

FROGS FANFAIR

FEBRUARY 2006



FROGS is a Registered Charity No. 1069168

AGM 2006

All members are cordially invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of Friends of Gambian Schools, to be held at **The Brassey Centre, Aylesford** on **20th March 2006 at 7.30 pm.**

Apart from the usual business of the Annual General Meeting, we will be seeking to adjust the FROGS Constitution, to meet the changing situations of FROGS personnel.

As you will know, our Secretary, Sally Reader, now lives in The Gambia, and by the Autumn of 2006, Chairman, Malcolm, will be joining her.

We will therefore need to elect two new UK based Committee Members, a new Chairman and Secretary, and expand the size of the Committee to allow for two Gambian based members.

To change the Constitution we need the support of the Membership, so hope you are able to attend.

If you would like to be considered as a member of FROGS Executive Committee, please let any Committee member know at least 14 days before the AGM.

We look forward to seeing you.

Malcolm Reader
Chairman, FROGS

MEMBERSHIP FEES 2006/2007

Membership Fees become due on 1st April. Please send your fees, along with a completed Renewal Form (enclosed with this Newsletter) to the PO Box address.

Membership fees remain the same at £5 for families and £3 for concessions.

We look forward to your continuing support, but if we do not receive renewal by 30th June 2006 we will remove you from our Mailing List.

giftaid it

By a simple signature on our Membership Form by those of you paying tax, we are able to claim back an excellent sum of £2945.00 this year through the Gift Aid Scheme!

CHRISTMAS DRAW

Thank you to all members who supported this fundraising venture. The total sum raised was £345.50.

It has been decided by the Committee that we will not have a draw in 2006, as the sum raised does not reflect that the tickets and distributing costs were donated. Without this very little profit would have been made.

PAPER BANK

Unfortunately no alternative site has been found for the Paper Banks, currently outside Malcolm and Sally's home at Kits Coty, so reluctantly they will have to go. The revenue from this source has decreased over the years, but valuable funds have been raised. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the bank.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

SUMMER FAYRE
Joint venture with The Friars
SUNDAY 18th JUNE

PLEASE PUT THIS DATE IN YOUR DIARIES
VOLUNTEERS WILL BE NEEDED TO MAN
STALLS - PLEASE CONTACT BRENDA ON THE
NUMBER BELOW.

Items required – Bric a Brac and Toys, cuddly toys for a tombola.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Postal Address:

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Keep up to date by watching our Website on
www.friendsofgambianschools.co.uk

LETTER FROM AFRICA (2) – EXPERIENCES!

Sally Reader

Hi everybody. Happy New Year!

Having been here now for several months I am beginning to find my way about and learning to cope with the little problems that crop up. Visiting a country, and becoming a resident are poles apart. You see things from a different perspective. And a resident I now am! I've even got an Alien Card to prove it!

Someone said life is full of surprises. I'll amend that and say it's full of new EXPERIENCES. I think in general I learn something new every day and am amassing experiences at an alarming rate.

On the practical side the EXPERIENCE of being able to cope with an ancient generator without which I would be in the dark – literally, and having no essential cold drinks was a learning curve.

Then the EXPERIENCE of dealing with the Gambian experts – the solar technicians who weren't expert at all, and made a pigs ear of setting up our solar panels. It's now sorted, thanks to a fellow Brit who came to my rescue and I put that down to EXPERIENCE.

Those of you who know me well know of my love for our feathered friends and I was determined to attract as many as possible into our garden. The obvious way was water, and as the Gambia is dry for 2/3rds of the year the answer was bird baths. But where to get them! I tried the pot makers, explaining what I wanted and giving dimensions. I was greeted with blank looks, so said they were for bird baths, to which the response was – 'you **bath** birds?'.
bath

A very strange EXPERIENCE was one morning when my watering can wouldn't work. Hardly high tech! On investigation I found 5 frogs up the spout!!

At the beginning of January it was the feast of Tobaski - the premier feast in the Muslim calendar, on a par with our Christmas. Before the feast everywhere is frantic, with food being bought, and new clothes chosen and made. The rural farmers descend on the towns with strings of rams that they tether on street corners for prospective buyers to intimately examine. A prime ram is very expensive but it is every family's duty to make a sacrifice of the best they can afford, even if it's only a chicken.

I was invited to celebrate the Feast with Yaharr and family. The day started on the Praying Ground in Bakau, where thousands of people were gathered – all dressed in their new clothes, bright colours on the children and a lot of white - the holy colour - on adults.

After prayers the crowd dispersed back to their compounds for the sacrifice. At Yaharr's there were 3 rams. I was invited to watch and film, but declined! It was swiftly done and the meat divided into the traditional three portions – one for family, one for friends and one for the needy.

The females of the family started cooking, and soon came plates of hot grilled liver and local bread. The day went on with a lot of chatting and greeting friends, then more food! This was lunch – a huge dish of fried offal, couscous and vegetables. Next came barbequed ribs and roasted vegetables – I was beginning to feel full up!

After a while I told Yaharr that I had to head for home – only to be told that the feast started at 6 o'clock! On departing I was presented with my gift – a haunch of ram in a plastic bag!

Some EXPERIENCES are a learning curve, some are fun, some are sad, and some are very interesting!

Will be home in February but can be contacted on slyyreader@yahoo.co.uk.



BRENDA'S GRANDAUGHTER

The children in the picture below live next door to Sally, and are displaying clothes which Brenda's granddaughter Flora donated.



SIFOE LBS – WESTERN REGION, DIVISION 2

The Committee originally agreed to buy pots for the school kitchen, but on Sally's visit to the school in December she discovered that the kitchen was not being used due to the suspension of the School Feeding Programme. The Headmaster identified an urgent need for class dictionaries and blackboard tools, so the money was redirected to buy these, along with calculators. This project cost £50 – a small amount that means a lot to the school!

THANK YOU DAVID BELLAIRS!

A huge thank you to one of our members, David Bellairs who raised £600 for FROGS from sponsorship received for running in the Great North Run last year.

He writes: "I am glad I am able to help even in some small way to improve the education of children in The Gambia. I know from my visit earlier this year just how desperate they are to be educated, and how little money they have.

Don't be put off by the fact that I was wearing a 'Guide Dogs for the Blind' vest. This is the charity I ran for last year – I will have to try and have a FROGS one designed to wear during my next race. The photograph was taken when I was at least half way round so I am not looking my best!

I was quite disappointed with my time and completed the race in 1 hour 54 minutes – 9 minutes slower than last year. However I was surprised with my placing of 6,076 out of approximately 38,000 runners."



SEINO PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT

Brenda Sladen

For some years now we have been visiting Haddy Seino at her Nursery School and watched the progress of the children taking advantage of the wonderful amenities it offers – some of which FROGS has been able to donate. Haddy has always given us a great welcome and we have learned how ambitious she is in wanting to provide more for the children in her area. She owns a large compound and her intention is to build primary and secondary accommodation alongside the Nursery, which will provide continuity of education for the children.

When we visited last Autumn we were shown the new 6-classroom block which is the Primary School – all very light and clean. However, Haddy was not happy with the quality of the flooring, a constant problem in The Gambia. She was hoping to crazy tile the floor (a method using broken tiles in cement), which ensures the floors will last longer.

We suggested that she obtained estimate, and we submitted these to the FROGS Committee, who agreed that it was something we could undertake – the rest is history! The picture above shows the end result. A real difference to the usual 'dust/cement' flooring!



GREATER BANJUL – REFURBISHMENT OF THE HOME SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Brenda Sladen

We checked out the cookery room on our visit and handed over the first monies for the small project, so that it could get started. The staff who teach Metalwork and Carpentry are going to do a great deal of the work relating to the cupboards and work surfaces.



GREENFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Linda Ransome

Greenfield Primary School in Leeds receive support from their very own FROGS (Friends of Greenfield School) who regularly raise money for the school.

However this year the children decided to do some fundraising themselves. After learning about The Gambia the children were keen to help other children who are less fortunate than themselves.

The Year 3 children (aged 7 & 8) organised a 'Gambian Gala'. They sold toys, books, organised a raffle and designed various competitions. They also provided refreshments. They raised £200.

***A BIG THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK
YEAR 3 – Editor***

KANUMA REVISITED!-Follow up to David Jordan's article in the May '05 Newsletter
Sally Reader

Tuesday morning, 8th November 2005 found me travelling the red, bumpy road from Brikama Regional Office to Kanuma L.B.S.

The journey took 1½ hours, half of which was bone rattling on the red road. We arrived at Kanuma - two regional representatives, and myself - mid-morning in blazing heat to a welcome from all the school and dancing villagers.

The Carving Project, a great source of pride to the school and village, was much discussed. The fact that we had raised D 4,600 (£96.00) by selling the children's carvings in the UK was greeted with loud applause and whistles. It was requested that we ensure that the project continues until Upper Basic Level, as two schools will soon be running side by side.

We then toured the exhibition of the children's carvings displayed in a Classroom. I chose some for Malcolm to take back to England.

This small project is certainly proving of interest to the Ministry of Education as nothing like it has been set up in a school before. I am contacting the local papers with a report on the occasion, and trying to persuade some of the tour operators to perhaps include Kanuma LBS on their tour itinerary.

ST MATTHEW'S LBS, KAIMO
Carol Fall

In September 2004 some friends and I organised a Fashion Show in our local church and raised a substantial amount of money for FROGS.

Last April I went out to The Gambia with the money, and visited St Matthew's LBS School in Kaimo that needed assistance.

We were greeted by Michael Jarjou, the Headmaster, who showed us round the school. We went into every classroom and were introduced to all the children and teachers. The reception we received from them was incredible, and it was obvious that FROGS has made a valuable contribution to this community. The Headmaster, staff and children are all very proud of their school and work hard to maintain the standards they have achieved.

We were shown the Cook House and were told that this needed some attention. One of the two cooking fires had become very 'sooted up' and needed re-lining – every time they used it to cook the school lunches, the whole room filled up with black smoke! We were also told that the school needed more cooking pots, utensils and serving bowls. We told the Headmaster to use some of the money for these items.

We saw the school garden where the children are taught basic gardening skills. The garden is well equipped with watering cans and a wheelbarrow – all bearing the FROGS logo! They even have a hosepipe – but have not been able to us it!

The well is very deep and open, with no hand pump and children throw buckets down to collect the water. The Headmaster desperately wants to get a hand pump installed, and we felt that this could be something that we could consider in the future.



EBAY!

Ebay, as many of you will know, is an internet buying and selling site used by individuals and companys. FROGS had the opportunity to obtain money from their 'Champion –a-Charity' scheme through a FROGS supporter Jamie Parkin.

David Jordan met Jamie at the Ebay offices in London to officially receive a cheque for £1396.65 on behalf of FROGS.

The Committee have decided that this sum will go towards building accommodation for teachers at Prince LBS on the North Bank of the River Gambia - way off the main road. It is difficult for the school to keep teachers as they are far away from their own families and have to lodge with local people in the nearby village.

The school will benefit from having staff living on the site with their own families as they will have consistent teaching and added security for the premises.

We are very grateful to Jamie for all his work which enabled us to benefit from Ebay's charity giving.

