

FROGS FANFAIR

NOVEMBER 2004



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SUMMER 2004

Loading Days by Brenda Sladen and Sally Reader

Loading this Summer took a different form due to an offer we just could not refuse. Bewbush Middle School on the outskirts of Crawley, West Sussex were merging with another school locally and were disposing of all their desks, chairs, cupboards, lockers etc. and these were offered to FROGS, but with one provision – everything needed to be removed from the premises immediately after the close of the Summer Term, in order that the contractors could carry out the refurbishment, ready for the September term.

After a great deal of discussion and several ideas as to how we could take up this great opportunity, it was decided to load all the furniture from the school directly into two 40 foot containers and, through the great generosity of P & O in Tilbury, store these until shipment in late September, ready for the FROGS team's next trip to The Gambia in October.

Because we try to use every space in any containers we pack, in order to get our monies worth, it was necessary to make several trips from our store in Aylesford to collect as many A4 boxes and other small 'fillers'. Thanks to the loan of a driver and 2 vans from Airclean, a firm in Marden, Kent, this was done the day before loading. We were also greatly helped by the removal firm employed by the school who put everything which was being offered to FROGS in the main hall, adjacent to the front entrance, which saved a great deal of carrying.

On Saturday 24th July the team arrived at the school bright and early and started loading both containers – it was a hot, sunny day, which was great as far as keeping everything dry, but not so good for those in the containers! The job was completed by mid-afternoon and Bill and his son drove the containers to Tilbury – we owe them both a great debt of gratitude as not only did they give their driving services free but also helped with the loading.

The distribution of these two containers will mean that FROGS will be able to furnish 12 complete classrooms – 50 children in each. Thank you Bewbush Middle School.

And then With a little bit of help from our friends:-

Following the loading of the the two Bewbush containers your Committee was concerned that the store at The Friars, commonly know as the 'Black Hole' was overflowing with all the maths aids donated by Ginns.

This material had been sorted at Marden, courtesy of Steve and Sue Ford, and was sitting in the store waiting for something to come up something in the shape of enough money to fund another container.

Once again a Fairy Godmother, or should I say Godfather, came up trumps. A new member from Edinburgh, Dougie Wilson, pledged to fund the third container – our 30th !!!

On the last day of August, when time was tight, we received a call to say that it was all stations go as the money was on its way. So on the 11th September we loaded a 20-foot container at The Friars with 3,500 boxes packed with educational books, files and other materials!!!

UNLOADING DAY 21ST OCTOBER 2004

An account of the unloading of the containers in The Gambia by Malcolm Reader

As the FROGS unloading team of Sally, Dave, Brenda and myself drove towards Bakau Newtown School on the morning of the 21st October, the temperature was already showing 34 degrees at 9.30 a.m. and the suggestion was that there was worse to come.

The ship bringing the containers was one week late in arriving, causing Brenda and Dave to extend their stay; otherwise they would have been in The Gambia without seeing a container.

This time the visit coincided with Ramadan with most Gambians observing this festival and fasting from sunrise to sunset. An unfortunate time for Ramadan to fall, at the hottest time of the year with no drinking allowed during the day.

The first two containers arrived at the school bang on time from the docks, and once in position unloading began. These containers were the two loaded at Bewbush School. As usual we had employed several Gambian unloaders.

Unloading proceeded at a steady pace, but as the temperature increased people definitely started flagging, myself included, and as Brenda spent most of the time inside the containers directing the unloading, it was something of a surprise that she did not reappear looking like a roasted chicken! It was that hot!

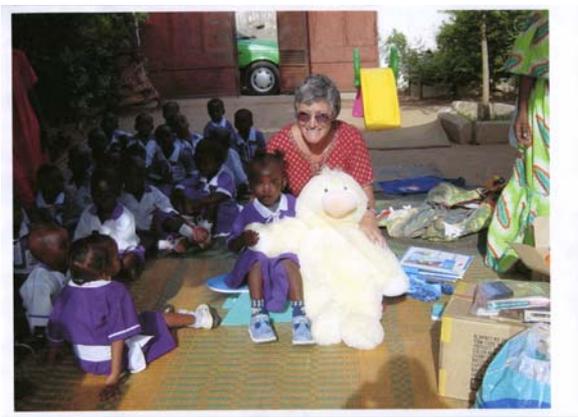
The third container arrived just after lunchtime, and we began to unload more than 3,500 boxes of books that had been loaded at The Friars. They seemed to go on forever!

The handover ceremony was planned for 4 p.m. and it was announced that because of Ramadan it would be a short ceremony. Radio, TV and the press were there as usual, and the handover went by without a hitch, finishing with Sally handing over the token box to the Director of Education on behalf of FROGS.

Several FROGS members joined us on the day, in particular Ian Howard and Pippa, and we were delighted to have Ian's tremendous help in the unloading; yet even he was feeling the heat by the end of the day. I think that the other FROGS members learned quite a lot about the Gambian side of the operation.

At 7 p.m. there was nothing more we could usefully do, with most of the recipient schools having taken their shares of the materials, so we headed back to the hotel for that very welcome first cold beer.

We can gladly report back to the FROGS membership that the 28th, 29th and 30th containers were safely delivered.



Sally handing over gifts to a Nursery School

A GOAT CALLED BLENDA! ***Brenda Sladen***

Our team in The Gambia decided to take a couple of hours off and thought they would accompany Malcolm on a fishing expedition on a nearby beach. We asked a local taxi man, whom we have used before to take us.

Malcolm cast his line into the calm blue sea and Sally, Dave and Brenda took a walk along the beach. When we returned to the taxi, an old, but comfortable Mercedes, we were amazed to learn that we were sharing the ride back with a pregnant goat!

Our driver said that he had bought it to be a mate for his Billy Goat as his 'wife' had just died.

During the discussions we decided that the goat should have a name – she is now called 'Blenda'!

She was put into the boot of the car, and happily slept during our return, alongside 3 huge Water Melons that the driver had bought from a roadside fruit seller.

We hope that 'Blenda' enjoys her new home and gets on well with her 'husband'!



Blenda the Goat

SMALL PROJECT FUND UPDATE

Due to continued support from members our Small Projects Fund has been able to complete 13 projects to date.

During our recent visit we provided the money for much needed mosquito netting fitted to the windows of the two Staff Rooms at Bakau Newtown LBS.

We also funded woodworking tools for a small school in the Western Division – Kanuma. They are planning to set up a project to teach pupils wood carving as a means to generate income for their school funds.

We provided a further 10 First Aid Kits for this years main share schools.

A future project to provide assistance with the building of a Nursery classroom at Kaimo Village will be considered soon.

LIFE BEGINS AT '40' ***Carol Fall***

They say 'life begins at 40'! Mine certainly changed when I was taken to The Gambia for my 40th birthday at Christmas in 1998. My family and I fell in love with the Country and have made some wonderful friends out there.

When I returned from my last holiday in October 2003 I felt compelled to do something to help the Country and its people. I spoke to some close friends and, as a result, set up a small group at our local Church. We call ourselves The Network.

We decided that we would raise funds for various charities through informal social events.

The first event to be organised was a Fashion Show in September this year. It was held in our Church, using the aisle as the catwalk!

With guidance from Sally and the team, we very much look forward to supporting future projects. I shall again be visiting The Gambia in March 2005, and hope to be able to visit some of the places where FROGS have made a difference.



The Network Team

EMAIL AND WEBSITE

Don't forget to send your email address to the Editor sue@airclean.co.uk, for future Newsletters. Any information or articles can be sent as well.

Our Website can be found on www.friendsofgambianschools.co.uk

NEW GLASSES

As reported in a previous Newsletter, through the generosity of Alisdair Buchanan Optometrists from Snodland in Kent we were able to take out new glasses to various teachers and our picture shows them trying them for size.



GEORGIANA'S DREAM Brenda Sladen

A couple of years ago the team visiting The Gambia were introduced to a very remarkable and hard working retired teacher – Georgiana. Despite the death of her daughter, resulting in her taking over the care of her grandchildren, she has been able to fulfil her lifelong dream – to provide Nursery education for the small children of her village.

She has done this, literally, with her own bare hands – and created a 3 classroomed building with two primitive toilets, and a well to provide drinking water.

FROGS were so impressed with her great endeavours that we supplied her with tables and chairs, and on a subsequent visit with toys and some teaching aids.

During our latest trip we called to see her to discuss plans for two of our teacher member – Barbara and Maggie – to spend some time time on their planned visit in April 2005 giving Georgiana ideas for lesson plans etc. which she is very enthusiastic about.

When we arrived we could not believe what we saw! Instead of a very basic building of locally made bricks, we were met by a brand new white washed school with 3 classrooms, an office and cemented paths surrounding it. The construction was still going on, and the labourers were busy making more bricks to complete the boundary wall, a new well and toilets.

We asked Georgiana how all this came about. “It was an Act of God” she said, with a huge smile, and went on to tell of a local taxi driver who took his son to join her Nursery, and was distressed at the very basic conditions, and vowed to help if he could – and he did.

He showed some visitors from the UK and they agreed to finance the rebuild – in 6 weeks – during the Summer break this year. The taxi driver supervised the work and, as they say, the rest is history. PAT'S NURSERY has been reborn, thanks to the generosity of British visitors.

And what of the future! To make her dream complete Georgiana would like to build a small two roomed dwelling where she and her grandchildren can live and be able to 'protect' her new school from local vandals, who have already stolen toys, despite padlocked doors!

**Georgiana-Head
Teacher and owner of
Pat's Nursery School at
Kerewan**



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



FROGS have been invited to take part in a Christmas Tree Festival at the United Reformed Church in Week Street, Maidstone. This is the second festival to be held where local Charities are invited to decorate a Christmas Tree in their own theme.

The Church is open from the 9th to 13th of December for viewing of the massed ranks of decorated trees. Invited Charities can promote their work and benefit from donations given.

If you're shopping in Maidstone between these dates why not pop in and see the FROGS tree, and many more!

CHRISTMAS QUIZ NIGHT AND DRAW

SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2004

**BRASSEY CENTRE, AYLESFORD
(by the Railway Crossing)
7.30 p.m.**

**Entry - £5 per person – teams of up to 8 people
Includes 'seasonal nibbles'**

Bring your own drinks

FANCY CHRISTMAS HATS ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY!



PLEASE LET SALLY KNOW IF YOU HAVE A TEAM, OR WOULD LIKE TO JOIN A TEAM, SO THAT WE HAVE AN IDEA OF NUMBERS.

If you are not attending the Quiz could you please ensure that all monies, stubs and unsold Draw Tickets are returned to Sally during the week before the Draw, Thank you

STOP PRESS!!!!

Due to storage difficulties we are no longer able to collect the following items:

- Furniture of any sort
- Computers of any sort
- Bottle Tops are no longer required

We also need to be more selective with the books that we take in so please contact us regarding any that you may have for us.

We thank everyone who has collected these items for us over the years.

CONDOLENCES

We were sorry to hear of the death of Hugh Jones after a short illness. Hugh was husband of Sheila Jones, a founder member and stalwart supporter of FROGS.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our sympathies to Sheila and her family at this sad time.

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