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Page 2

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Page 4

## Revamping science education in rural Africa by Bill Kim

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Page 6

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Page 8

## Swimming for Dome by Sybil Bell

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Page 9

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### Kathy tells the story:

We arrived at Nyinampong, having been told that a durbar was being organised to celebrate the completion of the latrine project. We were shown to the central area laid out with chairs and tables: many villagers had already gathered and were shyly smiling and waving to us. Settling down amidst the noisy and colourful preparations, I idly picked up a typewritten agenda listing the forthcoming activities. I went into a state of shock when I suddenly saw my own name half way down the sheet, under the heading "Cultural Display by Mrs Kathy Anochawaya Rees". What was a "cultural display"? Why was I suddenly called Anochawaya? Before I could descend into complete panic mode, I saw Nicholas approaching with a broad grin on his face. He explained that because of the number of chiefs in Nyinampong, they couldn't 'enstool' (hold that word, I'll return to it later) another male chief, so instead of Dave, I was being honoured as their Queen Mother for Development.

Nicholas then introduced me to the 'real' Queen Mother of Nyinampong who, taking my hand, led me away from the hubbub, to a little room in

a courtyard, where I was "prepared" for queen mothership. I was wound in a strip of brightly-coloured cloth, and then given ceremonial slippers and beads plus a handkerchief to wave as I danced around! On top of all this, a golden-yellow kente cloth was draped over me. It really was like being in a fairy-tale. But before I had time to fret that 'fairy' Queen Mothers probably know how to do a "cultural display" (this was still a mystery to me), the procession had started. At my side was the Queen Mother, and behind me a man holding the biggest umbrella I have ever seen. It turned out that this kind young man was the Queen Mother's son. The Queen Mother now demonstrated the dance, which I realised with relief would constitute my "cultural display". I hoped that under all these gorgeous robes no-one would see that I couldn't do it properly. I swayed and jiggled as best I could, entering the square where by now everyone had assembled. All my uncoordinated and clumsy attempts at emulating the graceful movements of the Queen Mother were heralded with generous though entirely unmerited gestures of approval. It was an unforgettable moment, and I looked across at Dave, Penny, David and Nicholas who were all smiling encouragingly.

Then came the enstoolment ceremony. Supported by a strong man on either side, I was gently lowered onto a characteristic Ashanti stool, but just as I was about to actually sit, I was whisked

upwards again. This was repeated twice more, and on the third time, I was permitted to sit. And sit I did, flanked on either side by all the village elders and the Queen Mother, splendid in their full regalia. There followed speeches, singing, drumming, and dances performed in turn by well-rehearsed school-children, elegant women in striking wraps, and athletic young men. Those individuals who especially pleased the audience were rewarded by gifts of cedis and enthusiastic signing from the crowd. The microphone eventually came my way, and I had my opportunity to express my gratitude, not only for the honour of becoming a Queen Mother of Nyinampong, but for the gift of a new name, Anochawaya, which as I explained to the gathered crowd, is a much prettier and more exciting name than the one I've had for the past almost six decades.



**The Queen Mother with the village elders**

**Now Dave takes up the story to explain how we ended up in Nyinampong on this happy January day in 2016:**

January 21st 2016 was the end of a year-long project involving the villagers of Nyinampong, Ashanti Development volunteers in the UK and our wonderful staff in Ghana.

It started with Penny, David Williams and Nicholas visiting the village to discuss with the Chiefs and Elders how they managed for water, sanitation, food and housing. Like most villages in the region they had no latrines and consequently many

health problems. When the work started, the villagers themselves dug the pits and AD provided materials, tradesmen and advice. One of the best aspects of being a sponsor was receiving email updates and photos every couple of weeks. It really made me feel involved, and I hadn't anticipated how motivating it would be to follow the progress and see the impact on peoples' lives.

**We have been inspired,  
We have been taught,  
We have seen grace and generosity,  
From the people of Ashanti!**

The 'Develop a Village' programme has now brought water and latrines to 46 Villages, which has transformed the lives of over 15,000 people. Ashanti Development is continuing to grow the scheme and if you would like to find out more please contact Penny or David.

## Ten years old

**This year is Ashanti Development's tenth anniversary. Its beginnings lay in the efforts made by Ghanaian immigrants to raise money from local people to help their village in the Ashanti Region. They asked for very little – £1 or £2 at a time – but their requests were urgent and so frequent that finally they were asked to stop.**

But at the same time, they were asked for a proper explanation. They explained that in recent years life had become difficult in their village. Back in the 1980s, they had been relatively wealthy cocoa farmers. They had no education worthy of the name, and there was a lot of sickness, but no one went short of food. However, by 2000 climate change had set in and it had become impossible to grow cocoa as a commercial crop. The land was bone dry, and wild fire destroyed many plantations. After a fire, nothing seemed to grow again – grass didn't grow, or normal bush, and certainly not cocoa.

Martha Boadu, one of Ashanti Development's founders, told us about her friend Kwaku Donkor – a tall, skinny, bald-headed man with three wives and many children. "He was a nice man," she said. "He was a friend who I trusted and liked talking

to. He used to have a big cocoa farm as well as a house in Mampong. He had three wives and a lot of children, all well cared for."

But when she visited Ashanti in 2000, all this had changed. Kwaku was dead, and his children were starving. Some left to work with cocoa 200 miles to the west, where climate change wasn't so marked. The girls survived by means of prostitution. "Many of my friends went to Nigeria to work as prostitutes," says Martha. "They had no other option. Almost all the girls who grew up with me are dead now."

The effects of climate change are very marked around Martha's home village. Streams have shrunk and the remaining water is highly polluted. Most people have diarrhoea for around five days in every seven, and three out of ten babies die of water-related disease before the age of two. The farmers have diversified into what they call 'Sahara crops' - yam, cocoyam, plantain, groundnut - but watering them is very arduous and the harvest is barely enough to sustain life.

We concluded that Martha and her family were only doing their best to help what had become an impossible situation and as a result we registered Ashanti Development as a charity in 2006. It is one of the growing number of volunteer charities, and pays no wages for work in the UK, though of course it pays its 25 staff in Ghana. At the start,

we had very little idea of what we were doing, except that we were motivated by a desire to help, and we consequently we relied on UK Ghanaians for advice at every step of the way. The learning curve was steep and mistakes were made, but in retrospect they don't seem too grave.



**A malnourished child with worms being weighed**



Here in the UK, Ashanti Development grew slowly at first and then snowballed more and more rapidly. Demography means that many retired people are able-bodied and well-informed. While they don't necessarily need money, many welcome the chance to do something useful and some offer a very high skill level. We have on our books some of Britain's top experts in their particular fields.

That doesn't mean that we don't need non-experts. We can find work for any number of occupations and we welcome the chance to take people out to Ashanti and show them the situation. Many volunteers effectively start their own projects under our umbrella, whether its fund-raising to pay for mosquito nets or free school meals, running our microcredit or teacher-training projects, or teaching bee-keeping and running school twinning.

We are also fortunate in our Develop A Village project, Sponsors choose a village for themselves – we always have a list and description of each village which we've earlier profiled – and then pay for the materials and skilled labour to enable each householder to construct their own latrine, and to train the community in health and hygiene. After this, the infant mortality rate drops, diarrhoea disappears, and the villagers have a lot more energy at their disposal.

At all times, the sponsor is encouraged to visit the village and make friends with the people, and many go on to provide other benefits as well.

With the help of this scheme, Ashanti Development has now provided over 16,000 people in nearly fifty villages with sanitation and training in health and hygiene. At the same time, we strengthen their institutions. The villages have two lines of command: – the Committee of Chief and Elders, who report to the Paramount Chief; and the Unit Committee (Parish Council), which is linked to the District Assembly (local authority). We make sure that these and, and the many other committees which operate in a well-run village, are strong enough and work well enough together to be able to maintain the improvements.

Water is a harder problem, because the ground is laterite, and it's difficult to be sure that a borehole will be successful. We've recently started using water filters in some villages, and hope that eventually we'll be able to sell them to the people on microcredit terms. If so, we'll use the profits to supply them with replacements when the filters eventually break.

Apart from that, our record for the last ten years looks like this:

**Building:** We've built five kindergartens, a primary school, a dressmaking school, three computer centres, two school latrines, three clinics, five

food processing facilities and a centre for the disabled.



**Eye Clinic in Gyetiase**

**Health:** We are progressively training and equipping village healthworkers for each village where we work. We have also distributed 6,000 prescription spectacles, and carried out over 200 cataract operations. We provide free school meals to two kindergartens, run a Hardship Fund for disabled and elderly people, and provide food supplements to malnourished babies.

**Education:** We have a semi-permanent teacher trainer working to improve the quality of teaching. We have fifteen twinned schools, some connected by Skype. We supply volunteer teachers, books and educational equipment.



Computer room in Gyetiase

**Income Generation:** We've provide agricultural training and loans in four villages, and a microcredit scheme in eleven.

**Trees:** We've planted over 6,000 trees, mainly teak which can survive wild fire.

We welcome your interest in any part of our work. This year we are trying to increase the number of regular standing orders we receive, which we use for day-to-day expenses, staff salaries, maintenance of some buildings etc. If we could cover this money by regular donation, it would leave us free to concentrate on new work, and Ashanti Development and the people we work for in Ashanti would be extremely grateful for your help.

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## Revamping science education in rural Africa, by Bill Kim

As a biochemistry graduate researcher, I have been fortunate in receiving an excellent science education – one filled with inspiring mentors and engaging hands-on experiences. But how is science taught and, importantly, received by students in other parts of the world where resources are limited? To find out, I took a short break from my Ph.D. to explore science education in Ghana.

It is easy to dismiss the importance of teaching science in Ghana. Yet education is paramount in overcoming social and economic difficulties in poorer regions of the world. In particular, science has the power to not only cultivate the rational mind, but also nurture children's creativity and resourcefulness, which are often neglected in the developing world. Especially in science education, student engagement is crucial. As such, teaching science solely through books is ineffective – it can impart knowledge but fail to engage student's interest and imagination.

Peter Rees had arrived at this conclusion and, in the summer of 2011, he set out to Ghana to share science experiments with kids. It was

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a big success. His experiments showcased concepts that were familiar and important in rural Ghana (filtration and sanitation), and he also demonstrated the chemical properties of common food and drinks. He confirmed that simple experiments, using locally available resources, could galvanize enthusiasm among kids and engage their hearts like no books could.



Teachers use the custom-made box with a prism to split sunlight into a rainbow spectrum, which is projected onto the side of the box.

Peter's success inspired me to take the idea a step further. While his experiments were popular during his time in Ghana, there was no one to continue the demonstrations at the school when he left – a shame, as students missed out on an

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engaging and interactive learning experience. The goal of my trip was to complete what Peter had originally imagined before: to bring cheap and accessible science experiments into the classroom and incorporate them into the school curriculum to facilitate continuity of the experiments year after year.

With help from David Banks, a teacher-trainer from the UK, I obtained the school syllabus, which described the science topics taught in junior high school. I brainstormed potential experiments that could be used to enrich current science lessons, and, as Peter had done, I focused on experiments that could be performed with cheap and accessible reagents.

I searched local markets and pharmacies to assess the range of simple chemicals available. Reagents that could be used for multiple types of experiments were sought after. For example, Alka-Seltzer (baking soda with citric acid powder) generates gas bubbles when dissolved in water. It can be used to demonstrate the concept of pressure when making a film-canister rocket and also the concept of density when making a lava-lamp. I also brought triangular prisms. Bright sunlight enabled a striking visual demonstration of diffraction of white light into rainbow colors. The chamber used to project diffracted light doubled as the storage box for all the other experimental reagents.



**Teachers learn to handle chemical reagents properly**

Each morning I taught a science class in Gyetiase Junior High School. I would start off by encouraging a discussion of concepts that they should be familiar with. At first, students were quite shy and hesitant. But when I brought out the experiment and let them take charge, their eyes lit up in excitement and, at times, students fought for my attention to get their hands on the experiment first.

Through my interaction with the kids, I constantly modified and improved the experiments. Some experiments that I had planned beforehand were abandoned because of reagent unavailability or lack of context in the school curriculum.

I finalized a list of experiments relevant to the school curriculum. All necessary reagents were compactly stored in a kit that could be kept in the school and re-used multiple times.

I got in contact with Samuel Bediako, district education supervisor of the region. Who had been told to expect me. He was incredibly appreciative of my contribution. Together, we decided to introduce the experimental science kit to other junior high schools in the region. To facilitate this, we held a workshop where science teachers in the district could learn how to perform the experiments and handle the reagents.

I described to them how these experiments could be used in various classes, and I suggested ways to encourage student participation during experiments. The teachers were eager to try the experiments themselves while I was there so I could correct them or advise them. At the end, in addition to the pre-made experimental science kit, we gave a certification of completion to each teacher in recognition of their participation in the workshop and commitment to demonstrating these experiments to their students.

This workshop is just the beginning. We have plans to take the experimental science kit to schools in other regions. This will require thorough preparation. Better experiments need to be designed; hopefully, the pilot kit project that I have implemented on this trip will provide us with

valuable feedback. Maintenance and upkeep of the kit and lesson delivery need to be monitored and refined, and new experiments that could complement more concepts taught in school should be researched.

I thank Samuel Bediako and David Banks, Ashanti Development's teacher trainer, for facilitating this pilot project. With their help, my kit was able to inspire and amaze students and give them a better appreciation of the beauty of science in their own lives, something that I hope will continue for years to come.

## Amazing Exam Results

A few years ago, Dave Banks, a retired teacher, volunteered for Ashanti Development as a semi-permanent teacher trainer.

We asked Dave to find a way to upgrade teaching and learning across a wide area, perhaps a whole District or more, which we could implement easily and economically. After a period of observation and discussion, Dave did just that. He identified

the worst aspects of teaching, and documented easy ways to improve them. Then he started looking for a publisher, but was afraid Ghanaian teachers might perceive his work as something devised by 'foreigners' which 'foreigners' were seeking to impose.

So he came up with a better idea. In order to ensure ownership of the programme by local staff, he and the District's two lead supervisors reviewed and re-wrote the work. The supervisors then trained seven circuit supervisors to cascade the programme to teachers throughout the District.

Last year's exam results for the District are now out and the headline figures are amazing.

JHS 3 (West African Leavers Exam)	%
2011	32
2012	45
2013	54
2014	69
2015	81

Dave won't take all the credit for this dramatic improvement, but likes to think he had some small part in it. He is also quick to point out that the figures mask serious issues, such as how the pass

mark is calculated and the actual level achieved.

Despite this, he is now under serious pressure from neighbouring Districts and elsewhere in Ghana to come and work with them. We'd love to meet teachers with management experience, or teacher-trainers, who would be interested in joining him.



Teaching the teachers



## Swimming for Dome by Sybil Bell

The Oasis swimming pool in the heart of London is exactly that – an Oasis. Many people don't even know it's there and yet it's existed in Covent Garden for decades.

To be fair, there are actually TWO swimming pools – one indoors and a slightly bigger one outdoors. It may seem rather decadent to have two pools side by side amongst some of the most expensive real estate in London but all day, every day, Londoners come to this council-run facility to get their fit-fix. A group of us have, over the years, become good friends – a real eclectic mix of wonderful people from all walks of life, ages, faiths and backgrounds – a true reflection of London.

The outdoor pool is something of a treasure with a sunbathing terrace, trees, cafe and a relatively new vegetable garden surrounding the pool area. The sun, when it makes an appearance, beats down from around 9am along all three lanes, meaning on a particularly hot day you can enjoy a swim and have breakfast by the pool – and not even be on holiday.

Early this year, Penny told us that many people in Africa have diarrhoea for around five days each week and are quite seriously ill three or four times a year from lack of clean water and sanitation. Also a lot of babies die from diarrhoea and dysentery, which is a really horrible death. She said this went on in a village called Dome – so we decided to spend a day swimming to raise funds for the cause. Our goal was £1,900.

We gathered together one Saturday in May and were extremely lucky to get a scorcher, especially since the weather in the run-up to the swim had been less than lovely. The pool regulars came along as well as some new faces.

Martha came with some locally made handicrafts and I, once again, sold home baked goods. As well as doing a good turn, we had such a great day chatting and laughing and listening to music. We swam from 9am until 3pm and collectively did a total of 3,476 lengths – that's just over 59 miles. Swimmers ranged from over 80 to under 20 years old – people from all backgrounds, faiths, ages and walks of life. We raised the whole £1,900 – a great success.

Penny has said now Dome will have sanitation and training in hygiene. Babies will die only rarely and the villagers will have a lot more energy. In consequence, everything they do will seem easier.

We're all really proud of being part of Ashanti Development now, and it was our pleasure to help the village of Dome to be a safer place to live.