

Olney—Newton Link

February 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

We are much more hopeful... the Ebola situation is improving.

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Toys for orphans...



Newton now...

At the time of writing the number of cases of Ebola in Newton has dropped significantly - very good news.

Last year we spent over £800 on transport of goods to Newton so it is a substantial part of our work. Last week we sent 2 boxes of books donated by local schools and Northampton College, a computer and a box of First Aid Equipment donated by St John Ambulance. There is also a packet of letters from Olney Middle School sent to their partner school in Newton which hopefully will be operational again by the time they arrive.

The motorbike has arrived for James Kabia, thanks to kind donations from the Sutcliff Baptist Church.



Some of the football kits have arrived.



The toys and clothes for the orphans have arrived, thanks to kind donations from the parents of children in Olney Middle School and Olney Infant Academy.



Ebola Sensitisation Workshop

One of the main problems with fighting the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone was the lack of knowledge of the disease and how to prevent its spread.

On 13th December the Newton Committee organised a one day sensitisation workshop for the various community groups in Newton (community heads, youth groups, women's groups, motor bike riders). The necessary facilitators were identified from within and without the community to animate different sub topics, agreed on as a strategy to effectively deliver the messages related to the issues of stigmatization, marginalization and outright neglect of Ebola victims, their families and subsequent quarantined homes. Well over 100 people participated and received information on 4 topics:

- A general overview of the Ebola Virus, how it entered the country, how it happened to spread nationwide and the level of havoc wrecked on the people of Sierra Leone including the Newton community.
- Community mobilization and integration
- The effects of stigma and marginalization on Ebola victims and their families
- Acceptance and Social Exclusion

OUTCOME OF THE WORKSHOP

By virtue of the level of participation of all groups of the participants, it was deduced that:

- The participants appreciated the workshop.
- A Statement of Commitment was made to ensure de-stigmatization of all people affected by Ebola and to welcome them back into their folds.
- The community heads promised to make by-laws and other encouraging steps to protect the Ebola victims.

Taken from a report written by Abu Bakarr Forfana, Secretary, Newton Committee



Received from the NEWTON Committee

OLNEY/NEWTON LINK COMMITTEE
SIERRA LEONE

22nd January 2015

Update on the activities of the link

I am hereby writing on behalf of the link to update you on the activities and project undertakings. We have three projects at hand at the moment

The pavement of the skills center frontage
The toilets project.
Ebola Victims.

The pavement of the skills training center demands few more bold stone, iron stones, sand and cement. Mabinty (*their treasurer*) would like to refer you to the original estimate of the project to know how much is left to complete the project.

In another development, the first toilet is completed and the second one is ongoing. We were looking for a janitor or the caretaker of the toilet to negotiate with; fortunately we have got one person today by the name of Osman who is willing to do this for us. We have procured the water drum and buckets for use. Mabinty says funds are not yet available for the care taker. However we will let this facility open to the public on Tuesday. Once we have a little incentive to give the janitor.

In addendum to the above Val has decided to buy cold cloth (*even in SL it gets cold at night sometimes*) for children vulnerable to our cold dry season.

Finally we have given money to the teachers for their radio programme.

We will send you photos of the toilet on the day of open in the presence of few community elders. We are happy that the Ebola is passing off gradually. Our schools and colleges will reopen very shortly. We are like getting back to normal life.

Thank you very much for the wonderful humanitarian relief you rendered to the people of Newton Community.

I beg to remain

Yours faithfully,

Abubakarr Fofanah. (*the Secretary*)

The first block of toilets opens for business(!)

Great news from Newton yesterday! The first block of toilets, at the junction by the old station, are open and in use. Thank you to everyone who helped achieve this by giving money, twinning their toilet or walking or running to help.



Mohamed Sesay, Second Headman of the village, the man responsible for managing building the toilets, opens the block.



The Newton committee has organised a 'caretaker' who will keep the water tanks and buckets filled (remember there is no mains water) and ensure everything is kept clean.

The second block of toilets... now under construction

The trustees have sent a further £1000 to continue the building of this second block and hopefully get a roof in place before the rainy season starts.

Last week Rachel had a phone conversation with Mohamed Sesay, Second Headman of the village and toilet builder extraordinaire. She thanked him for his hard work and said how impressed we were with the 1st block of toilets. She said we were also pleased to hear that he is very much involved in building the 2nd block for which we have just sent a further £1000. He wasn't sure whether he would finish them on that amount but he said he would do his best.

Rachel explained that our income had now dropped back compared to just before Christmas and he understood that. He said he wants to do more so she explained we might not be able to fund a lot more but asked him to consider smaller blocks with 2 cubicles plus a washroom and he agreed to think about this.

You will be pleased to know that Mohamed has a great sense of humour and gave a deep Sierra Leonean laugh when Rachel said she'd seen him going into the toilet!



Items for the next Newsletter and letters and comments will be welcomed by the Editor, Janet Howe.

What would you like to see in the newsletter?

Email: olneynewtonlinknewsletter@gmail.com

*The next deadline is:
Friday 1st May*



From Claire Tarawally— musings from Salone...



These extracts are taken from e mails written by Claire Lintern /Tarawally. First, in December, when the outbreak was at its height. The schools are not open so neither Claire nor Mahmoud is working.

So what IS life like right now? In a word - dull. Let me take you through today which was typical. We are woken up by the sounds of pots rattling and chicken calling, closely followed by children chattering. Think of the noises in a campsite and you'll get the picture.

Breakfast is coffee and cold fried plantain sandwiches, taken on the veranda whilst listening to the local radio to hear any developments. It is followed by a cold shower, then sunscreen and sunglasses are donned before we walk down to Mahmoud's school to spend some time with friends (we sit with at least 2 feet distance between us!). After walking home, picking up essentials from the small provision shop, we have a small lunch of bread and something, then sit and watch the antics of our neighbours.

Finally we cook the rice and sauce for the evening meal, return to the veranda whilst waiting for the mosquito spray to work inside the house, watch the evening news and return to bed. In the meantime we have listened to the World Service Focus on Africa, the Ebola update from the BBC and received 2 texts from one of the newspapers which informs us of the latest Ebola numbers. During the afternoon Mahmoud often catches up with neighbours when we find out where the quarantined houses are in the local area. Anyone who passes asks "How di Ebola?" a question I have yet to find a decent answer to..... There are times when we have had enough and escape for a walk along a beach, using our little scooter as transport, but that is becoming more difficult as the local beach communities are also shutting down to protect themselves.

Now, this month, just in

And so the fight continues... We have now had Ebola in this country for almost a year, and the way of life that has been enforced on us has become common place. Now nobody greets in any physical way, and when you see someone on the TV shaking hands or hugging you find yourself thinking that it is wrong and dangerous! Whilst walking you are far more aware of personal space, and as a matter of course hands are washed before entering any business. Roads leading into residential areas are manned by young men with thermometers and hand sanitizers at the ready. Long sleeves, long trousers, all are common wear even though the temperature is always in the 30s now. Is it making a difference?

Yes, absolutely as the case numbers are way down and the fight is slowly being won. But like all wars it has battles lost and lessons to be learnt. The travel restrictions have been lifted by the President which is meant to boost the economy. However, soon after, the cases spiked in certain areas and questions are being asked as to whether they were lifted too early. Here the philosophy is to do something until you are told not to, and now that people can travel they ARE whether they really need to or not!! And thermometers are not the best way to determine if someone is sick....so the virus continues to spread.

However it's not all doom and gloom as it was before. Schools are scheduled to reopen at the end of March which is good news for all. Not only for myself and Mahmoud as we will finally be able to get back to work(!) but also because the kids are roaming and the teenage pregnancy rate has shot up.

The work required to enable schools to open and open safely is huge, so we don't count 100% on them doing so. But the atmosphere around the country is one of optimism that we will rise above this and be an improved country in the end. Hygiene has been highlighted, health care facilities have been built and people trained for nursing and other aspects of health care, ambulances are a common sight, overcrowding in transport is (hopefully) a thing of the past, awareness of family and friends has altered beyond recognition. If the questions raised by the response to this crisis are asked and answered truthfully then Sierra Leone can and will emerge a stronger nation for it. And international assistance long term is vital for this to happen. There is now a political aspect to this, so international partners and the determination to be transparent are essential factors in the recovery of this wonderful country.

Schools' report

Each of the primary schools:

Lavendon School

Olney Middle School

Olney Infant Academy

has sent £200 to their partner school to enable them to buy radios, so that the children can listen to educational programmes and begin to catch up on the schooling they have missed due to school closure since the outbreak of Ebola started last year.

Hopefully the schools will reopen soon - March 30th has been proposed by the government.



The handover of 20 radios at Christ Evangelical School, who are linked to Olney Middle School.



This thank you message has been received from Mrs Sheriff, Headteacher at the Ahmadiyya Primary School:

We've received the money, the teachers and the students are very grateful to their partner school Lavendon and the link as a whole. We've bought the radios and have shared them into 10 groups and it will be monitored by the teachers.

Good News:

Our schools have just heard that their British Council grant for a further exchange visit to Newton has been extended in view of the Ebola crisis and they are now able to travel up to January 2016.

Fund Raising Activities



Winning Team

Congratulations to 'Just us 6' who won the ONL Quiz on 14th November 2014. Well done Jacqueline and Steven Baron, Teresa and Richard Soman and Kate and Colin Jackson. Thank you everyone for helping raise £673 which has helped alleviate the hardship caused by Ebola.

The Walk to London

In November Aidan and Glenn Selwood and James Hardy walked over 80 miles from St Peter and St Paul's Church, Olney to Big Ben in London. Michael and I followed the boys on their route, meeting them at various points to drop off food and drink, which was not readily available adjacent to the canal. As they arrived at Big Ben they could barely put one foot in front of the other, and struggled to reach the car to take them home. The walk took *three days* to complete and the trio raised a total of £1660 for the Olney-Newton Link. It was a remarkable achievement, especially as it was terrible weather and raining most of the time.

Two months later their feet are still not fully mended. They completed their challenge but are not currently looking for another!

Tricia Selwood



A fantastic amount! Thank you Aidan, Glenn and James and thank you to everyone who sponsored them.

THANK YOU to 1ST OLNEY SCOUT GROUP who held a Bring and Buy sale during December. They raised £52.50 for the Olney Newton Link.

Dickens Day

Another day affected by the weather. It was cold—but the main problem was the wind which upended our tables several times. Fortunately little was broken, only 1 bottle, and the superb amount of £694 was raised which has been sent to help finish the toilets. Thank you to all who helped on the stall and to everyone who bought a ticket.



Did you come **Carol Singing** or were you lucky enough to hear us? Not 'Singin' in the rain' this year but 'It was on a Starry Night' and definitely 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. £202 raised and a big thank you to our generous donors.

Cheese and Wine Party

About 30 or so supporters gathered on the evening of Friday 30th January in the congenial surroundings of Sheila Woodhead's home in Midland Road, Olney to enjoy a Cheese and Wine Evening. As well as a varied collection of cheeses, wines, bread and crackers to sample, there were craft items and raffle tickets to purchase, and a powerpoint presentation of life in Newton to remind us all of the work of the Link, and the difference our donations can make.

The Olney-Newton Link would like to thank the 'Olney Co-operative Society' for donating cheese and wine, 'MuchAdo' for donating cheese and crackers and the 'Market Place Gallery' for donating raffle prizes. Thanks must also be extended to all of our individual supporters who donated wine, cheese, crackers and/or raffle prizes. £386 was raised on the evening, which will be used to fund the building of more community toilets in Newton, Sierra Leone.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2015

Tuesday 17th February	Pancake Race: support our stall
Friday 6th March	Soup Lunch: 34 Carey Way 12.30-2.30 Tickets from Rachel
Friday 27th March	Race Night: Carlton Club, 7 30pm, details to follow
Wednesday 13th May	AGM: Details will be e mailed to all

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

	<p>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</p>
	<p>Heron Opticians a friendly, professional family business.</p>
	<p>David Coles Architects</p>
	<p>Stephen Oakley</p>

SILVER

	<p>Souls Garages</p>
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BRONZE