



Left: the current nursery school meets in a dilapidated building with holes in the roof and a bare concrete floor; right: the excited children view the site of their new nursery with (back) Stuart and Linda Forster, from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington

New nursery will be real blessing

THESE Ghanaian children are taught in a ramshackle 100-year-old building.

Water pours through the roof when it rains, paint and plaster are peeling off the walls, and there's a bare concrete floor.

But in September, these four to six-year-olds will be taught in a brand-new, purpose-built nursery – thanks to the generosity of worshippers from our diocese.

Christians from Holy Rood Church have donated nearly £2,800 to St Mark's Church in Essikadu – their link church in the Sekondi region of Ghana – so the nursery project can be finished.

The plans for a new building were drawn up in 2002, but work has stopped several times as money ran out. Worshippers from

Holy Rood saw the partially-completed classrooms when they visited and decided to help.

Their cash was augmented by £150 from the Acorn Pre-School that meets in Holy Rood Church and another £600 from Holy Trinity Church, Fareham, which was earmarked for new metal roofing.

And worshippers Stuart and Linda Forster, from Holy Rood Church, were there last month for the official dedication of the new building by the Rt Rev John Otoo, Bishop of the Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese.

"After the morning service, there was a procession from the church down to the new nursery where Bishop John blessed the work done on the building," said Linda.

"And on the Wednesday, we

went to the old nursery school and took the children and teachers to see the site of the new building.

"They were all excited to see their new school. The children sang a song for us and then we handed out lollipops as they headed back to their old school.

"Work started while we were there – thanks to our parish's latest gift – on the kitchen and toilet block. As soon as they are functional, the children can move into the new building and painting can go on over the weekends when the children aren't there."

St Mark's Church is the parish that Holy Rood is linked to as part of our diocese's Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL).

When the Forsters visited in 2006, the parish priest, Father Emmanuel, and church council agreed that the £1,000 Crofton

parish mission tithe for Ghana should go to the nursery.

The present nursery caters for 150-160 four to six-year-olds, but numbers are dropping because parents don't want their children to be taught in such a dilapidated building. Their playground is a small fenced patch of dirt with a slide, the remains of a swing set and a small merry-go-round.

The new nursery will have six classrooms, an office, storage area, kitchen and toilet area, and a fenced-in play area. It will have room for all the current children, as well as extra capacity for new members. It may also have a crèche and facilities for toddlers.

When the new nursery is completed, the old church building may be restored for use as a guest house for Ghanaians who visit the area for weddings and funerals.

Special guest at D-day service

HE came to Christ Church, Portsdown, just before the D-Day landings in 1944 to dedicate the invasion plans to God.

Peter Birkett Smith, aged 92, will return this month for the church's unique annual service to commemorate D-Day.

General Sir Miles Dempsey, who commanded the British 2nd Army, arranged for a 'Knight's Vigil' service there on June 4, 1944, so his staff could "dedicate to Almighty God the task which lay before them." He returned in 1948 to dedicate two stained-glass D-Day windows at the west end of the church. And he attended the D-Day service there every year until his death on June 6, 1969.

Mr Birkett Smith survived the evacuation from Dunkirk near the start of the Second World War. He became aide-de-camp to General Sir Geoffrey Roberts, who was Quarter Master General of the 2nd Army based at Fort Southwick, and attended the vigil in that capacity.

He now lives in Jersey, and will make the trip especially for the service. It happens at 10.30am on June 10, and will be attended by parishioners, D-Day veterans, uniformed groups, and a detachment from the Defence College of Policing and Guarding at Southwick Park.

Christ Church, Portsdown, also has a military cemetery for those who lost their lives in both world wars. The church is open from 10am-12noon, every weekday from March to October, so visitors can see the church, admire the D-Day windows and visit the cemetery.

Christians on hand at loW Festival

CHRISTIANS will be at the Isle of Wight Festival to offer help, prayers – and free cake – to festival-goers.

The 'Solace' tent has been in evidence at the annual music event for the past two years. This year's festival happens on June 8-10 and features bands such as Snow Patrol, the Rolling Stones, Keane and Amy Winehouse.

Organisers are appealing to churches for £1,000 for the marquee, materials and insurance they need – and cakes to give away. For information, or to make a contribution, contact the Rev Malcolm Stinton on 01983-523483.

Big day for our church flower arrangers

FLOWER arrangers from across the country will descend on a Denmead church this month for an important get-together.

The Church of England Flower Arrangers Association (CEFAA) will be holding its annual meeting at All Saints Church at 11am on June 9.

The national chairman of CEFAA, Hillary Brian, will be staging a demonstration from 2pm. All flower arrangers from across the diocese – whether they are CEFAA members or not – are invited to this afternoon session.

Ann Brown, secretary of the Portsmouth branch of the CEFAA, said: "This is an exciting event for us, as the AGM is usually held in the Midlands or up North.

"We'd like to use the day to encourage people to see what the association is like, and perhaps to think about joining."

The afternoon session will cost £2 a head, payable on the door. CEFAA members who would like to come are asked to ring Ann Brown on 023-9249 8143 if they'd like lunch.



Hillary Brian, national chairman of CEFAA