a private institution, the Technical Institute is now under the auspices of the Ghana Technical and Vocational Education and Training Service (TVET Service), offering young people aged 15 to 19 opportunities to train as, amongst other, electricians, carpenters, etc. All skills very much needed in the North, and particularly when graduate unemployment is so challenging. Ghana School Aid has funded dual desks and furniture for the headmaster's office (2022). Again, to see GSA funded projects and the benefit they bring was tremendous. The headmaster and the pupils were most welcoming. [See front cover photo.]

We also visited Baako's old school - **Kanvilli Tawfikiya Islamic JHS** (Sagnarigu Municipal). As readers of this newsletter and our website will know, Baako recently retired, making the end of a long career in public service to young people. I say the end, but that is not



Baako and senior pupils, Ken Strong Washroom, TAMASCO

true, thanks to his commitment to Ghana School Aid Baako continues to drive education and opportunity forward across the Northern Region.

Conclusion

I left Ghana with joy, at meeting Kofi and Baako, and at seeing our projects. I felt sad at leaving, and having got home started planning my next visit which I hope will be in 2024. I have much to report, including to our patron, **Lord Boateng**, who I will have the privilege of meeting in May.

For myself, my visit to Accra, Cape Coast, Tamale and the Northern Region left a deep impression, and I will continue to do all I can, by all means I can for Ghana School Aid.

William Spooner, Chairman, 2nd April 2023.

AGM 2022 REPORT

By Jo Hallett and Jennifer MacDougall

Ted Mayne, our Vice-Chair, welcomed everyone to our third AGM on Zoom [held on June 16th 2022]. He explained that William, our current Chair, was unable to attend as he was suffering from severe complications of COVID. Everyone expressed their sympathy, and the Secretary was asked to send him very best wishes for a speedy recovery, from all present.

Ted reported that we had had a successful year despite the pandemic, but sadly three of our long-standing members had died. Obituaries and tributes to Eric Earle, Auriol Earle and Lalage Bown were all included in the recent GSA Newsletter (2022). Several people present added their own memories and tributes to them.

One of the points raised in the breakout groups last year was the issue of contact between GSA and the Ghana Education Service (GES). Kofi Ohene and Rita de Graft had recently had a useful meeting with the GES Director of Corporate Affairs, Mr. Abankwa. He is keen to get organisations and individuals to help GES in supporting the poorer schools. He mentioned the need to move away from classes held “under the trees”, and will send us a list of their priorities. Rita also felt that we need to reach out to the UK Ghanaian community, urging them to get involved. Ted thanked Kofi and Rita for this work. [See below p.9 for an account of the recent GSA committee meeting with Mr Abankwa and the subsequent building proposal.]

Report from Kofi – Ghana today

Kofi reported that after several years of drought, in May Ghana had experienced very heavy rains, causing flooding and some damage to infrastructure. This came at the same time as a global economic crisis, causing higher prices for everyone, particularly for fuel and transport. There is pressure to raise wages.

The government has now imposed an E-levy of 1.5% on money transfers by phone, which has resulted in much agitation. However, it does not affect international money transfers. There have been delays in payments for school feeding programmes. Some incursions and attacks on churches from border territories have caused concern. There is great pressure on the Government at the moment.

Hartley Trust School

We heard from David Mustill about the Hartley Trust School, which has been supported by GSA in the past. The school is located in Kasoa (near the coast west of Accra) and was established by British Airways (BA) staff in 1996. It receives no funding from the Ghana Education Service. David Mustill (a former BA employee) visits regularly and raises money for it through the Trust.



Effects of flooding at Hartley Trust School

The school buildings were in need of considerable renovation, before widespread flooding occurred, causing even more damage. The school roll has fallen from 650 to 350, and many pupils cannot afford to pay the fees. An emergency GSA grant of £1,400 had been sent recently, and the committee would return to this concern at their next meeting. Those present expressed sympathy and sent greetings. [See update below p.18.]



Flooding damage at Hartley Trust School

Wulugu project

Lynne Symonds reported that this year had been busier than ever. The project has now provided their 50th borehole: a mechanised borehole costs around £4,000. They have also been supporting libraries, in Wulugu and in rural communities, and had recently been able to establish two new schools with legacies from donors. The vocational schools, established some time ago are still going, but lack equipment. It is really important to be working with communities. She appreciated the link with GSA and how we can learn from each other.

Moses Anafu

Sylvia Lynn-Meaden expressed a wish to support a project in memory of Moses Anafu, an old friend, who became a prominent international diplomat working with the Commonwealth

Secretariat in several countries. He came from a village near Bolgatanga. [Sylvia is liaising with local people and other contacts in order to research possible projects.]

Breakout rooms

Members and Supporters were able to meet one another in small groups and introduce themselves, including their connections with Ghana. These conversations were clearly appreciated.

Committee elections

Rod Earle will join the committee. All other members were willing to continue on the committee and were re-elected *nem con*.

Treasurer's report

Nigel Dennis spoke to his report, which had been circulated.

The annual accounts (1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022) show that our income for that year was £40,527 and the expenditure was £24,347. He noted that the income was higher than for several years. “Legacies and Donations in Memory” accounted for at least £8,600 of our income, but the enormous success has been the income from Trusts generated by Penny Sewell, amounting to over £19,500. [See update below p.14.] During this period, £20,717 was given out in grants to 20 different schools from across Ghana, and these were listed. Our total assets at 31st March 2022 stood at £30,905.38. The figure at 9th June 2022 was £22,822.41, after another round of grants was agreed at our May committee meeting.

Ted thanked Nigel for his work as treasurer. He does a wonderful job keeping our accounts in order. [The accounts to April 2023 are on page 25.]

Secretary Jo Hallett's report

We have sadly lost a number of long-standing members this year, as Ted has reported.

Ghana School Aid has continued to thrive! And it has been very much a team effort.

- Kate Regan produced a wonderful leaflet to spread the word of GSA much wider.
- Jennifer and Anna produced the usual fantastic newsletter.
- Rita has continued to keep our name on the internet, monitoring both our Facebook page and Instagram account, and has also made a good contact with the Ghana Education Service.
- Penny has done a magnificent job on the fundraising. [Update below p.14.]

We should be proud of them all!

In terms of the nitty gritty – we have adapted the way we receive requests for grants, and this is working well. We no longer have a mountain of applications from schools across Ghana applying via the website, but follow up requests and applications for grants which come from “known sources” – i.e., through our representatives

in Ghana, committee members' contacts and schools with which we have long-standing links. This also improves our monitoring and reporting capacity. There have been just two or three schools that have been given grants in recent years and didn't give us feedback, or report on their project.

Which brings me to the point of giving a HUGE THANK YOU to our representatives in Ghana. We would really struggle without them. Baako has worked tenaciously on the Tamasco project, and puts a huge effort into finding, supporting and monitoring schools in the north to make improvements with the help of a GSA grant. Kofi has an amazing grasp on the finances, receiving the funds from UK and distributing them to the schools, often with hurdles on the way.

Two PowerPoint presentations were shown, featuring schools that received grants in 2021 – 2022:

1. The story of the building of the new Ken Strong Washroom at Tamasco



Rita de Graft (right) and William Spooner at Kofi and Floria Ohene's house during William's recent visit

2. Before and after pictures of toilets and urinals at Aperade SHS, Diasibe AME Zion Primary School and Sampa Methodist Primary School; also support for Action Through Enterprise (ATE) working at Tanchara Hub, GSA providing equipment for pupils in their schools

[See more information and photos of these schools in Newsletter 2022.]

Publicity and Social Media

The GSA Newsletter for this year was very much appreciated. It is a colourful and well-written publication, with plenty of images. Ted expressed our thanks to Jennifer MacDougall and her daughter, Anna.

Kate Regan had put together an attractive new GSA leaflet, with pictures and information, and 350 copies had been printed and distributed to members. This was well received by everyone – and our thanks go to Kate for producing this.

Penny Sewell continues to monitor and update the website and reported that she had received a postcard from Miles Stephenson, who complimented us on our newsletter and brochure. Both had been useful and he would pass them on to friends.

Rita de Graft continues to update the GSA Instagram and Facebook pages. The photos and posts can be viewed even if you are not a Facebook user. Rita also produces a YouTube series called *Chronicles of an African Diaspora Nurse* which includes many entertaining videos of Ghana and her work as a nurse in England. She is supported by fellow committee members Mary Owusu and Beatrice Monney.

NEWS

Mr. Kwasi Abankwa, Head of Corporate and International Affairs at the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ghana

Mr Kwasi Abankwa attended the GSA committee meeting on February 2nd 2023, by Zoom. He thanked GSA for their support of schools in Ghana. He confirmed a wish to visit schools with Rita De Graft (who previously brought GSA to his notice); with a view to co-ordinated school support. He explained that the MoE has identified that access to education for all in Ghana depends on the benevolence of others to strengthen the Government's own resources.



Mr. Kwasi Abankwa [Source: ghanaweb.com]

His role is to seek help from corporate bodies and philanthropic institutions. Recently he has been engaged in introducing a programme of financial support for those on National Service who wish to study engineering and could otherwise not afford to do so. This will lead to a positive impact on their futures and that of their families. The issue of poverty in communities and lack of infrastructure in schools challenges the Government, as does the cost of introducing

free secondary schooling. In fact, 40 school districts in the country are still lacking full enrolment.

A School Tragedy

Mr Abankwa then told the committee of the struggle of some pupils to get to school in the rainy season when they have to cross flooded rivers and lakes. Later, we found out that he was referring to a recent tragedy; the drowning on the Volta Lake of 8 primary school children travelling by canoe to school from an island settlement called Atikagome in Sene East District, Bono East Region. The primary school children have to cross the lake to Wayokope because there is no school in their village. Around 20 children at a time travel in one canoe across water which becomes very dangerous in the rainy season leading to tragedies such

as Atikagome. Many children miss months of schooling every year due to these conditions.

Appeal

Mr Abankwa appealed for help from GSA in furthering his promise to this poor fishing community that they would have a school by the end of 2023. He has details of school structures that, comprised of alternative materials, are cheaper and can be erected more quickly than a standard building. The committee sympathised with all involved in this tragic incident and asked for full details of cost, building specification, size of community and teaching potential. It was also stressed that GSA does expect help from the community, usually labour, alongside any financial help for a project. Mr Abankwa agreed on behalf of the MoE that the community always has a role to play. He excused himself from the



Pupils at school in Wayokope and (top) the type of canoe that conveys up to 20 of them across the lake

meeting, adding that he intended to work on a proposal straight away.

Several committee members have been moved by this situation to offer personal contributions towards this project to build a school in the Atikagome community. We have set up a ring-fenced fund to accumulate money towards this cause. Anyone wishing to contribute can transfer funds to Ghana School Aid, sort code 60 80 07, account no. 36306274, reference Atikagome, or through other methods as listed on the back page of this Newsletter.

In March Mr Abankwa sent us details of the proposal:

“PROPOSAL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 6-UNIT CLASSROOM BLOCK FOR THE ATIKAGOME COMMUNITY IN THE SENE EAST DISTRICT

Background of the Community

Atikagome is a community located in the Sene East District of the Bono-East Region in Ghana. The community is predominantly made up

of the Builsa people who migrated from the Upper East Region of Ghana. Atikagome has a population of approximately 3,000 people and is mainly an agricultural community with subsistence farming being the primary occupation of the people. The community grows crops such as yams, maize, beans, millet, and groundnuts.

Findings

The community is home to many children who have to travel long distances to access basic education. The primary school in Wayokope is the nearest school to Atikagome, which is 3km away. Unfortunately, the route to Wayokope involves crossing a wild water, which becomes dangerous and impassable during the rainy season. This has resulted in many children missing school for weeks or even months during the rainy season. The recent tragic death of the eight pupils while attempting to cross the wild water highlights the urgent need for a 6-unit classroom block in the Atikagome community. This incident has left the community in shock, and the parents are afraid to send their children to school.



An example of a portable container classroom unit (left) and toilets (right) under construction

Expectations

The proposed 6-unit classroom block will serve as a safe haven for the children of Atikagome. It will enable them to access basic education without having to risk their lives by crossing the wild water. The building will consist of six classrooms, with washroom facilities. Modular Professionals (ModPro) who are into portable container homes have agreed to help construct the 6-unit classrooms with washroom facilities at discounted rate. ModPro uses rapid build modules, which are suitable for turnkey projects and use fewer crafts in setting up their structures. ModPro cuts out cost associated with delays in projects, as it will take less than two weeks to setup the 6-units classroom and moreover, their structures are environmentally friendly. The project's estimated cost is (GBP) £44,610 (see attached invoice), which will cover the cost of materials, labour, and supervision. The purpose for this proposal is to seek funding support from Ghana School Aid-UK to help this project become a reality and to help these kids have a safe place to attend school.”

This proposal and the amount we could contribute towards the cost were being carefully considered by the GSA committee at the time we went to press. The speed of construction is a big advantage so long as the building is fit for purpose. However, the committee is concerned about issues such as who would be the co-funders, and a number of questions about the structure of the units. If they are constructed of mainly metal components, how will they be adequately ventilated and kept cool sustainably? Air-conditioning and fans are dependent on a reliable electricity supply and are expensive. Insulation, airflow, verandas and shade over the windows should be seriously addressed. The washrooms will need the necessary infrastructure and maintenance. To avoid the effects of flooding, foundation pads/floors may need to be raised and steps for access provided. The use of local labour/tradespeople should be considered. These matters were being raised and discussed with Mr Abankwa.



Pupils in the classroom at Wayokope

ATE Award 2023

GSA member Lady (Dr) Sue Dale Tunnicliffe, Reader Emerita in Science Education UCL, is also Chair of the Commonwealth Association of Science Technology and Mathematics (CASTME). She has informed us that they recently presented the Education Award to Action Through Enterprise (ATE), an organisation in Lawra, regularly supported by GSA [see Newsletter 2022 p.14.]

ATE Chief Executive, Sarah Gardner, sent this account:

“Winners of Education Award for STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths] awareness!

Our new Computer Suite is already changing lives for people who’d never even seen a computer before! And now we’ve won a prestigious award from the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematic Educators for our ‘innovative approach to increasing awareness of STEM’. The Findel CASTME Education Award celebrates the ground-breaking facility, which we opened in our purpose built Inclusion Centre last autumn.

With 28 computers donated by SEGA, the Suite provides free of charge access to technology and the internet to hundreds of people – from school pupils to small business owners to disabled children – with the opportunity to learn a new and vital skill. It’s all part of enabling the community to support itself in a sustainable way – and fighting digital poverty, leaving no one behind.”



New Computer Suite

Fundraising Update

Penny Sewell reports as we were going to press: “Since May 2020, I have sent out 507 letters to charities whose addresses are supplied by Paul Woodcock [fundraiser]. We have received 26 positive replies, with grants ranging from £100 to £5000. The total received is £33,850. Paul’s share comes to £4184.30, leaving us with net receipts of £29,665.70.”

We also raise funds through the “Give As You Live” and other online fundraising schemes – see all details of how to donate on the back page.

Accra – UNESCO World Book Capital

Accra has been named the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation World Book Capital from April 2023 - 2024. Accra was chosen for its focus on youngsters and their potential to contribute to the culture and wealth of Ghana. The city proposes a programme targeting marginal groups with high levels of illiteracy including women, youth, migrants, street children and people with disabilities.

The President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, announced that:
“This is an acknowledgement of the giant strides that Ghana and Africa are making in developing our book and creative art industry, and we thank you for your diverse contribution that made this possible”.

The priority for Accra is to reinforce the existing school and community infrastructure to foster a reading culture. This will be achieved through mobile libraries, workshops to increase reading

in different Ghanaian languages, setting up centres for unemployed youth, and competitions to promote the country’s culture. Accra’s application, entitled “*Reading to connect minds for social transformation*”, also emphasised the importance of human rights and freedom of information and expression.

Accra is also due to host the African Games from August 4-19, 2023.

Cape Coast Conference

GSA committee member, Rod Earle, is hoping to attend a conference on Education Research for Development in Africa at the University of Cape Coast in September 2023. [See icerdaafrica.org] Rod is part of the research group, The Centre for the Study of Global Development, at the Open University which is co-sponsoring the conference. [See also wels.open.ac.uk].

Eric and Auriol Earle legacy

Following the loss of GSA founders, Eric and Auriol in 2021, their four children, Wendy, Jennifer, Rod and Patrick, have decided to donate a substantial sum to GSA for a memorial project in their names (see tributes in Newsletter 2022). A suitable project, probably in Ho (Volta Region) where Eric and Auriol were based for several years, is being researched by various Ghanaian contacts, in particular our representative in Accra, (Samuel) Kofi Ohene and Hilary Gbedemah (a lawyer and women’s rights activist), both good friends of the Earles. Many emails and discussions have ensued and Hilary and Kofi have suggested the following project for discussion.



Eric and Auriol Earle

Kofi wrote:

“I have in consultations with Hilary looked at the options, the investment climate in Ghana, and the sustainability of putting together a befitting memorial for our beloved Eric and Auriol Earle. We wish to recommend a one unit Classroom block with toilets and store/office space, in a school in Ho or a nearby area. Hilary will nominate the school to enable us work out details for implementation, subject to approval of this proposal.”

Hilary also suggested

“For several reasons, we favoured infrastructure that would benefit especially girl education. Initially we had thought of a stand-alone modern sanitary facility - which there is a dearth of, with inimical impacts on girls (including their missing school) - but we foresaw challenges in monitoring and sustaining long-term maintenance. So, we gravitated towards a classroom which in my view can be upgraded to special purposes (reading room/library, language lab etc). This structure should be conspicuously branded to avoid change of use. With regards to location, we are indeed considering peri-urban Ho for

ease of supervision throughout the cycle. I leave again shortly for Geneva, but will follow the discussions and weigh in where necessary. As to cost, I think Samuel [Kofi] and I can present a basic [estimate] after you have taken a decision on what we will go for. Should we anticipate add-ons (library etc) these further costs can be shelved for a Phase 2 (maybe involving partners).”

These excellent proposals are being considered by the family and the GSA committee. To date there is approximately £10k available. The family would like to explore building a legacy classroom, or more specifically, a room with a special purpose such as a reading room/library. They would keep aside a contingency fund for on-going maintenance, for 5 years, say. Siting it in or near Ho, where Eric and Auriol spent happy years, would be ideal. They have discussed this with their good friends Hilary and Kofi, both of whom are asked to search in the area for needy schools that might be worthy beneficiaries. A school would need to have basic facilities, such as a water supply, in order for such a project to be sustainable. If it is to be, for example, a peri-urban school, we would need to look carefully at sustainability. Hilary and Kofi will be mindful of the need for money and project management.

Alhassan Salifu Baako Retirement

Our representative in Tamale retired from his post at Kanvilli Tawfyikia Islamic JHS where he was Headteacher for 18 years. A ceremony was held and Baako has sent us this description of the day:

“First of all I would like to express my appreciation to all GSA members for their

congratulatory messages to me on my retirement. I thank everyone for the concern shown. I was posted to the school in the year 2004, remained and worked there as the headteacher till date, that is about 18 years now. The community, the PTA/SMC, the teaching staff and the students both old and present came together and organized the send-off party for me saying I have actually served the community and the school well and therefore deserved what they did for me.

The teaching staff, PTA and old students presented to me three smocks and eight citations among other gifts. The chief's rep dressed me in a new smock and a cap saying that is a symbol of a title they are giving me as the ambassador of peace and development in the school and others in different communities I supported

through GSA, and would want me continue with the good works as usual and remember the school as they still need my help. I also find it appropriate to dedicate this achievement to GSA without which I could not have supported the school much, not to talk of other schools in other communities. In their speeches and recommendations to me including that of the circuit supervisor made me shed some tears. They told me I will still be part of the stakeholders of the school and they will continue to knock at my door for my advice.

They appealed to me that GSA has helped them build two classrooms through me which they really appreciate but would still plead that we help add one more classroom to make the block complete to become a 3-classroom block to make it a full stream.



Baako, with staff and former students, at his retirement celebration

Some students after conducting the closing assembly with them and were about to leave started crying. I had to tell them that I will continue to visit the school once in a while. We really had a good time with mixed feelings. I was given an excellent send-off and it will be a day I will always remember.”

The GSA committee agreed a grant of £3000 towards the new classroom, and William visited the school with Baako in March 2023. All at GSA wish Baako a very long and happy retirement!

Pen to Paper Ghana

This NGO works to improve children’s education, especially literacy, in the Kumasi and Mampong area. In 2017 GSA provided funds towards a mobile library van for local primary schools. In spite of breakdowns and needing a new engine, this service continues to provide books for pupils in rural areas. During 2022 Pen to Paper held four teacher training workshops with follow up support to enable over 100 teachers to teach phonics, benefitting over 3000 children each year. Daily free phonics classes were provided for illiterate teenagers and thousands of pieces of stationery and 97 maths sets were also distributed. A football tournament was held and the winning school given new sports kits for both the girls’ and boys’ teams. Pen to Paper also provides free breakfasts to pupils studying for their Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE). There have also been many difficulties recently, including losing regular funding from a charity which meant the loss of the one paid member of staff making it very hard to keep the organisation running.

Afrikids

This charity has been working with local people in Bolgatanga and northern Ghana for over 20 years to improve the lives of vulnerable children by ensuring that they are kept healthy, safe and in education.

An anonymous donation of £500 to GSA for IT provision was forwarded to Afrikids to supply secure housing for IT equipment in four remote rural schools in the Bolgatanga region. Afrikids began an e-learning project with younger children in 2021 and reported very successful outcomes in numeracy, literacy and in rates of attendance. A donation of 50 low-cost tablet computers means interactive learning can be personalised, leading to improved understanding and standards. Children can also choose books to read from the 3000 stored on the tablets. They do not rely on the internet or electricity as they can be charged using solar or wind power. Overnight the tablets are safely secured in specially designed crates where they are charged ready for the next day.



New tablets and secure IT storage

UPDATE ON PROJECTS

Hartley Trust School (formerly the British Airways School, Kasoa, Central Region)

As David Mustill reported at the 2022 AGM, [see above p.6], this school has received GSA support for a number of years and has suffered badly from flooding in the last year. The committee sent two grants of £1500 and £1400 in 2022 and much work has been undertaken including securing the footings, new paving, and improving the guttering. David sent this report in April 2023:

“The main reason for the flooding that is now affecting our school is the construction that is going on around our area with no town planning. The stream/river that runs along the side of the school has now become a road with a very small gutter. Our main gutter that we constructed over 5 years ago has become a dumping place for local people with plastic and all types of rubbish. Unfortunately the town refuse company refuse to take the rubbish away.

On behalf of myself, all the Staff and all of the children at the Hartley Trust School Ghana a big Thank You to GSA for the help they have given to us over the years. Please pass on our Thanks.”



Flooding damage at Hartley Trust School



New Paving at Hartley Trust School

Manyiha No.1 Basic School (Ahafo Region)

GSA has awarded two grants to this school which had no toilet or washing facilities. A toilet block was completed in 2022 with a grant of £1330 and, following further funding of £525, new tables and chairs for the kindergarten were being manufactured in early 2023.



New toilet block, Manyiha No.1 Basic School

Ahwerase Presbyterian Primary School (Eastern Region)

The school has previously received funding for furniture for their IT room. Due to increased enrolment they needed more desks. A grant of £650 was agreed.



New furniture in use at Ahwerase Primary

Walewale Vocational Technical School (North Eastern Region)

The school was awarded £1000 in 2021 for a 6 unit KVIP toilet block. This has been a long term project. A second grant of £1200 was required and the new building is now complete and looking impressive.

An organisation called Bees Abroad has been fundraising for a borehole for Walewale and had raised £1000. GSA was happy to forward the money and the subsequent Gift Aid tax to the school.



New toilet block, Walewale Vocational School

Nambiri Primary School (Northern Region)

This school which was facing many challenges, was discovered by committee member Rita de Graft on her YouTube channel (*Chronicles of a Ghanaian Diaspora Nurse*). She interviewed an enthusiastic young teacher at the school, Abigail, who described the many problems at the school, in particular the terrible state of the teachers' quarters. This is a frequent problem, especially in rural areas, where poor quality accommodation leads to difficulty recruiting teachers. Following a detailed estimate of costs, GSA agreed a grant of £1300.



Nambiri Primary School - before (top), after (above)

Zuarungu Moshie JHS

This school was seen by GSA member Marika Sherwood (historian, educator and author) who visited the Upper East Region recently. She provided a graphic description of the challenges faced by the school. Their priority was to build new urinals and reconstruct the footings round the school which were seriously eroded.



Zuarungu Moshie JHS urinal (before)

The GSA Committee made a grant of £1600 and the results can be viewed in the subsequent photos which were received along with progress reports, accounts, and a letter of thanks. Inflation rates are currently very high in Ghana and the school was not able to complete all it wanted, so a further application for funds has been submitted which the committee was considering as we went to press.



Zuarungu Moshie JHS - newly rebuilt urinals

Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute

This rural training centre, in the Kumbungu District, Northern Region, aims to reduce unemployment and migration to the distant towns, and cut the number of early marriages amongst young people. Our ever hardworking representative, Baako, reported on his visit in 2022 to assess its multiple needs:

“The school was converted from a local training centre into a technical school this academic year and some students after their BECE [Basic Education Certificate Exam] this year were placed there by the computerized placement system to continue their education. Students came from far and near and some of them looked frustrated and disappointed finding themselves for the first time in such a less endowed school that lacks many facilities; the primary basic need of the school being furniture for their classrooms.

On my visit to the school, the principal Mr Ziblim Yakubu took me round. The school has a school block built in the form of a compound facility and a house consisting of six rooms that was converted into a Hostel. This hostel was reserved for only the girls, as for the male students, the school appealed to members of the community to adopt them in their houses, giving them free accommodation and feeding. Between 1 to 3 students are adopted by the landlords depending on the number each of them can afford to accommodate. By the permission of the school authority I offered some counselling services to the students to encourage them not to feel bad about their school but rather take their studies seriously to make them proud pioneers of the school one day.



The new Zugu Dabongi T.I. desks arrive

In short they lack many facilities as an institution, these include toilets, flooring the compound of the school block, hostel for the boys and extension of electricity into some of the classrooms.

When the Principal and the staff pointed all these to me I told them I have taken note of all that but I will advise them to pick and apply for what they find to be an urgent need as there are other schools too with similar needs that GSA cannot handle all at a time. They then agreed on the furniture as their major need.

They requested for 50 dual desks and furniture for the Principal. The cost of each dual desk is 220 Ghana cedis (Ghc). Then that of the Principal's own cost Ghc1600. This will include

a large office table with two drawers and three office chairs.

The total cost of the 50 dual desks is Ghc11,000 the office furniture is Ghc1,600.

In all that would be Ghc12,600" [£929.82 in April 2023]

GSA awarded the Institute £1500 in May 2022. Baako wrote back in July with photos to show the results and pass on the gratitude of the Principal and school community:

"On my part I told the elders, teachers and students that GSA is not a big organization but are doing their best to support needy schools such as theirs, for that matter they should all take the donation as their own and ensure that they all play proper roles in safety and maintenance of the furniture for the benefit of the school and the community. I also advised the students to eschew negative tendencies and take their studies seriously and try to take advice from their teachers and the elders of the community when the need arises. They should consult the teachers and elders in whatever difficulties they may find themselves, as students away from their parents, for advice rather than



Baako handing over the new desks to the Zugu Dabogni Technical Institute

doing things on their own that could land them into bigger troubles. The elders also spoke in turn to thank GSA and also encouraged both teachers and the students to continue to live in peace and take their work seriously. They assured the school of their usual cooperation whenever necessary.

The PTA chairman, Mr Abukari also thanked GSA and says they have lost words to express their gratitude to GSA and cannot thank them enough, however they will still need more support from GSA.”

Apart from the essential furniture, the funding also allowed them to increase the amount of electricity for lighting and chairs for teachers. The local radio station, Simli Radio, broadcast the proceedings when Baako officially handed over the new furniture on behalf of GSA. Our Chair, William, visited the Institute in March 2023 as described in his report above, p.3.

Gung AME Zion Primary School (Northern Region)

This is another school visited by Baako who reported that the building was in a terrible state. In May 2022 the committee awarded £1500 for repairs including replacing doors and windows and repainting inside and out. Two months later Baako wrote:

“A visit to the Gung AME Zion Primary school in Kumbungu District last week shows a significant progress in replacing the rotten wooden doors and windows with metal ones. I visited the school with the contact person, Mr Adam Issah, who has been supervising the work closely from the beginning and giving me feedback until I visited it myself. I inspected both



Gung AME - before (top) and after (above)

inside and outside of the work. Replacing all 8 doors and 12 windows have been completed. All work on cracked walls has been done and plastered. Rough surfaces of the walls have been maintained and also plastered. What is left now is some potholes in some of the classrooms that need to be worked on. At the time of my visit they are in the process to complete the work soon. The community members do sometimes come to assist the mason by offering services in labour. I will pay another visit again soon to see the new development in the work and report to GSA.”

The school was also in dire need of furniture for the children with several classes having to sit on the floor. Following a further request, £700 was agreed in February 2023 to cover the cost of 40 dual desks.

William Spooner (Chair) also visited this school in March 2023 with Baako and was given a very warm welcome as described in his report. [See above p.3.]

Hia Community Library

This impressive community project was initiated by our committee members Rita de Graft and Mary Owusu of the Ghana Nurses Association, supported by Kate Regan. GSA has been involved with this development for a number of years and was last reported in the 2022 Newsletter (p.12). In September 2022 GSA donated £1880 towards the provision of robust and secure library shelving. The Ghana Library Board also supported this work.



Hia Community Library

Kanvilli Presbyterian JHS (Northern Region)

This large school was poorly constructed only 7 years ago and had become too dangerous to use. A grant of £2000 was agreed in May 2022 to renovate the three classroom block, overseen by our northern representative, Baako. The school community themselves painted the exterior and the results are impressive.



Kanvilli Presbyterian JHS

Gbanjong AME Zion Primary School (Northern Region)

When Baako visited this school in 2022 he found almost no furniture. Mr Iddrisi Alhassan Sibdow, the Chair of the PTA sent an application:

“I write on behalf of the General PTA, the teachers and the entire Gbanjong Community to your office to come to our aid by supporting us in acquiring some furniture for our school which is our main problem among other challenges for now. Gbanjong is a farming community located in the Tolon District and the above-mentioned school is the only school in the village. The school has a population of 264. The boys are 150 and the girls are 114 with ten teachers.”

The class that suffers more in lacking furniture is the KG class which has virtually none in the class and the children have to sit on the floor to learn which is not helping teaching and learning in the school.

*We would be grateful if you could for now help us get **40 pieces of dual desks** to manage with.”*

Baako researched the cost of materials which have increased recently. Metal desks are more expensive and it was decided to recommend the construction of wooden desks, using durable wood and screws. These will need to be maintained correctly; GSA is keen to emphasize this in all schools to ensure they last as long as possible. Experience has shown that some schools do not maintain the furniture and broken desks and chairs are simply left to pile up at the back of classrooms. £1000 was awarded in this case. After a month or two, our representative wrote again:

“I am reporting on the above-mentioned school which received funding from GSA to make 40 dual desks for the KG class. You remember during my first visit there was not a single chair in the class for the pupils. Now the 40 dual desks have been made at the Tamale timber market where I monitored from the start of production to the end of it. I also ensured stencilling was done on them. After successful completion of the work, they were conveyed to the Gbanjong village where I followed up to see to their safe arrival at the school. All expenses including transport were covered from the funding. The teachers, PTA executives and some elders of the village met with me in the school to express their appreciation and I later handed over the furniture to them on behalf of GSA. In my address I told the elders and the teachers to ensure proper care of the furniture so they would last longer.”

The letter of thanks from the Chair of the PTA at Gbanjong, reveals the effect of the GSA grant:

“We are so overwhelmed that we do not have adjectives to describe the extent at which your support has helped the learners now and forever. Some of the pupils never knew that desks were part of learning facilities From observation, the enrolment has started to increase. As well teachers do not bend on their knees to give support to learners. The pupils’ uniforms they wear to school were always dirty at the close of a day’s learning. This has reduced and parents are enthused about that. We the people of Gbanjong are grateful and forever remain grateful for your great support.”



New desks in use at Gbanjong AME Zion Primary School (for more pictures see p. 27)

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT 01/04/2022 - 24/03/2023

by Nigel Dennis, Treasurer

INCOME	£
Legacies and Donations In Memory	3,739.87
Donations from Trusts	10,100.00
Donations for Atikagome School	950.00
Other Donations	6,107.00
Donations through Give as You Live	2,409.99
Annual Lunch Bookings and Donations 2022	40.00
Annual Lunch Bookings and Donations 2023	292.00
HMRC Gift Aid	176.25
Interest from COIF Deposit Fund	<u>5.43</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>23,820.54</u>

EXPENDITURE	£
Grants to projects in Ghana	26,208.50
Grant to Let's Read, Ghana collected through Give as you Live	360.10
Advertising Leaflets	219.22
Newsletter May 2022	686.95
Website	60.00
Fundraising	980.98
Expenses of Officers in Ghana	100.00
Bank Transfer Fees	<u>17.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>28,632.75</u>

FUNDS at 24th March 2023	£	£
NatWest Current Account Balance 1st April 2022	29,905.98	
COIF Deposit Account Balance 1st April 2022	<u>1,000.00</u>	30,905.98
Add Income less Expenditure	£28,632.75 - £23,820.54 =	<u>4,812.21</u>
TOTAL Balance at 24th March 2023		<u>26,093.77</u>
Nat West Current Account Balance 24th March 2023		26,093.77
COIF Deposit Account Balance 24th March 2023		<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL		<u>26,093.77</u>

GRAND TOTALS 1986 – 24th March 2023	INCOME (£)	EXPENDITURE (£)
1986 – 31st March 2022	429,359.01	398,453.03
1st April 2022 – 24th March 2023	<u>23,820.54</u>	<u>28,632.75</u>
Total	<u>453,179.55</u>	<u>427,085.78</u>
Income less Expenditure	£453,179.55 - £427,085.78 =	£26,093.77

OBITUARY

Sheila Gilbert 1931-2022

Sheila was a nurse who trained at Great Ormond Street Hospital and worked with her husband, Vic Gilbert, a teacher, at Mfantshipim Secondary School in Cape Coast Ghana, from 1955 to c1959, where she ran the school dispensary and sick bay.

After leaving Ghana they spent time in Uganda, and later Sheila worked many years in the premature baby unit at Sheffield Hospital.

Sheila left a bequest to Mfantshipim School and our Chair, William, was able to deliver a letter notifying the Headteacher on behalf of the family during his visit in March 2023. [See above p.4.]



Sheila Gilbert (far right, next to Vic) with friends at the inaugural meeting of GSA, 1986



Manyiha No.1 Basic School (see also p.18)



Baako meeting with teachers, elders and PTA at Gbanjong AME Zion Primary School (see also p.23)



Kanvilli Presbyterian JHS (see also p.23)



Walewale Vocational School (see also p.19)

Ghana School Aid



INFORMATION



UK email: info@ghanaschoolaid.org



UK tel: 0779 9927 496



GHANA email: ohenekofi5@gmail.com



GHANA tel: +233 207401 221



Website: www.ghanaschoolaid.org



Facebook: search "ghanaschoolaid uk"

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair: William Spooner

Vice Chair: Edward Mayne

Secretary: Jo Hallett

Treasurer: Nigel Dennis

AGM organisation & Website

Administrator: Penny Sewell

Newsletter: Jennifer MacDougall

Representatives in Ghana: Kofi Ohene, Alhassan Salifu Baako, Patrick Nyanteh

Other Committee Members:

Letitia Boateng, Rod Earle, Rita de Graft, Susannah Mayhew, Beatrice Monney, Mary Owusu, Kate Regan

PATRONS

HE Papa Owusu-Ankomah, High Commissioner for Ghana

The Rt Hon Lord Boateng of Akyem Ghana and Wembley, London, DL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

The meeting and reunion lunch will be held in the crypt of Saint Mary's Church Upper Street, Islington, London, N1 2TX on **Thursday 15th June from 11am**. To book please contact pennymsewell@gmail.com

For those unable to attend in person, there will also be a live Zoom link at:

Website: www.zoom.us/join Meeting ID: **891 7283 3993** Passcode: **1234**

DONATIONS

Please donate online: giveasyoulive.com/charity/ghanaschoolaid

Or scan the adjacent QR code with your mobile phone's camera

Cheques: Payable to Ghana School Aid

Please post to: The Treasurer, 230 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon, RG9 1QY

Bank transfer details:

Ghana School Aid Trust, Bank: Nat West, Sort code 60 80 07, Acc no. 36306274



THANK YOU

Ghana School Aid is a registered UK Charity No. 299178
Editor: Jennifer MacDougall, Layout: Anna M. MacDougall

