

FRIENDS OF AHOTOKUROM NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity DMJ 232421

June 2011

Everybody at Ahotokurom wishes to say a big 'THANK YOU' to each one of you for your continued support

The 'Mantey's' move

The Mantey family epitomise the success of Ahoto! In our next edition of the newsletter we will be describing the hard work that this family has put into Ahoto. All are sad, & yet happy that they have moved to a new home off site. Thirty years of living within talking distance and now they have to cycle, walk or drive to the Ahoto site!

Mark Mantey, once a young lad making charcoal to sell to pay for his school fees, is now completing his PhD at Limerick University! He is busy putting together the final chapters of his thesis but hopes to be finished this year. It will be lovely to have a Doctor in the family of Ahoto! We wish him all the very best for the last months of study.

St Clare's

St Clare's is the home for mainly elderly ex-leprosy sufferers. Unfortunately there have been several deaths this year. It is always sad saying goodbye but when you have four deaths in two weeks, as happened earlier this year it took some time to recover. Philip Anane was the first ex-leprosy sufferer to welcome the DMJ's to Ghana. Sadly he went to God in early April. Raymond Endechi, a man from Enyindakorum followed within days. Heaven will be having a great 'welcome celebration' this year!

Our Landcruiser "Don't Touch Me"

We reported on the Landcruiser, affectionately known as *Don't Touch Me* in the last edition.

It is really on its last legs and yet Ahoto depend on it. Most of the money for its replacement has now been raised, thanks to Friends in UK, Ireland and the Netherlands. So, the Ahoto team are well on the way to replacing it!

God Bless all who have supported this important project!

Rainham Scholarships

We are delighted that Rainham Parish with Fr. Brian Coyle as the new Parish Priest, will continue to support our education programme. Scholarships for vocational training are a route out of poverty and give every young person the tools necessary for their future. Thank you Rainham parish for your long and loyal support. We will do a report in a future newsletter.

Why send Christmas Cards?

Have you ever thought of not sending Christmas cards but making a donation to Ahoto instead? Think about how good you would feel – all the work that could be achieved with the money saved! Surely your friends would also feel good about it too!

Last year a number of our supporters send 'virtual' cards via email and gave the money saved to Ahoto.

Remember with our charity there are no administration expenses. All your donations go directly out to Ahoto. All the work here in the UK is undertaken on a voluntary basis. Your donation can even be Gift Aided to make it go further!

To make a donation, please send cheques/postal orders to

'DMJ Friends of Ahotokurom'
The Treasurer
Holy Cross RC Church
208 Sangley Road
Catford, London, SE6 2JS

Changes in Staffing

Since we last wrote, Sr Hedwig has been elected to the DMJ's Provincial Council and has transferred to Uganda. She asks to be remembered in our prayers. Obviously she has a difficult task, managing the Province and not just Ahoto! She is sorely missed; however Sr Alice has now arrived (she is very welcome!) and has taken over Sr Hedwig's duties.

IT Training Centre

The work on the Computer Training Centre is progressing well. It is located at Enyindakurom. All are working hard to achieve an opening of operations by July 2011. The youth in particular are very enthusiastic and willing to do anything to get the project off the ground. It has taken several years of planning but hopefully we are nearly there. We wish to thank our sponsors for their patience and continued support.

Young Adults Training Centre

We are very hopeful that St Elizabeth's training centre will be rebuilt, beginning in September. It will comprise of new classrooms and guest rooms which the disabled students will personally maintain. Currently there are 15 students all with leaning disabilities but we still have a long waiting list! John Hassell and his team from a specialist school in the UK are giving educational advice and offering training for the staff in Ghana. Not all of the funding is yet in place but we thank all of you who have contributed so far.

Thank You

All of you are remembered by Fr. Philip at daily Mass. He continues to be a source of joy and inspiration as he ministers to his flock.



Fr Philip Relaxing

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Charles Yaw Attindogo A Profile

Charles is a teacher in the Special Needs Kindergarten. He was in fact raised in Childcare at Ahoto having been admitted at the age of 4. Charles left Ahoto for a limited period to complete his training and studies. However all are delighted that he is now back and that 'a child of Ahoto' has returned to help and teach others. Yet another success for Ahoto! Charles has just married, we wish him and his wife every happiness together.



Charles Yaw Attindogo

Our Young Residents

The younger residents have had a lot of staff input this year. Student volunteers have all been working earnestly and finding new ways of helping the youngsters to have a better quality of life.

Childcare will be very busy for the next two months with school holidays bringing all together. The ages range from 4 – 20, so life does have its moments! All are looking forward to the *Holiday - at - Home* project. The 65 youngsters from Enyindakurom plus 20 children from Childcare will be involved. Alternate days are planned for two teams with one big 'youth day' at the end. UK and Irish volunteers will be organising this with Sisters Louise and Alice. The daily programme will be for 30 - 40 children. It is 'one big family' and chaos, but good fun!!

Visitors

Ahoto always looks forward to having visitors. Be they staying for hours or months, they will always be welcome! This year, so far has been very busy with many friends and volunteers from the UK, Switzerland, Ireland, America, Netherlands and of course, Ghana. Only six months into the year and Ahoto expects to host at least another ten volunteers on 'come and see' visits. Thank you everyone who helps to support this networking programme. Remember, when you return back to the UK – your help as a 'Friend of Ahotokurom' would be valued! For further information contact Trudy at the email below.

Memories of a Visit

By Jonny Peacock

As a workaholic, thirty-something, London dweller, who had never been anywhere off the tourist trail, my visit to Ahoto, was always going to be an eye opener! Since returning I came across a Mao Tse-tung quote which seemed to sum up what I have learned very neatly. *We think too small, like the frog at the bottom of the well. He thinks the sky is only as big as the top of the well. If he surfaced, he would have an entirely different view.*

I feel like a bit of a cheat and a fair weather visitor (hard not to be the latter in a literal sense) compared to others who have stayed for longer and done much more to help. Through a 'friend of a friend' type link, I was invited by Sister Pat for a two week sort of reconnaissance visit in advance of a longer stay in future. So it was a half-holiday rather than *bone fide* voluntary work.

Despite this I experienced more life lessons there than in an entire year in London. These few thoughts from our trip might serve to inspire others or at worst revive some happy memories for previous visitors.

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The first thing that struck me about Ahoto was everyone's strong sense of values. I'm not sure how to define these values exactly except that they are the antithesis of the greedy, selfish lives of the average inhabitant of 'developed' Europe. I was reminded of Peta's account of her visit that I'd read on the Friends of Ahoto website; of how the way we live our lives and our set of priorities seems to have got lost somewhere. I was constantly left wondering where the 'developed' pre-fix comes from!

One evening I attended Advent prayers in the Childcare centre as part of their preparation for Christmas. I sat and listened to a twelve year old boy talk quite spontaneously about the importance of humility; what it was, how he had practiced it during that day and how he would think about it as he went about his day tomorrow. This isn't an exceptional example. The discussion and display of a strong set of values was experienced repeatedly. I'm not sure how much of this is innate in Ghanaian culture or the influence of the DMJ Sisters - probably both but it is humbling, refreshing and inspiring all at the same time.

Koful

Koful is one of Ahoto's neighbouring villages & part of their outreach programme.

It is a very poor village, but the sisters are working with the community to build some eco-tanks to catch and contain some of the rainwater. This will enable them to have some water when the '*one and only*' water tap in the village has a supply failure. Clean water is precious in Ghana. Villagers have to pay for each and every bucketful that they collect so this project will raise the standard of living too.

There are many more stories of activities at Ahotokurom on our website Please take the time to look at

www.ahoto.org

For further information about Ahoto please contact tkilcullen@live.co.uk