

Dumbarton/London Corner Nursery School, Serrekunda, The Gambia The School trip 2008

Last summer Guy Rose did a sponsored walk to raise funds for the nursery school in The Gambia run by our Dumbarton based charity which was formed by my husband Kenny, myself and friends, and is supported by friends including many Edrington employees. Guy raised £350 and some of this money was earmarked for a school outing for the children. It has been several years since we were able to afford to take the children out for the day and so this was a very special treat.

The day started with a busy time loading the two buses, a 'gillie-gillie' (a minibus) and a larger bus which carried the rest of the party. Enough food and drinks were loaded onto the top of the buses to feed the 50 children and teachers and cooks and off we went for what was an adventure for the children and an experience for us. While Kenny drove his own jeep along with the cooks, I travelled in the gillie-gillie with two other Dumbarton ladies who were staying with us for a week. With five adults and 15 children it was a bit of a squash and in Scotland, the health and safety folk would not have been happy. However, in this poor third world country it is acceptable and not unusual.



After a journey with a few stops to retrieve the plates and lids from the food containers on the top of the buses (as they flew off down the road behind us), we arrived at our first destination which was called Sanamentering. Sanamentering is a holy place of pilgrimage for 90% of Gambians, being the place in The Gambia where Islam first came to the country. Islamic missionaries arrived there, and it is now a place where many Muslims will go on pilgrimage, and is one part of The Gambian coastline that will never be developed, but will remain untouched. There is a little mosque there where people will visit, sometimes for days at a time, praying and asking God to grant them special favours.



Next stop was the crocodile pool at Gunjur which is also a special place of pilgrimage for many Gambians, especially for women who have not been able to have children of their own. There is a belief that by washing in the waters of the pool, a woman can become fertile, and have lots of babies! Crocodiles, though, are rarely seen there in modern days although there are still some around. It is said that a very special white crocodile lives in the pool, but some Gambians think this is a myth.

There was a distinct lack of crocodiles the day we visited, but no one was complaining!

And so we went to the beach at Kartong. There the children were fed and we had lots of fun running around by the sea. There were races and ball games and lots of laughter with the children obviously enjoying the whole experience. Eventually it was time to leave and as Kenny, myself and our friends headed off home in our own transport we waved goodbye to 50 very happy if tired children and teachers.



The children had been told about Guy and his kindness, and all said thank you in unison. The teachers also send their love and thanks and Anty Caroline, the new Headmistress was delighted that this day of fun for 'her' 5 to 7 year olds was made possible by a boy of the same age in Scotland.

The school has been improved immensely this year thanks to all the support which we have had, and I am sure you will agree from these photos that it is a school of which we can be proud.

Linda Macaulay

