

Save The Date:
4 January 2020

Volunteers and supporters are invited to a meeting in central London to meet and learn more about what they and the charity are doing.

More information to follow.

Update on Worms

by Ruth Simpson

Ruth was a nurse in Mampong Maternity Hospital in the 1970s. In recent years, she visited Ashanti regularly as a volunteer and set up and fundraised for the project described below.



It must be over two years since the fundraising service at Saint Philip and Saint James' took place, to raise money to buy worm tablets for the worm-infested children of remote villages north of Mampong, Ghana. The money raised is now being used to buy worm tablets to treat these children.

It was Nicholas, the Ghanaian manager of Ashanti Development based in the village of Gyetiase, Mampong, who first noticed the plight of these children when visiting remote villages to assess their needs. In 2016 during a visit to Ghana, Nicholas insisted that I went with him to see these children with large protruding tummies. Immediately I remembered seeing children with the same problem when I worked at the mission hospital many years ago. After talking with parents it was confirmed that these children were heavily infested with worms.

My next visit was in 2018, and with Nicholas' help we arranged a meeting with the Medical Officer of Health for the Mampong and Nsuta area of Ashanti. He agreed to allow the Ghanaian Government nurses to administer the worm tablets. This was the very best way to distribute them, as the nurses would be able to keep records and check up on the children for side effects etc.

So far, over 5,000 tablets have been distributed, with most going to remote villages in the north of the area. These communities are mainly of people from Northern Ghana or Burkino Faso who are forced to come south to escape the worst effects of climate change. They are the poorest of the poor, with few possessions of their own. They have no sanitation, no understanding of hygiene and no money. For them, hunger is a way of life.

The nurses always start by going to village schools to distribute the tablets, but they know that the worst affected won't be at school because they won't be able to walk there. So after the schools, they do house-to-house visits in and around each village.

Already great benefits and results are being seen from the worm tablets. The parents of the children are so pleased and grateful when they see the health of their children improving and lives being saved. Children who were not able to walk the distance to school can now go to school. The appreciation is enormous by both parents and children. Thank you for the part you have played in enabling this project to happen.

We are grateful to the Fleet Parish magazine, who first published this article.



A Better Present

by Pam Smith

Pam asked her family and friends to stop giving her Christmas and birthday presents and instead to save the money for her sponsored village. With their support, Pam has funded household latrines and hygiene training for the village, as well as a building to house a cassava mill¹. This has turned round the lives of 400 people.

I have been a supporter of Ashanti Development for many years. When, in November 2013, I was invited to join in a visit to Gyetiase, I jumped at the chance. I knew it would give me an opportunity to see first-hand how the money, raised by Ashanti Development, was spent and gain a greater understanding of the area and the problems the people there faced.

The two weeks I spent in Ghana were a real eye opener. Where Ashanti Development had provided funds, the welfare of the people had improved dramatically, particularly through the building of household latrines and the supply of fresh water. However, I could see there were still many villages which needed help. I was particularly moved by the plight of the people of New Saviour, a community of about 400 people living in great poverty. I decided I must do whatever possible to help.

When I returned home, I told family and friends about my visit and the wonderful welcome I had received from all the people I had met. I was able to describe the villages I had been to and show photos taken during my stay. When I told them about the living conditions of the people of New Saviour and my determination to help, they were keen to make a contribution. Now they always sponsor me on the annual walk and give money to Ashanti Development rather than buy me birthday and Christmas presents. We all agree this is a much better use of the money.



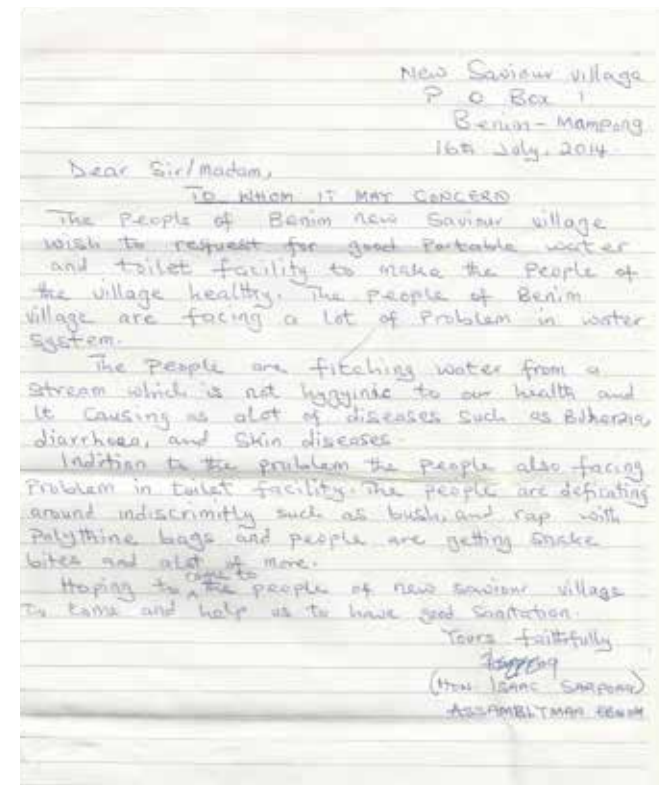
Woman and child in Saviour Benim

When I returned to Ghana in 2016, I was able to see how much difference our donation had made. Each household now has its own latrine which the villagers were proud to show me. More recently they have been able to build a shed for the gari mill which they acquired from another village. This is important for them as they rely on farming for their income.

Learning of these developments has encouraged the members of my family and my friends to continue their support in any way they can. I am particularly pleased to have engaged the interest of the younger members of the family. Our next project is to provide clean drinking water which is essential for good health.

The 2014 letter below is from the village. Pam's now saving to fund a borehole to give them the clean water they asked for.

¹ Cassava has a short shelf-life unless it is processed into gari, which can be stored until needed or sold in the market when the price is right.



2014 letter from Saviour Benim Village. Pam's now saving to give them a borehole.

Mark Ryan, who has visited Ashanti twice, sponsors the village of Aframano and writes a newsletter for his friends. Here are some extracts:

Borehole in Aframano

At the time of my first visit there was a broken borehole in Aframano, installed by an NGO that never came back. We have made a temporary repair, and now it is producing delicious water. Because we raised a bit more money than our initial budget, and we aim to raise a bit more, we are planning to mechanise it. This means providing a 5000 litre plastic tank and an electric pump to fill it. Then there will be about five taps, so that people can fill buckets from a tap fed by the tank without having to pump manually. As the village isn't yet connected to the mains electricity, the electric pump will be powered by an electric generator for a few months. Later, when the mains electricity is connected, the generator serves as standby for power cuts. The pump will run for two hours to fill the tank, which will last one or two days before it has to be filled again.

As schoolchild called Matthew

Last year I met Matthew in Aframano, a very charming child who spoke good English.



Overhead water tank

His story was a big part of my motivation for sponsoring latrines and the borehole in Aframano.

He had told me that he goes to the stream to get water for his family each day, before school. He gets up at 6am, and does three round trips, carrying two large tubs of water on each return journey. Last year I visited the stream. It took about ten minutes to walk to it, but I guess the return trip is more like twenty minutes if you are carrying twenty litres of water. And the water looked horrible. The village pigs were grazing and wallowing in it. But it (and another similar stream on the other side of the village) is the only water the village had at that time.

When I next saw Matthew, he remembered our conversation last year. I asked him what he thought of the latrines and the borehole. He thinks they are great.

Cole, Vincent, Sebastian, meet Acheampong, Atta and many others

The children in Gyetiase were very curious when I mentioned my children and nephew, and asked to know their names, ages, and whether they play football. They were delighted when I said we could talk to them on a video call. We planned it carefully. We'd start off with just two or three of us in the clinic¹, so the UK children wouldn't feel too overwhelmed. Then, after about ten minutes, we'd

walk out of the clinic with the phone, to show the UK children some houses and more people. I knew that tens of other children would come to join the conversation, and they did :-)

I had primed them with a few ideas for conversation, such as what food they ate, how school was that day. But I was happy that they quickly found their own things to talk about, and showed each other drawings that they'd made.

¹ Volunteers stay on the first floor of a building which is otherwise used as a clinic.

Toasters, kettles, and electric toothbrushes

I loved showing the children household items common in the UK but unknown in this small village, like the toaster, kettle and microwave oven. It made a bit impression on them. Later, when we were outside, Atta asked an older child "Has Mr Mark introduced the toaster to you?" and went on to describe excitedly how it cooks the bread to make it crunchy, and the bread pops up when it's done. But the item causing the most fascination was my electric toothbrush. They were a bit scared to try it at first, fearing it might be painful, but were soon reassured :-)

News In Brief

For the last ten days, a team from Leicester SpecSavers shops have been screening eyes in Gyetiase, and distributing second-hand prescription spectacles which they graded themselves before they came. They worked very long hours and saw nearly 2,000 people. The Ashanti people and Ashanti Development will always be forever grateful to them.



The team at Heathrow

Congratulations Mavis!

Congratulations to Mavis Bobie on her wedding last June. Mavis manages our microcredit projects across nearly thirty villages and writes brilliant progress reports.



Mavis' Wedding