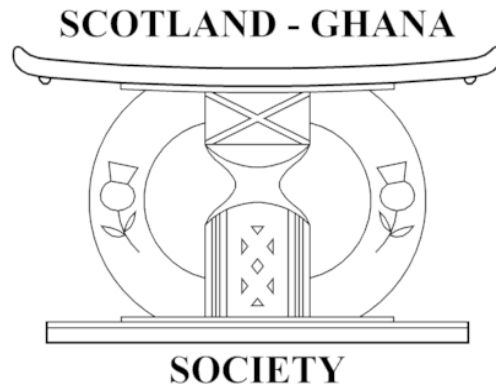




Newsletter No. 51

September 2025

Dear Members

Our June meeting featured a very interesting talk by Brittany Newfer on the work of EduSpots, a charity working in the education sector in Ghana. Brittany started off the talk by asking if the talents ideas and energies of the students, teachers and community members are being fully harnessed in education. Not surprisingly, there was much discussion after her presentation. An account of Brittany's talk has been included in this Newsletter.

Concern is being expressed about instability in the Sahel and the danger of it spilling over from Burkina Faso into the north of Ghana. The removal of the Gadhafi government in Libya back in 2011 created instability that is still spreading in the region, now affecting Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It is pleasing to see that the new government in Ghana took immediate action to improve relations with countries to the north which should allow sharing of intelligence information.

We are saddened to learn of the death of Brian Gerard in early June at the age of 90. Brian had been a very active member of the Society back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, being at the centre of developments when the Society transitioned from the Ghana Reunion to the Scotland Ghana Society. He served as Secretary/Hon. Treasurer under the Society's new Constitution from 1998 until 2005, remaining on the Committee until 2007. He played a key role in organising the Exhibition of African Ceramics which the Society organised during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in 1997. Brian had worked at the Cocoa Research Institute, Tafo; the National Institute, Ibadan, Nigeria; and Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania before coming to Edinburgh where he was a Senior Lecturer at SAC and University of Edinburgh and he also did work for the UN FAO. His wife Pat, who used to co-organise the catering for Society meetings, passed away in 2018.

There has been much talk recently about artefacts related to indigenous people of former colonised countries that are held in museums in the West and restitution of plundered or stolen items to the countries of origin. However, our museums also contain large quantities of items that were purchased directly from the owners by the museums or donated to the museums by enthusiasts who collected them while travelling abroad. The National Museums Scotland recently published a report on the range of items held by museums around Scotland which is available at [Reveal and Connect: African and Caribbean Collections in Scottish Museums | National Museums Scotland](#). Our next meeting, on Saturday 8th November, will feature a talk by Zachary Kingdon comparing the Ghana Collections of National Museums Scotland and Liverpool, his current and previous places of employment.

Alex Morrow
Secretary

Next Meeting

**Autumn Get-together at Newington Trinity Church: Priestfield,
2 Marchhall Place, Edinburgh, EH16 5HW.**

Saturday 8 November, 2025, 2:00 – 4.30 pm

with a talk by Zachary Kingdon on

Ghana Collections of National Museums Scotland and Liverpool Compared.

Ghana's ministers of defence and the environment killed in a helicopter crash

A military helicopter crashed in Ghana on 6th August, killing all eight people on board, including Defence Minister, Edward Omane Boamah and

Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister, Ibrahim Murtala Muhammed. A medical doctor by training, Minister Boamah, had, as defence minister, been tackling jihadist activity brewing on the northern border in Burkina Faso. Muhammed was at

the forefront of the battle against illegal gold mining, known locally as *galamsey*, which has wrecked the environment and contaminated rivers and lakes. Also among the dead were Samuel Sarpong, the Vice Chair of the ruling National Democratic Congress party; Deputy National Security coordinator and former Agriculture Minister Alhaji Muniru Mohammed and four crew members. The helicopter was travelling from Accra to the gold-mining town of Obuasi in the Ashanti region for an event about tackling illegal mining when it came down in dense forest. It was found later in the Adansi area of Ashanti. President Mahama declared three days of national mourning and ordered flags to be flown at half-mast. Reports suggest that President Mahama, who was scheduled to appear at the launch of the mining programme, escaped the crash due to changed plans. The Z-9 helicopter, which was involved in the accident, is a type commonly used by Ghana's military for transport and patrol missions.

Jihadist threat to Ghana

Ghana's northern frontier has become a security hotspot, and analysts warn the country may not be insulated for long as violence deepens across the Sahel. Armed groups across Ghana's northern border in Burkina Faso have become increasingly restive. In particular jihadist groups JNIM (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin) and IS-GS (Islamic State Sahel Province) are actively engaged in terrorist activities including attacks on civilians in Burkina Faso. These attacks include the killing of civilians, prohibition of community events, targeting of schools, and assassination of local elders, with recent reports detailing scores of civilian deaths and attacks on villages and towns from May to August 2025. Porous borders allow potential recruiters to cross over into Ghana. Reports by international think tanks, have suggested that jihadists are using northern Ghana as a rest stop, supply base and even medical hub. Cattle markets are another concern, with livestock trafficked across the border to fund militant activities.

With violence in areas being on the rise, concern has been expressed that jihadists may be trying to exploit communal in-fighting between rival communities in northern Ghana. For decades, the community at Bawku has been caught in a bitter ethnic feud, but in recent years, the clashes have taken on a new dimension: weapons smuggled in from Burkina Faso have found their way into local hands.

In addition to tribal conflicts, poverty and a lack of employment opportunities put many young people in northern Ghana at risk of being recruited. In 2022, Promediation, a France-based NGO, said its research showed that jihadist groups had recruited between 200 and 300 young Ghanaians. The Ghana Government believes quelling the Bawku conflict is key to preventing jihadi groups from gaining a following.

Ghana is also trying to shore up its defences, not only with troops and intelligence, but with diplomacy and community engagement. President Mahama has made regional diplomacy a centrepiece of his new administration, cultivating positive relations with Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, all ruled by military governments who have broken with the ECOWAS West African regional bloc, thus having open channels of communication so that intelligence and counter-insurgency measures are put in place through diplomatic channels.

Ghana and its diaspora

Ghana will host the 2025 diaspora summit in December, which aims to deepen partnerships among people of African descent and the continent, and leverage their resources for development. The media launch of the summit took place on the 17th September at which Ghana's Foreign Minister, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa delivered a speech highlighting Government's commitment to deepening engagement with the diaspora and leveraging the skills, knowledge and resources to accelerate national development. He further acknowledged the contribution of the diaspora to development and stated that the Summit is expected to provide opportunities for trade, investment, tourism, and entrepreneurship, as well as high-level policy dialogues and business-to-business networking. The Minister also highlighted the government's leadership in advancing the African reparations agenda, noting that a special conference on reparations would form part of the Summit.

In the 1950s, Ghana's first prime minister and president, Kwame Nkrumah, championed the diaspora's return as part of his Pan-African dream and nation-building efforts. Before that, in the early 1920s, Governor Guggisberg persuaded Dr J.E.K. Aggrey to return home from the US and join the staff of the new college at Achimota. Ghanaian leaders continue to encourage the African diaspora to reconnect and relocate. In 2019, the "Year of Return", marking 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia, more than 200 people from the US and the Caribbean received Ghanaian citizenship. In 2024, as part of the government's "Beyond the Return" initiative, 524 African diasporans were granted citizenship.

However, relocating back to Ghana goes back further. The Brazilian "Tabom" community in Jamestown, Accra are descendants of formerly enslaved Africans who returned from Brazil in the 19th century and settled among the Ga people, intermarried, learned the language, and built lives that blended their Afro-Brazilian heritage within the Ga social structure. This is seen as a perfect example of a well-integrated returned diaspora group. However, integration takes time, and returnees have privileges that others in Ghana don't have. For those relocating it hasn't always been

as they might have hoped. Many new arrivals feel guilty about their economic and social privileges, but some Ghanaians carry an often-unspoken burden tied to their ancestors' role in the transatlantic slave trade, leading some chiefs to offer land to returnees as atonement. For further information on the challenges the returning diaspora encounter see "A soul mission: The African Americans moving to Ghana" <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/9/26/a-soul-mission-the-african-americans-moving-to-ghana>

Ghana increases farm-gate price of cocoa.

Delivering a key campaign pledge made by President Mahama, Ghana's Finance Minister, Cassiel Ato Forson announced in early August that the official price paid to cocoa farmers was being increased by 62.6%, from US\$3,100 per ton to US\$5,040 per ton with immediate effect. The new pricing framework also aims to ensure that growers receive 70% of the Free-On-Board (FOB) price, the benchmark value of cocoa at the point of export, thus allowing cocoa producers to benefit more directly from international market conditions. In July Mahama reaffirmed his administration's commitment to ensuring that cocoa farmers receive a fair share of the world market price. Finance Minister Forson said "Cocoa has always been the mainstay of our economy, and that must not change". In May, the Finance Ministry announced that the government intends to secure 200,000 hectares of land for cocoa cultivation as part of its strategy to enhance production. Ghana exported 261,248 metric tons of cocoa beans in 2024, representing a nearly 50% drop compared to 2023 export volumes. Despite the decline in quantity, earnings from cocoa exports increased significantly due to a global price surge.

Cocoa prices fall back since late 2024

The global price of cocoa has dropped more than 40% since late 2024, slipping below \$7,000 per ton. Market watchers attribute the steep decline to rising supply estimates and weakening demand pressures. Improved rainfall in West Africa has eased fears of drought with forecasts of increased harvests, key factors behind the price drop. High cocoa prices combined with US tariffs are expected to dampen chocolate consumption, adding to the market strain. Cocoa hit a record high of \$12,931 per ton last year, driven by supply anxieties. Poor weather in West Africa and declining global stockpiles propelled prices upward, with weak output from Ivory Coast and Ghana, a region accounting for 60% of West Africa's production, playing a pivotal role. Plant diseases such as the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) also worsened supply constraints.

World Bank expresses concern at the pace of reforms in the energy and cocoa sectors

The World Bank has urged the Ghanaian government to institute urgent reforms in the energy and cocoa sectors to ensure macro-financial sustainability noting that sustaining policy reforms remains challenging. Robert Taliercio, World Bank Division Director for Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia noted during the launch of World Bank 2025 policy that further delays in the long-awaited reforms of the energy sector are risking the country's macro-financial sustainability. He said "it cost the government approximately 1.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2024 on transfers to cover the financial shortfalls in the energy sector, and these are projected to rise to about 2 billion dollars by 2026". This is about 2 percent of GDP, which could otherwise be used for priority spending in health, education, or improving Ghana's road network."

"Similarly, reforms in the cocoa sector are urgently required to improve the sector's resilience and financial sustainability," Taliercio said: "COCOBOD's current operational framework creates significant inefficiencies and market distortions that result in debt accumulation and increased fiscal liabilities.". However, he noted that government programmes such as the 24-Hour Economy and the Big Push, which aim to revolutionize Ghana's infrastructure, offer an opportunity to catalyse ambitious reforms to promote broad-based and resilient growth, job creation, and poverty reduction, if implemented well.

UK agrees to debt restructuring with Ghana

Ghana and Britain signed an agreement in September to restructure debts equivalent to 256 million U.S. dollars, extending the maturity date of Ghana's bilateral debts with the UK by 15 years. John Humphrey, the British Trade Commissioner for Africa said at the signing ceremony "by restructuring this debt in partnership with the Paris Club and G20, we are creating the fiscal space Ghana needs to deliver on its bold vision for the future". Ghanaian Finance Minister Cassiel Ato Forson listed a number of road infrastructure projects that British assistance would be invested in to improve Ghana's road networks, create jobs, and boost economic activities across the country. He said "the government of Ghana will take steps to ensure that we do what we have to do from our side, so that together we can begin the disbursement of these facilities so these projects can begin in earnest." Under the agreement with the Paris Club and the G20 nations, each bilateral partner is to sign a country-level agreement with Ghana on debt restructuring as part of Ghana's debt rationalization. Forson noted that the agreement with Britain would send a signal to the rest of Ghana's bilateral partners.

"The sweat of our cocoa farmers deserves dignity and a fair reward" - President Mahama

The work of EduSpots in Ghana

Edited transcript of a talk given at our June meeting by Brittany Newfer.

The name EduSpots is a composite term derived from the word education and the concept of drinking spots that are found throughout Ghana: basically, it is about creating spaces for thinking, for creativity, for innovation and being able to bring people together at these Spots to better create the future that they want to see. EduSpots' activities are centred on supporting Catalysts in setting up inclusive learning spaces named Spots in schools or communities: 80% of Spots are school based with the remaining 20% being community-based. Its mission statement is "we connect, train and equip local Catalysts to ignite fun, community-rooted and future-ready education". These Catalysts, who are the ones driving the change, are community members that volunteer with EduSpots and include teachers, students and parents.

The development of a Spot is a bottom-up process where, maybe, a few teachers in a community, are really keen on having a Spot for their own school, so they build a small team of people who are interested in this idea and they come to us and say hey we want to apply to become a Spot. They then go through the application process and meet with our programme coordinators who establish their commitment as both material and financial support will be provided. Once the review process has been completed, programme training is initiated shortly afterwards to get people where they want to be in terms of their own personal and professional development. There are three different kinds of capacity building/leadership development programmes that we offer Catalysts: there is the Ignite Programme, Catalyse Leadership Programme and Peer Mentoring Programme. Basically, all three of these include in-person workshops: we will typically have weeklong sessions with people, bringing everyone together to be able to do a lot of hands-on learning. EduSpots provides tools and worksheets and one-to-one support as well. WhatsApp is used a lot to connect communities in WhatsApp Groups. There is sharing of reading resources and we get people's opinions and feedback through WhatsApp polls. There are also monthly challenges. Each Spot is provided with two tablets, a wifi kit and security support. A stipend is provided so that they can access different programmes and platforms and training is provided on all the platforms that are used. When a Spot is being created the community get to choose what programmes they want to do. We have seven different programmes; the ones that all spots do are around safeguarding, making sure that everyone is feeling safe and comfortable at all times and knowing the procedures around reporting. The two compulsory programmes are i) Spot Lead and ii) Keeping Spots Safe. Then there is iii) EDUKIDZ for early learners; iv) DIGILIT for upper primary and is concerned with literacy; v) ECOSTEM for Junior

High school and is heavily focused on the sciences - we had a class build their own burglar alarm once which was really cool to see; vi) IGNITE EQUITY for Junior High School focusing on female empowerment but we have also started to bring in more of the boys as well into this because that is just also a key part of it and vii) COMMUNITY-LED ACTIVITIES which is for all ages. Catalysts choose which strands to lead through a co-curriculum clubs model with resource kits, monthly challenges, WhatsApp community and mentorship & training provided by EduSpots. The monthly challenges are i) Curriculum and community connected, ii) Practical, team-based and iii) Involve creativity, critical thinking and digital tools. For these challenges, which could be building a simple machine, the Spots are provided with the materials that they need. Each spot takes pictures of what they have made, they share them with their WhatsApp group and so everyone gets to see what is happening in the other spots as well, which is always really cool and really encourages creativity and innovation. We are also developing at the moment an EduSpots app - on this app we house a lot of the policies, the procedures and documents but this is also where we have a lot of our monthly challenges, activity tracking with a live dashboard and students and catalysts have an opportunity to provide feedback to us and to get in contact. The app developer who is leading this effort is actually one of the students that we have worked with and she has since become an employee of EduSpots.

One of the Spots has created a story book, "Kwame's Adventures", which is very focused on the alphabet so it is for our EduKidz group: this was created during COVID time when there wasn't really much else going on.

A video, "Abdul Manaf: An EduSpots Story", was put together this year to mark our tenth anniversary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO-bI1Dq0u8>. Abdul originally joined EduKidz Club, moved on to DigiLit Club, borrowing books during COVID, became EcoSTEM Club President and then became an active Catalyst. He commented that "if the Spot wasn't here, I think I'd still be that scared student who was always worried when he had maths. I wouldn't even be speaking English with you right now".

We had an independent study done this year to test our model to see how things have been going these past ten years and one of the pieces of feedback that we got was - "the shift towards more learner-centred, inclusive and practical teaching methods has transformed school-based pedagogy making education more relevant and engaging for students". The entire idea behind our model is that communities don't need someone from the outside to be able to come in and do these things, this knowledge and these ideas exist already within and it is just us providing that support to get it to the next level. Another quote from the report -

“the spot has become a hub for more than just education, we now use it to organise community clean-up drives and awareness campaigns” - showing the general community projects that run along-sides the Spots.

An example of the journey of someone from the very start of beginning to engage with us towards now is Adu's story. He started off with us retaking all of his Senior High School exams and then he became a Catalyst and was really keen to build a Spot so he recruited all of his friends and a lot of different volunteers and ended up building a team of thirty people to be able to put this Spot together and with that was able to create something incredibly innovative: there was the creation of a book library in which students could come in and borrow books, which was particularly important during COVID when nothing else was happening; there was the story-book creation and then as a result of that there was increased literacy rates. Adu became a Peer Mentor for Spot leads, he graduated from University and he actually became a Catalyst committee chairperson.

EduSpots is not implementing a pre-set model, everything is fluid, it is designed from the inside out so it is constantly evolving and it is very much a collaborative effort which is what I feel makes it so engaging for students because they really feel they have a say in creating it.

Fifty percent of EduSpots' staff are from spot communities and 100% of our fulltime staff are Ghana based. The few UK-based staff are mainly involved with fundraising. There are now almost 50 Spots throughout Ghana and looking to the future we are looking to double that number.



Current Spot locations

In terms of sustainability, Spots apply to join with locally rooted Catalyst Teams. Ongoing costs are paid for by communities, but training in local fundraising and resource mobilisation is provided. Networks bring recognition, motivation and teamwork.

The model that EduSpots works with is very focused on community ownership, innovative teaching

methods and cultural alignment. The authors of the independent study of EduSpots, referred to earlier, believe that it has the potential to be replicated in other contexts so we, as a team, are firm believers that just because this is starting in Ghana doesn't necessarily mean that it stops in Ghana as well. It could be replicated in various different contexts, whether it is here in the UK or in the US - there is that potential to bring this elsewhere which is also a very exciting kind of idea. Our big goal is to be able to create a network of one million Catalysts, creating a future that they want to see through education: we still have a bit to go on this but that is something that we are actively working towards

Currently we have over 400 active Catalysts, 2,800 Sparks, which is what we call the smaller children who have not yet become Catalysts but they are in that beginning stage, and to-date we have worked with over 10,400 learners of all ages, with an estimated 10% of learners becoming Catalysts.

EduSpots has received several awards, including the Tes International Award 2018, sponsored by the British Council, and it has been featured on the BBC. It has also been selected for accelerator programmes with the Dovetail Impact Foundation and Gratitude Network Fellowship and overall it has been fortunate enough to receive more than a million pounds in funding up until this point.

Looking to the future, how we see ourselves getting from where we are now to being able to double our size and ultimately working towards that idea of one million catalysts is a ten-year target. This year the plan is to expand fundraising to improve systems and engage research partners. Next year the aim is to have £150k to expand from 50 to 100 Spots in Ghana and trial partnerships and paid-for models. By 2028 we aim to build on what we have learnt to date to grow to 1,000 Spots, including in other countries and by 2035 to have a global network of 1 million Catalysts. Professor Kaufmann, who is Dean of the School of Engineering Sciences, University of Ghana and a popular quiz-master has this year become one of our patrons, which we are very excited about.

At the moment we have a big fundraising campaign going. Earlier this year we were approached by a man named Emmanuel Adjei, who is based in Germany but originally from the Accra area. He was really keen on giving back to the community that he grew up in so he had this very wild idea for a fundraiser where he would cycle from Germany to Accra: he is on that journey at the moment and we are currently putting a lot of our efforts around that campaign and supporting him and uplifting him. He hopes to raise €100,000 by cycling 10,000 km from Munich to Accra. Details of this ambitious effort can be found at (<https://www.biketomyroots.com/>)

Performance of the Ghana Cedi against the Pound sterling over the two-year period to 12 October 2025



Source: Xe Currency Converter - <https://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=GHS&to=GBP>

Visit: The Scotland Ghana Society website on <https://smithdonald.wixsite.com/scotghana>

SCOTLAND GHANA SOCIETY NEWS

Our June meeting, which was held at Priestfield Parish Church Halls on 14th June, was attended by 15 members. Many thanks to Brittany Newfer for a great talk, to Fiona and Kenny Ferguson and Moragh Gibson who did the catering and to Newington Trinity Church for the use of their Priestfield facilities.

The date for our autumn meeting is Saturday 8th November and the next June meeting is planned for Saturday 13th June, 2026.

Next Meeting:- Saturday 8th November, 2025, 2.00 – 4.30 pm in Newington Trinity Church: Priestfield, 2 Marchhall Place, Edinburgh, EH16 5HW.

Charitable Fund:- Last year all donations to our Charitable Fund went to support the work of the Shetland-based Project Bongo: a total of £1,200, which is more than half of the costs involved, was forwarded to support the drilling of a borehole for Nayorigo Primary B School, in Upper East Region. So far this year £459 has been contributed to the Charitable fund. The Committee is actively engaged in identifying suitable projects to support and your suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Scotland Ghana Society Committee:- The Committee was notified that Dr Stephen Adjei wished to stand down from his role as President and to leave the committee due to failing health. His wishes were intimated to the AGM and in recognition of his outstanding commitment to the Society the Committee has decided that he be made an Honorary Life Member. Stephen served on the Executive Committee since 2002, including many years as Vice-chairman and since 2017 as President.

Scotland Ghana Society Committee as approved at the AGM held on 14th June 2025:- Peter Akyeampong (Chairman), Malcolm McLeod (Vice-chairman), Alex Morrow (Secretary), Donald Smith (Hon. Treasurer), Sylvia Boal, Moragh Gibson, Justus vanLare and Will Leschen with Max Shardow as a co-opted member.

Annual membership subscription of the Scotland Ghana Society is due in June each year and has been set at £10 per individual/family. ***Those wishing to remain members and who have not already done so should complete the enclosed renewal slip and return it together with their subscription (cheques made payable to the Scotland Ghana Society) to the Treasurer, Donald Smith, or pay electronically by bank transfer and inform the treasurer if there are any changes to the details noted on the renewal slip.***

The Society endeavours to make a charitable donation each year to a worthy development or medical cause in Ghana. All members with ideas or suggestions on such causes are asked to make contact with Moragh Gibson who is our Charity Coordinator. Do not hesitate to tell us about worthy causes that you are already associated with or get help from other donors. What we need is as much information as possible so that the Society can select with care.