

Olney—Newton Link

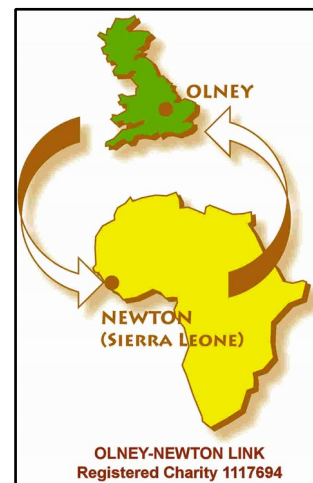
May 2015

Registered Charity 1117694

ONL

“To advance education and to relieve poverty in the village of Newton, Sierra Leone, by the provision of charitable assistance”

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk



The AGM

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Glenn, James and Aidan received thanks for their sponsored walk from Olney Parish Church to Big Ben.

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A BIG THANK YOU to Rachel who has resigned as chair after 9 years.



Sarah Dewey received a thank you on behalf of her granddaughters Faith and Gemini's sponsored cycle ride.



And **WELCOME** Anne McCallum, new chair

CHAIR'S REPORT FOR THE AGM 2015

The year began very positively, full of optimism. We had just returned from SL and had seen various projects in Newton and spoken to the committee so we were all geared up to extending the Water Well, finishing off the toilet block, and improving and extending the Skills Training Centre. No serious signs of Ebola.

Gradually the news became more and more worrying. A state of emergency was declared, and schools closed until end of September. The Baptist minister, Brima James Kabia, began to text and later use Facebook to describe his work as a tracer, and then as a hygienist. We started to hear the most heartrending news of what was happening in Waterloo, the township adjacent to Newton. But Newton had no cases. We responded to the request for buckets of disinfectant etc to place in strategic areas around Newton and it seemed to be working. I shall never forget the panic stricken text message I received from Bakarr saying that suddenly they had 10 homes in quarantine and then this was quickly followed by 60 homes in quarantine. The government were overwhelmed, Aid Agencies such as the World Food Programme were limited in what they could do, so we needed to do something to help as quickly as possible. Hence the appeal in Olney 'Help Kick Ebola out of Newton'.

The response, as you have seen in the financial report, was very pleasing indeed and I think Olney can be proud of its response. Ever since Rena's plea for help after the Civil War in SL, which began the Olney- Newton Link, we have learned to listen ever more carefully to the people out there and respond to what they want and not over-rule them with what we think they should want. This has to be weighed against the responsibility of the trustees here to ensure that money donated for a particular cause does get to that cause. This is not easy, as the two cultures are very different and sometimes we find it very difficult to accept that they are doing something which would be totally alien to us. This was particularly relevant when we were allocating the funds that were coming in for Ebola.

Obviously you cannot give money 'to Ebola', it is a vicious virus which, like all living things took the opportunity to spread and thrive. We had to interpret the purpose of the money as being for the relief of suffering due to the effects of Ebola and the prevention of its spread, both now and in the future. I hope everyone who donated so generously to the Link is happy that that is what we did and what we continue to do. The Sensitisation Workshop was something that we couldn't possibly envisage as happening over here; it was hugely important in SL but virtually impossible to actually measure its effect. Since the beginning of the New Year we have been delighted to have financed three sets of public toilets in Newton. They would like us to do more but have suggested we stop there for a while to allow the community to gain trust in using them. There was a very real fear of using such places through fear of catching Ebola, hence the need for education or sensitisation as it is called in SL. Instead we have been asked to fund a Preschool and support centre for 3 to 5yr olds, and some older children, who have lost relatives or guardians through Ebola and therefore need extra support. The trustees have accepted this challenge and we will need to raise approximately £10,000 to build and furnish it. We have sent £1000 already and are on the way to a further £1000 but we would really appreciate some sponsorship. Any ideas?

I'm not going to get involved in politics but I do think that those of us who were closely involved with the Ebola crisis have learned a lot about what is meant by International Aid. A lot is promised, little is actually delivered both on a day to day level and during a crisis. This may be a cynical view but national governments are really only interested in their own electorates as witness, for example, the withdrawal of direct flights from London to West African destinations. This was done against all scientific advice and has cost the UK millions of pounds more than it should have done as all aid workers, and there were many wonderful nurses and health workers who risked their lives from the UK, had to go via Brussels at twice the cost. I could go on! The country that quietly gets on with aid is of course China. They are making huge inroads into West Africa, including the new Lungi Airport.

But, back to earth! Thankfully we are more or less over that particular crisis. Somewhat battered, but having learned a lot. I must thank all who helped throughout the year, including the trustees, all of whom had to suddenly respond to requests for approval of funds to be sent out by the day before yesterday. I am particularly indebted to Anne, we held each other's hands, metaphorically speaking, throughout the Ebola crisis. Tricia, our treasurer, has been very busy this year and we are grateful to Liz Brewster who helped Tricia to organise the accounts and introduce some of us oldies to a Dropbox. Janet has done invaluable work as Secretary and must be congratulated on her production of the Newsletter. There are many many people in Olney who have donated time and money but we would like to acknowledge two in particular. One is the Heron family who over the years have donated dozens of boxes of First Aid and simple medical equipment, allegedly out of date, but of huge benefit to people in Sierra Leone, and the other is the Phonebox who have supported us with free publicity for many years now.



Thank you, Debbie, from Phonebox



Thank you to the Heron family

We would very much like to continue supporting our friends in Newton. We hope that the exchange visit of teachers will take place soon as education is an important part of the Olney-Newton Link. We do, however, need some more help. I am particularly appealing tonight for new people to serve on the trustees' committee, not to do a lot of physical work but to give us advice and ideas on how we might move forward. If you have some ideas or think you could help in any way please do let us know.

Rachel Lintern

All the trustees would like to express their thanks to Rachel for 9 years of unstinting enthusiasm and hard work which has enabled the ONL to prosper and provide much needed help in Newton.

AGM Guest Speaker

Lori Spragg
from
Build on Books



Disease and Development in Sierra Leone

If you weren't at the AGM you missed an excellent evening! Our speaker was Lori Spragg, founder of Build on Books, a charity which was initially set up to recycle unwanted books from a school in Marlow to a library in Waterloo, Sierra Leone. More schools became involved and they have now sent 1/2 million books and created over 170 school libraries, as well as building 9 boreholes with water pumps and several sets of public toilets.

Lori reminded us of the extreme poverty in Sierra Leone; the country was ranked 183 out of 187 countries in the world in terms of Human Development (HDI). After the devastating Ebola virus, the situation has worsened; there are 12,000 children who have lost one or both parents, many doctors and nurses have died, industry such as mining has ceased to function, markets have closed, farming has stopped, schools have only just reopened having been closed for nearly a year and some charities withdrew due to the risk to their workers. The immediate effects on families include: loss of income, difficulty in obtaining food, disruption to education (some girls have been married off to lessen the burden to their families), poorer access to healthcare (hospitals have only dealt with Ebola) and fewer work opportunities.

The future is uncertain. Ebola is being eradicated but the country has multiple health problems caused by typhoid, malaria, cholera, dengue fever and hepatitis A. Health care facilities are inadequate for pregnant women, resulting in high mortality rates for mothers and babies.

Build on Books works with a team of volunteers in Waterloo. Their Ebola prevention programmes provided information workshops and fed and clothed quarantined families, just as the ONL did in Newton. One interesting idea Lori recounted was the establishment of a peanut farm. Peanuts grow rapidly in SL and provide an essential source of protein to combat Kwashiorkor.

Lori also told us some very moving stories about families who suffered through Ebola. Although the virus had a terrible effect in Newton, we are very thankful it was not as devastating as it could have been, due in part to Olney's wonderful support in providing funds to combat the disease.

Our thanks go to Lori for her interesting and inspiring talk, and we wish her continued success in her work in Sierra Leone.

Janet Howe

Election Musings

Sitting here, away from all the election fuss in the UK, you would think I would be unaware of it all. Far from it! As the BBC World Service is like oxygen to most of us I could not escape the comings and goings of any of the parties.

As we have satellite and so Sky News, we became even more immersed in it, and were lucky enough to catch the main debate of all the leaders, but I think my perspective on it all is different to those of you tired of all the shouting and sandwich-eating shenanigans.

For a start the ABILITY to have such a debate which did not lead to riots or calls for calm is something perhaps us Brits take for granted. You can display your party affiliation outside the house without fear of reprisals. Leaders pass from town to town dealing with supporters and haters alike, answering questions, having the (now infamous) selfie taken for display on someone's Twitter feed or Facebook page, joking with potential voters, journalists have full access to all the parties and can ask the questions to make them squirm.

We forget how precious these freedoms are, even now with the result out, we still have the freedom to complain. Outsiders recognise the transparency and accountability of the campaign, the fact you can go onto social media and call a politician an idiot without the police taking you into custody, and journalists can criticise the leadership without fear of reprisals.

If I have learnt anything from watching from afar, it's that so many so-called democracies still have a long road to follow before things are truly democratic. Freedom of the press cannot and should not be curtailed.

The General Election in the UK shows how things COULD be and SHOULD be. Our elections here in Sierra Leone are scheduled for 2017; perhaps our leaders and political activists will look at the past few months and learn how to be more tolerant of opposing views. Only then can we truly call this country we love a free and democratic society.

Claire Tarawally, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Claire has resigned as a trustee but has offered to continue liaising for us in Sierra Leone. Thank you, Claire.



<p>ONL Trustees</p> <p>Anne McCallum—Vice Chair Rachel Lintern—Chair Janet Howe—Secretary Tricia Selwood—Treasurer Liz Brewster Paul Collins Tom James Chloe Kegg Brian Partridge Glenn Selwood Marilyn Watkins Sheila Woodhead</p>	<p>ONL Committee, Newton</p> <p>Valicious Klng—Chair Abu Bakarr Fofana—Secretary Mabinty Sesay—Treasurer Oseh Jones Mariatu Kamara Mohamed Koroma Mohamed Y Sesay Doris Harding Unisa Turay</p>	<p><i>If you have any questions or comments, would like to find out more about us or offer to help in some way, please contact:</i></p> <p>Anne McCallum, Chair 34 Carey Way Olney MK46 4DR Telephone 01234 711215</p> <hr/> <p><i>Items for the next Newsletter, letters and comments are needed by the Editor, Janet Howe. Email:</i> olneynewtonlinknewsletter@gmail.com</p> <hr/> <p><i>The next deadline is: Friday 31st July</i></p>
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A night at the races...



No big hats or spray tans... But a great night out, especially for the anonymous person who kept winning! George called the races (8 horse ones and a special of greyhounds), Tellers Jenny, Tricia, Brian and Honest John (aka Charles Dance - honestly John!) took the bets, Rob paid out the dividend and everyone else had a great time deciding which horse was likely to win from the briefing before each race.

Each race was accompanied by lots of cheering as the punters encouraged their own horses (we couldn't really believe we'd be daft enough to shout at a tv screen - but we were). Carl promised to ride his chair across the floor if he got a winner - and he did!

There was a smaller turnout than usual due to the football match but numbers swelled once England had despatched their opponents and £584 was raised for the link. Our heartfelt thanks to the Carlton Club who donated the supper of sausage and chips, didn't charge for the venue and made the takings from the bets up to a round number.

Janet Howe



Pancake Day

Pancake Day fell in half term this year and so the event was very busy. We are delighted to report that our children's tombola (a prize every time!) was great fun for all the young participants and raised £115 for the ONL. Thank you to the stalwart stall holders. Thank goodness, the weather was fairly good!



Having a 'SOUPER' time

Not my joke but the efforts of one of our partakers at the annual Soup Lunch. As Sheila was on holiday, Anne bravely undertook to host this event and, as far as I know, no-one went to the wrong address! 34 people enjoyed a bowl of home made soup and bread followed by tea or coffee and a delightful cupcake donated by Lindsey Pemberton. We made a wonderful total of £347. Many thanks indeed to Anne and the 5 soup makers who we hope will do it all again next year.

Rachel

MENU



- ♦ Pea, Spring greens and mint
- ♦ Carrot and Coriander
- ♦ Spicy tomato and chickpea
- ♦ Butternut squash
- ♦ Carrot and artichoke

Help Build the Preschool



The Newton Committee has requested funding to build a pre-school for about 105 vulnerable children who have lost one or both parents due to Ebola.

Work has begun already with the construction of building blocks. We have sent £2000 to date but more is needed.

Mabinty Sesay, Newton Treasurer, e mailed:

'Thank you. We have collected the money and built many blocks for building but it wont be enough to start work too. We have to give deposit to contractor, buy stones, sand cement, pay labourers etc. It can't take us there, God bless.'

Have you any ideas about what we can do? Can you help by holding a fund raising event? Contact any of the trustees if you have an idea. Donations can be made to Anne (01234 711215), Rachel (01234 711751) or Tricia (01234 712219) or through Virgin Money Giving via our website www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

Congratulations to Abu Bakarr Fofanah (Newton Secretary) on graduating from Njala University with a Master's Degree.



First Aid Equipment sent to Newton

The cartons contain mostly First Aid items of bandages and other assorted basic items, plus a few books and tools and a few toys which we did not get in time for the last shipment. This shipment cost £200 + cost of the cartons themselves. We may have to pay some delivery costs at the other end IF they cannot be collected. Last time we had to have items delivered due to the restrictions on travel due to Ebola.

The cheerful 'movers' are Sierra Leoneans.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2015

Saturday 13th June	Cherry Fair
Sunday 5th July	Raft Race
Saturday 22nd August	Lunchtime BBQ—details to follow
Friday 20th November	The Quiz— Save the date!

More details can be found on our website: www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

CORPORATE MEMBERS SCHEME

We are already fortunate to receive support from local businesses, both financial and practical. We have decided to formalise this arrangement and to offer the opportunity to join the scheme to a wider range of business within the area who may not be fully cognisant with the charity. The scheme will provide existing supporters with greater and more tangible recognition as well. Corporate members will be requested to sponsor the Link's work through a series of packages, briefly:

Bronze Membership, £50 per annum – Benefits:- your website link and name on ONL's website.





Silver Membership, £100 per annum – Benefits:- your website and name and description on ONL's website and your company name and logo in our newsletter.

Gold Membership, £150 per annum – Benefits:- your website name and link and profile (maximum 30 words) on ONL's website and listing as sponsor in newsletter and logo.


Platinum Membership, £500 per annum - Benefits; link, profile (maximum 200 words) on ONL website, logo and advert carrying their logo in newsletter

Our very grateful thanks to those who have already joined the scheme—**David Coles, Heron Opticians, J Garrard & Allen, Souls Garages and Stephen Oakley.**

GOLD

	J Garrard & Allen , Solicitors, has been established for over 200 years. The firm has a local and international clientele. We like to provide a friendly, efficient and prompt service to our clients, many of whom have been with us for years. The firm is pleased to sponsor the Link's work. For more details of the areas of law covered by the firm, please view the website— www.jgalaw.co.uk
	Heron Opticians a friendly, professional family business.
	David Coles Architects
	Stephen Oakley

SILVER

	Souls Garages
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BRONZE