

FRIENDS OF AHOTOKUROM NEWSLETTER

June 2007 Edition 14

Registered Charity DMJ No 232421

Welcome to the Ahotokurom Newsletter- the latest from Ghana!

Again we thank you for all the good work that you have enabled through your generous support.

Celebrating Ghana's 50 years of independence.

There were massive celebrations all over Ghana for the country's 50th anniversary of independence. At Ahotokurom, it was a very special day. Someone bought a bottle of the best Paddy Irish Whiskey trying to tempt the teetotal Sisters to toast the occasion... never mind, there were plenty of others to enjoy it! Everyone enjoyed the rice, chicken and sweets that the Sisters organised to be distributed to everyone on the day. Some talked of what they were doing on that day 50 years ago when Ghana became the first African country to be decolonised. Two of our elder residents realised that they had leprosy even then.

On the same day 6th March, The Daughters of Mary and Joseph (DMJ's) also celebrated 190 years since being founded with a special Mass attended by a large section of the community at Ahotokurom.



**Mass celebrated by Fr Giles at
Ahoto.**

Tell your friends about our website

Why not tell your friends about our website. We are keen to tell more people about the wonderful work and achievements at Ahotokurom. This website (put together by our

volunteer IT expert – David Edwards) has a wonderful exposition of many of the activities at Ahotokurom – take a look at: www.ahoto.org

Personalities

Many of our readers know the key individuals at Ahoto personally, but as not all of you do, we plan to tell you about some of the people behind the project in future editions. The senior team comprises of Sr. Pat & Sr. Monica. Pat is originally from Middlesborough. She is a qualified Social Worker (and a larger than life, never to be forgotten character!) Sr. Monica is from Dublin; she's a qualified nurse and looks after the medical needs, both physical and mental of all of the residents. Monica is a specialist in the use of Endorphin Release Therapy. This is a non-invasive technique used to stimulate the body to heal by releasing endorphins to the affected area.

Also in the community are Sr. Nellie from Uganda (whose particular interest is education of children with Special Needs) and Sr. Clarisse who is from Rwanda originally but has been living in Burundi. Sr. Clarisse is working closely with the Childcare centre, in particular supervising the care of the quads which is a fulltime job in itself!

The Big 40

In our last newsletter we reported on Philip who is paralysed from the chest down. Philip celebrated his 40th birthday earlier this year. He held a party following a lovely Mass at which over 150 attended. Bishop Matthias Nketsiah (and 12 priests) celebrated the mass in the chapel at St. Clare's.

A date was set for Philip to be ordained to the diaconate.... however it had to be postponed due to illness! We await news of a new date soon! Please pray for him.

Easter

Easter is always a very special time at Ahotokurom. This year was no exception! There was a special celebration with Baptisms and First Holy Communions which all formed part of the Easter liturgy. Solomon & Mary received both sacraments. Solomon has been known to Ahoto since he was a baby and has lived in Childcare since his mother died 6 years ago. Mary has lived at Childcare for the last 3 years. Christie and Baba both received their First Holy Communion.

Enyindakurom

Enyindakurom is the village in which those affected by leprosy and rejected by their families came to settle. Prior to our housing project in 1999 all the families lived in terrible and harsh conditions. Friends of Ahotokurom raised funds for 80 new houses and the people themselves built simple, but clean one roomed homes demonstrating what can be achieved with enthusiasm, hard work and limited funds!

Seven years on the village needs a face-lift to ensure the houses survive harsh climate conditions. Work has commenced to reduce soil erosion and undertake minor remedial repairs. It is great to see that people have made their houses into homes and especially those where residents have managed their own home improvements – as their standard of living improves.

Visitors to England

Sister Nellie and Teacher Rose are currently in England on placement in a Special Needs School for 3 months. This is part of their training programme enabling them to learn new techniques and ideas for the school in Ghana. We trust that they will both be made very welcome here and we hope they will have an opportunity to meet some of you who continue to support the work.

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Lizzie runs the London Marathon

Lizzie Hayward ran the London marathon on the 22nd April in aid of Ahotokurom to upgrade one of the classrooms for teaching children with special needs. She ran 26 miles around the streets of London on a very hot day (in the very creditable time of 5 hours) and raised the wonderful sum of £1500, which has directly benefited children with Special Needs. Well-done Lizzie.



Lizzie crossing Tower Bridge

Help from Ireland

Recent months have seen lots of help from Ireland at Ahotokurom. Julia O'Connor was with Ahoto for 8 months and made a tremendous contribution to the community (as well as providing news items for this newsletter). Geraldine Maybury and her 11 year old daughter Sadhbh went out for a short while and were so impressed that on their return home they organised a number of fundraising events. A special vote of thanks must go to Johnnie Tuohy, a farmer and sports fanatic who with his merry band of men and women enthusiastically raised funds to enable 2 projects. The first was to renovate parts of the elderly persons' home St. Clare's and the community meeting place where

Mass is held every Sunday. This building with its open sides had a roof in imminent danger of collapse. Now it is completely refurbished and stable for a good few years. The second project is the continuing renovation of the school for those with special needs.

Some updates, hot off the press...

Trudy Kilcullen (Chair of Friends of Ahotokurom) has just returned from a short visit to Ghana. She was pleased to see the progress that is taking place. There are currently 25 resident children in the **Childcare Centre!** Despite an age span of 7 months to 19 years (including the quads now just 19months old!) there is an air of order! The older children help the young ones and all 'muck in' together. The children are there for various reasons. Some rejected because of disability or illness, others orphans, others have a parent alive but domestic circumstances such as psychiatric illness or inability to cope prevent the children from living at home.

On the Sunday afternoon a knock at the door brought a woman in the final stages of HIV/Aids. Her husband died three years ago, she had no home, no food and seven children. Four of these were young and completely dependant on her (including one child who was deaf and dumb). She wanted them to be admitted to Childcare so she could die in peace. Ahotokurom arranged for her to go to hospital and then they met with the extended family. The family felt they could not take the children in because they were already so poor. They were caring for a disabled grandmother. Discussions followed over a number of days. Ahoto made a commitment to provide food, clothing and education for the children...and the family has therefore agreed to take the children in. The Sisters will monitor the situation carefully....it may be that very soon they have more children to care for.....that is the hard reality of life.

Everyday twenty or so young people come in to the centre as young 'volunteers' to help them get into a routine of work life before they apply for our **scholarship scheme**. They assist with childcare, painting, gardening etc.

In **St. Clare's Home** there are three very sick elderly people requiring 24 hour care. There are also twelve men and women who are more mobile but cannot live on their own because of their disabilities. In fact Trudy was surprised to see that so many had lost their eyesight in recent years – this can be a long term effect of the leprosy.

The Training Unit is a new project for the older young people who have completed Special Unit. 20 young people attend this centre, which only opened last year. The young people are too old for school, but unable to work. They are taught practical skills for living. A parent or other relative accompanies some of the students in order that they may also learn techniques to help their child and apply them in the home. The unit is operating from one of the old kindergarten classrooms and is about to be renovated, modernised and adapted to suit its new use (with the funds raised by Lizzie Hayward and those in Ireland). It is one of the very few centres in Ghana looking after the needs of such young people.

The Ahotokurom team thank you all for your care and concern and hope that this newsletter will help you to understand the very real difference that you can and do continue to make.

**To make a donation
Please send cheques/postal
orders made payable to
'DMJ Friends of Ahotokurom'
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For further information on any of our activities please contact:
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