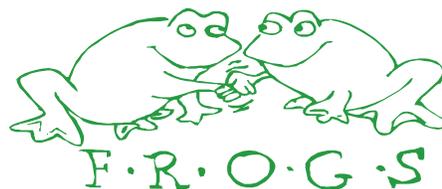


# FROGS FANFAIR

OCTOBER 2011



FROGS is a Registered Charity No. 1069168

## *Jofi Nursery School - FROGS 100<sup>th</sup> Project!!*



This little Nursery School was evicted from its premises when they refused to accept a 200% rent increase!

A new compound was found with a good solid building with good sized rooms but it needed refurbishing and fitted out as a Nursery School. The total cost was in the region of D40,000 (Over £1000).

FROGS was asked to help with the funding and we were able to help by purchasing paint, rollers, thinners and sand paper in order to transform what was a very run down building - this cost approximately D10,000 (about £260).

## *The Kingfisher Singers!*

In October a thoroughly enjoyable evening was spent with an audience of over 60 people at a concert by a Medway choir, The Kingfisher Singers.

The proceeds of over £500 were split between us and Medway Young Carers, so FROGS benefited by £270.

A big thank you to The Kingfisher Singers for supporting us in such an enjoyable way, and to Paul and Sue Warren for organising the event.

## *FROGS return to Tanjeh*

*Malcolm Reader May 2011*

In March of 2006 FROGS completed one of their earliest Projects (7), which was the conversion of a redundant classroom block into a sick bay.

Tanjeh is a thriving fishing village about one hour away from Banjul. The Lower Basic School has around 750 pupils. Their problem was that if a child fell ill, or required first aid, no local help was available and it took a considerable amount of time to get them to a doctor or hospital.

Five years later and after much use we were asked to inspect the block and see if we could do something to put it back to its former glory. Hundreds of little hands, and feet I think, had made both the inside and outside of the building look most unhygienic and the graffiti on the outside walls was only interesting if you followed football.

So Project 101 started with repairs to the roof and the installation of a new door. Five days of painting saw the building looking very smart again, and a shopping trip by Sally to the local chemists meant that the first aid box was once again full and ready for use.



*Malcolm outside the refurbished Sick Bay*

The block looks splendid once again, and the teachers chipped in by stencilling the FROGS logo around the walls to remind people who were responsible for the block.

The Deputy Head Master held a school assembly where the pupils were warned of severe action should anyone be found writing the name of Messi or Rooney on the outside walls!! We shall see!

### ***Bureng School Project report***

*Catherine Hurd PCV*

Greetings supporters of F.R.O.G.S.! I am an American Peace Corps Volunteer working at Bureng school in the Lower River Region of The Gambia.

When I arrived at my posting, I was surprised by the lack of school supplies and reading materials. The teachers and I had to go on a frantic search to locate textbooks for them to use to design their lesson plans. As a teacher in America, it is required by law that every student has a textbook for each subject so it was shocking for me to realise that students at this school rarely even touch a book, as textbooks are scarce and used mainly by the teachers.

So I began my project of bringing books to the school!

With the help of funding from FROGS, we have renovated an empty room and hired a local carpenter to make tables and benches. It was quite an eye-opening experience for me on the day that I realized that we had to hire a donkey cart to transport the metal door, paint, and cement to our school site.

We received boxes of books from the American Embassy and students now have the opportunity to look at books to encourage reading. Everyday teachers are sitting at the tables working on their lesson plans while students are independently reading books and studying their coursework.

I am also providing literacy lessons for the teachers, reading stories to the classes, and we hold our staff meetings in the room. Just this week, we had a training for the Peer Health Educators and a meeting of the Youth Brigade which is focusing on increasing agricultural

production in our community. I have also started to teach the school caretakers how to read and write their names and plan on starting adult literacy classes this summer.

On behalf of the Bureng school and community, I want to thank FROGS for your financial assistance to the project.

### ***A Day Trip to Chamen***

*Sally Reader*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May we left the house early to catch the ferry at Banjul, destination Chamen Oakes Nursery School, situated in the village of Chamen in Lower Niumi, on the North Bank of the river Gambia. Not a great distance as the crow flies, but the unreliability of the ferry service makes all trips across the river a bit of an adventure.



**My destination - Chamen Oakes Nursery School**

I had decided to travel across as a foot passenger, thus avoiding the long queues endured by vehicle passengers. Malcolm dropped me off at the ferry port and I travelled on.

The first step is to buy your ticket for the vast sum of D10, and then you enter the "departure lounge". A large room with benches and a gated exit, where foot passengers wait until all the vehicles are loaded onto the ferry. Time spent here is never dull, no McDonalds or Burger King, but you can buy delicious cakes sealed in bags, bread, fish and bean sandwiches, fish pies - the variety is fascinating. I settled for a small banana flavoured cake.

There were traders everywhere; I was offered pills and potions, cheap useless varieties of aspirin, Nurofen and paracetamol, and a cream that cures "all your problems". Other items being sold by the

vendors were torches, transistor radios, towels, flannels, prayer mats, underwear, babies rattles, teethingers etc. Who needs to go to Sainsbury's?

After about 20 minutes the crowd moved in a surge, the gates were opened and we could board the ferry. I headed for the top deck where it is less crowded and you get the breeze.

The ferry I was on was extremely slow, and we took more than an hour to cross the river, but once at Barra I was able to find my way through the maze of traders' stalls to the Gelli Gelli garage. It looked chaotic, but it only took a minute to be directed to the right transport. Once boarded, I sat and waited for the bus to fill up. They never leave the garage with empty seats.

Whilst waiting it was shopping time again - fresh bread, mangos, naan (water bags), bananas, fresh peppermint for mint tea and bread buns (tiny round balls of bread at 10 for D5). I bought a bag for breakfast. They tasted fine with my ever present triangles of cheese spread on them.

We eventually moved off and I began to wonder if I would recognise the place, out in the bush, on an open stretch of road, but I need not have worried as there were around 100 ladies, dressed in their finest, all singing and dancing!! What a welcome. A lone male was drumming furiously and the ladies sang and chanted as they escorted me down a slope and round the corner to where the little nursery school was hidden from the road. Mattie Cham, the headmistress was just beaming!

First stop was to look at the work progressing on the kitchen. The block work was very tidy and the mason was doing a grand job rendering the outside walls. I thanked them wholeheartedly, as they were volunteers and working in their spare time.

Then a visit to the classrooms where the children all sang and clapped a welcome. The Grade 2 class gave me a demonstration of their phonic songs, using the tape FROGS gave to the school when their teachers attended the Phonics Workshop at Kerewan last year. They love the phonic teaching - that is obvious!



We then all gathered under a huge mango tree and speeches followed, explaining how I came to be helping the school. This is a story of a chance encounter with Mattie who runs the Nursery School, back in 2008! Malcolm, myself, Sheila Jones, a founder FROGS member, and her daughter Di, were travelling to Janjangbureh. We had stopped to breakfast just off the road, when two ladies walked past. Mattie, the elder lady greeted us and after a short conversation, during which FROGS was mentioned, she told us she was just starting a nursery school for the village. I told her that when it was up and running to contact us.

Two years later Mattie was one of the teachers chosen to attend our Phonics Workshop at Kerewan, so we renewed our relationship. Later in the year we received a letter asking if FROGS could help the school to build a kitchen, as the school roll was growing fast and at that time food was being prepared in the village and carried to the school. FROGS agreed and the work started in April this year.

After all the speeches the ladies sang and danced, all very happy that the children could now be fed from the school kitchen. The underlying trend in the speeches was that the ladies valued immensely the chance that their children were getting with early years education, and they praised Mattie for starting the school.

I was then escorted into the village with the ladies clapping and the drummer still drumming. The nursery school is right on the edge of the village.

Most unusually I was then taken into about 10 compounds, first to meet the Alkalo, a very old man who said "Education is the water of life for his village" That is a translation! Then to various houses to meet the families of the ladies still with us.

The compounds were the usual clutter of broken blocks etc., with goats, kids, chickens and ducks and even a few donkeys for farm work. The rooms I entered, though basic, were spotless and I was made most welcome.

After lunch of fish benachin followed by prayers, it was time for me to leave. We set off for the main road and the Gelli Gelli, with a tail of about 20 small children who all wanting to hold my hand!

A good day trip to Chamen!

The work will continue as they have the money for the next stage. The roof will be put on as soon as possible, as the rains were coming!!

### ***Leeds Trinity University June 2011***

***Sally Reader***

In June 2011 a joint project was undertaken by students from Leeds Trinity University and Sally Reader, FROGS Adviser.

The 2011 group of students were the third group to come to The Gambia since 2009, and had once again decided to work at Bijilo Lower Basic School.

In 2009 and 2010, the students had worked on illustrating the walls of the lower grade classrooms, Grades 1 and 2.

This year, after discussion with the Headmaster and school staff, it was decided that the four Grade 5 classrooms should be targeted. The students liaised with the Grade 5 teachers and using textbooks and the teachers' wishes planned their illustrations.

We purchased everything they needed for the project locally using small local shops to ensure that any profit from the sales benefited the local people and did not go to the foreign traders who run most of the big shops.

The girls returned to the school, and then on to their hotel to work out their illustration plans for the next morning.

On Day 2 they cleaned both classroom walls, divided into two working groups and put the first base coat onto the walls.

By the time I arrived at the school on Day 3 the illustrations were going very well. Some were being painted and a definite air of progress pervaded.

The classroom walls were beginning to look extremely colourful and interesting - the teachers and their pupils were most impressed.

At the end of week one, after discussion with the group, it was decided that there were funds available to do further improvements to the classroom floors, and also a soak away system to get rid of some very unhealthy standing water were decided upon.



***Before the Soak Away was built!***

This time the team worked throughout the weekend and by Monday the soak away was dug out and ready for lining. The tap had a concrete surround and the kitchen waste area had been prepared.

The painting of the walls was also virtually finished and the floors in the two classrooms were being prepared for being re-laid. The cement was delivered locally by donkey cart, so again benefiting local labour.

Once the soak away project was nearly completed it was decided to divert standing water from another tap into it before it was sealed. This involved quite a long channel of piping and the team

of labourers once again got digging. A community tap outside of the school walls was also installed. The local community needed to use the school water supply, so a tap of their own means that the school can close their gates without denying the community water.



*The new Soak Away!*

The group also did some illustrations at a local Nursery School, painted extras on the end wall of a classroom block at Bijilo for the Headmaster and sealed the new cement work around the taps and kitchen trough with green paint.

Further water based projects have been put in place - a reservoir in the school garden, the repair of the hand pump area, and the laying of a concrete base.

All of these projects were funded by the students, and the school and local community were most grateful.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June the group were back at the school to hand over the Community tap to the local leaders.

A tearful group left for the airport after many goodbyes.

Again, well done girls, you have really made a difference to Bijilo School!

### ***Some thoughts from the Leeds Trinity group!***

Sam :

*'The fortnight I spent in The Gambia was probably the most rewarding two weeks of my life. The people were extremely welcoming and the work that we were able to carry out was evidently greatly appreciated. To be able to contribute to the welfare and future prospects of a whole community was immensely satisfying and my thanks go out to all those who supported our trip; my fellow students for making it that extra bit special and of course to the beautiful, smiling faces of the staff and students at Bijilo Lower Basic School, who were the highlight and focal point for our trip.'*

Becky:

*'I was amazed how little the schools had, yet how happy the pupils and teachers were. I honestly had the time of my life. I met some incredible people, made friends for life and learnt a very important lesson, to appreciate everything I have! The faces of the children and teacher when they saw their newly decorated classroom will never leave me and my trip will always remain a great high point in my life. I hope to return to The Gambia in the future to see how the school are getting along.'*

Sadie:

*'I was part of the group from Leeds Trinity who helped decorate Bijilo primary school. The school, staff and children were so welcoming and appreciative of everything we did. The head teacher said he wished he could find words more than thank you to say to us, and that we were setting the children up for life... not just the children that are at the school but the ones who are going to start year after year. We were all over the moon that we could help them, not just by giving them money but doing something practical, we could see the changes that were being made and the impact it had on their lives. I wouldn't change a thing about our trip, the positive support and organisation from the charity, everything that was achieved...the whole experience was amazing! Thank you!'*

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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