

Report on the ISGF African Gathering in Accra, Ghana, November 2nd to 9th 2007

Outstanding memories from the 4 Trefoil Guild members who attended as observers.

Friendship – everyone we met was so welcoming, so friendly and so proud of their country and the fact that we wanted to visit Ghana. On our arrival ISGF members were waiting in the airport terminal to greet us and assist us through the formalities...we actually went through the diplomatic exit so no hassle at all!

We were warmly welcomed by Ghanaians, conference delegates, officials, families, hotel staff, church officials, many, many children – in fact everywhere we went people could not have been kinder.

Fun – Life, although hard for many, is fun with people of all ages forever smiling, nobody hurries and time just passes slowly by. The majority of the people we met were deeply religious with Sunday still being a sacred day. Obviously there are problems between the have's and have not's when we learnt that one of our hosts had been badly attacked a few months since because he was rich. More ordinary people frequently have mobile phones snatched. Walking in the area round our hotel which was a mixture of shanties and houses in walled compounds we felt totally safe as we spoke to the local people, especially the children.

We visited a local craft market, a rabbitary (owned by ISGF, who employed two young men to run it, to help raise funds for a Guide sponsored orphanage.) We visited the actual orphanage to meet the 31 children found on the streets who now live in a safe family environment. (We did travel on a proper motorway to get there, suddenly leaving it between bushes on the hard shoulder to get onto a very bumpy dirt road!!). We travelled north of Accra to Tafo to visit the Cocoa Research Station which was very interesting as well as informative...it's quite amazing how every bit of the cocoa pod and the beans inside are used...for cocoa, cocoa butter, gin, brandy, liquid soap, fertiliser etc.

African time is certainly very stretchable with nothing happening at the appropriate time! Even the Opening Ceremony for the Conference, with notable dignitaries attending, was suddenly changed from morning to afternoon due to a wedding in the same hall starting late.....!

The conference went very well with Rigmor Lauridsen and Martine Levy doing an excellent job teaching the delegates how to form committees, share ideas and partnerships etc. Much progress was made during the week and I felt very happy with our contributions as 'observers'. We were asked to organise a Guides Own type of activity one morning early in the conference and this ended up having numerous spin offs in the actual conference especially one related to a possible ISGF Promise and Law.

Formalities -The Opening Ceremony was very formal occasion attended by many dignitaries as Guiding is obviously held in high esteem in Ghana. The Chief adviser to the President of Ghana – Hon. Mrs. Mary Chinery Hesse, Tribal Chief – Okusie Foli V, Princess Eva-Monica Boateng, etc. were all there to support the Ghana ISGF at their West African Conference. After the speeches, guides and scouts performed tribal dances, a choir of local guiders entertained with great gusto and enthusiasm and a delicious buffet was served.

The Closing Ceremony took the form of a dinner, a presentation evening for older members of Guiding, and a dance. The ex-guiders' awards were red discs with our Trefoil Logo on along with the citation for good service. Mrs. Rose Mortabe, the ISGF President and a former Chief Commissioner for Ghanaian Guiding was so impressed with the Trefoil Guild in the UK that she used our logo and has started a guild in Accra with the hope that there will be many more guilds very soon!

Three action packed days followed the conference with a special highlight being an audience with Princess Eva-Monica Boateng, Life Patron of ISGF, Ghana on our final afternoon!

Margaret Wellock
November 17th 2007.