

Music man records Ghanaian choir for new CD

HE spent 12 days in Ghana helping choir members with their singing – and recorded a CD of their voices.

Simon Long runs the Fine Voice Academy, which has a recording studio in St Cuthbert's Church, Copnor. So when the Bishop of Ho asked St Cuthbert's vicar David Power if he knew a musician who could train his choirs, Simon was the obvious choice.

David and Jeannette Power and Simon travelled to Ho, which is linked to Anglican churches in the city of Portsmouth via our Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL). Simon led choir practices in Ho Cathedral and across the diocese.

At the end of his stint in Ghana, Simon gathered



Simon Long (centre) with the choir members from Ho

together at Ho Cathedral all the choir members he'd been working with. He recorded them singing traditional hymns, Christmas carols and African songs for a CD he

hopes to sell from this month.

"David said that the choir members there wanted to improve their English language singing and improve their voices," he said. "I'd never

been out of Europe before, so I was a bit apprehensive. We had a couple of concerts here in St Cuthbert's which helped to pay for my trip.

"I took a portable recording studio with me. And when we arrived on the Friday, I was immediately involved with a cathedral choir practice that night with their diocesan musical director.

"They were good at learning notes and harmonies. Most of them didn't read music, but they spent hours learning by rote. Some of them had come 60-70 miles on buses and slept in the church on mattresses.

"I spent a couple of nights in other towns away from Ho with other choirs. Their hospitality was amazing, but

I think they were so grateful to be given an opportunity to improve their voices.

"The final recording session was in the cathedral, but it's actually a small building with a tin roof, fans whirring away and where the acoustics aren't brilliant. But we rehearsed on Friday night, people slept overnight and we recorded on the Saturday.

"I think the altos were very strong, and the sopranos enjoyed hitting some top notes for the first time. It was all a totally new experience for me, but I'm really pleased the church and the academy could work together on this."

The CD will be available via the Fine Voice Academy website on www.finevoice.co.uk from the start of December.

Teenagers' Africa trip is eye-opener

IT was an eye-opening trip which widened the horizons of these 12 young people.

Students from Ryde School spent 14 days in Ghana, teaching children and decorating classrooms at Nako School, near the town of Wa.

Each student had to prepare and deliver lessons to their African counterparts. Among the lessons they taught were geography, German, music and personal hygiene.

The teenagers and their two teachers also worshipped at Tamale Cathedral, went on safari, and learnt about the slave trade in Accra on their life-changing trip.

Ryde School and Nako School have been linked for around 10 years, and this is the second trip made by students. It was led by Canon Graham Morris, vicar of All Saints, Ryde, and organised as part of our Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL).

Mary Caddick, 17, hopes to pursue a career in medicine, so she and Freya Williams, also 17, prepared a lesson on menstruation



Above: the team with Canon Graham Morris; top: teaching at Nako School

and the female reproductive system.

"They had had lessons on human biology, but they still had lots of questions that we tried to answer," said Freya, who is now preparing to head back to Ghana between A-levels and university.

Alice Gordon and Pip Andrews, both 17, took an inflatable globe and flags for their geography lesson, while Issy Terry and Rhiannon Cobb, both

16, handed out 30 recorders to the pupils for a music lesson.

After the school day, the students went back to paint classrooms and help with building work. They also organised an England v Ghana football match.

During their time in Tamale, the students visited a village where two children had died that day, which helped them to understand some of the challenges faced by Ghanaians. They also experienced



High Anglican worship with a rock band during a three-hour service in the cathedral.

"I'd never been to Africa, and I didn't know what to expect," said Issy. "But I wanted to explore a new culture and get some experience."

Luke Wilson, 16, said: "It was good to get a general awareness of what's going on in that part of the world, and we've brought back a burning passion to want to help."

And Pip said: "One thing I took from the experience was how happy they all seemed, even though they don't have very much. We have plenty in our country, but we aren't always very happy."

Graham Morris, who chairs our IDWAL committee, said: "I

was thrilled by the way these young people adapted to cope with the language barrier, the food and the culture. And I was seriously impressed with their lessons."

The links between Ryde School and Nako School started 10 years ago. Ventnor worshipper David Tamcken visited Ryde School to talk about IDWAL, prompting staff and students to send money raised via the Global Rock Challenge to build classrooms in Nako. The link developed, and the first set of students visited two years ago.

Around 40 students applied to go this time, and each had to fill in a written application, detailing what they would bring to the trip. Each of the 12 selected then had to raise around £1,400 to pay for it. Among their fundraising ideas were teaching the violin, selling cakes and making greetings cards.

Teacher Jocelyn Drabble said: "We want to thank the diocese for this opportunity. Without Graham it wouldn't have been possible. And our students coped so well, and learnt so much about themselves."