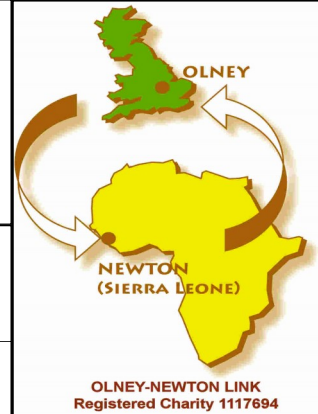


Olney—Newton Link



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

May 2018

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

ONL



Why is a cola bottle on our front page?
See our intrepid traveller's report on
page 8

Olney-Newton Link Trustees 2018-19

Anne McCallum, Chair
Brian Lintern, Vice Chair
Tricia Selwood, Treasurer
Janet Howe, Secretary
Debbie Hall
Chloe Kegg
Tom James
Brian Partridge
Marilyn Watkins

The AGM



Sports Equipment Arrives!



Read inside...

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The Annual General Meeting



Sailing to Sierra Leone **Julie Palmer** **of** **Rockel Shipping**

Julie Palmer is a Salonean who lives in East London. She was delighted to be asked to speak to us, having transported our goods for several years.

Rockel Shipping is a family run business. It was started by her ex-husband in 1996. Julie took over as director in 2009; her sons and daughter work for the business too.

Rockel gives 10% discount to charities (thank you!) and Julie has calculated that this helped charities by £9123.42 in the last financial year! They used to donate 20% but have had to cut the rate in order to 'keep afloat' (pun intended!) due to rising costs in Sierra Leone.

Most of their goods go to the port of Freetown, the capital city, but they also send some machinery and vehicles to other ports in West Africa. They collect from all over the UK and ship everything to SL in containers. The journey takes 18 days. Containers are unloaded in Freetown and taken unopened to their office in the city—avoiding problems with pilfering and customs duty. Rockel have discovered that the best way to work is to pay duty on the whole container by volume, irrespective of contents. They have an office team of 11 people in Freetown. The clearing process at the port has improved considerably in the last three years—it's now less than 5 days to get the container from the docks, it used to take three weeks! Receipts for duty aren't forthcoming and it's unclear how much actually reaches the government.

They do not ship goods back to London—there isn't enough cargo, although SL does export timber, coffee, cocoa and minerals through other shipping lines.

Julie grew up in a village on the outskirts of Freetown, sadly the one where the disastrous mudslide happened. She can see the aftermath from her mother's house. She is still a frequent visitor to Sierra Leone and is very grateful for all the work charities are doing. Thank you Julie for a most interesting talk.

The Chair's Report

by Anne McCallum

Last year I talked about the Link's history and the connection between Olney and Newton, in Sierra Leone. This year I would like to focus on how we try to meet the "needs" of the Newton Community and, particularly, the need to continue working closely with the Committee in Newton, who are on the ground and able to assess ongoing requirements. The Trustees have always functioned as a partnership with the Newton Committee and found that this enables us to raise funds for projects which actually make a difference to people's lives.

This year we haven't been involved in a major new project, such as the Preschool or the Skills Training Centre (now the Institute), but we have, at the request of our Chair in Newton, and the other members of the Committee, raised funds to enable a number of water wells to be built in and around the Newton area.

It should be remembered that Newton is an amalgam of small hamlets, covering an area the size of Milton Keynes, with a population about the same as Olney. Having fresh, clean water is, of course, one of the essentials of life. In this country we are extremely blasé about turning on a tap and expecting the water to flow without any problems. It is safe to drink, can be used for washing, cooking etc. When something goes wrong with our water system, and the mains water pipe is fractured, or we have a prolonged period of hot dry weather and have to use either bottled water or occasionally standpipes, we tend to have a complete meltdown.

In Newton there is no piped water and, therefore, people have to rely for fresh water on wells. The alternative is to use the water from the streams, which, of course, dry out in the hot season. These streams are not a source of pure water, as they are also used by animals and for washing both clothes and bodies and for less sanitary purposes. The result is the danger of infection from water borne diseases. Water has to be carried in containers from the source of the water to the people's homes. These 25 litre containers weigh about 55lbs (25kg)!

The best water is obviously obtained from a water well - constructed for that purpose. However, as there are few water wells, most people have to walk an average of 6 kilometres to obtain sufficient water for their daily needs. This task is generally left to teenage girls. They have to collect the water before going to school each day, and the result is often truancy, due to tiredness. They are also open to abuse from young men accosting them on their way to or from the well.

Valicious King, the chair of the Newton Committee, specifically requested funds, to enable them to build more wells, so that people would have the opportunity of obtaining fresh water, if not on their door step, than within a short walk. Two more water wells have been built and are now serving the community. The first was completed despite the rainy season. When the rain comes, no construction work can be undertaken. Indeed, the slab for the first well, was washed away and had to be renewed.



Among the many difficulties associated with constructing a water well, is the fact that it has to be dug by hand. The cost of machinery, even if it can be hired, is prohibitive. Wells can take up to five men to dig. They obviously do not work together, as there is not sufficient room. They use hand and foot holes (safety pockets) to lower themselves in and out of the well. Generally, they use a pick axe, and two sizes of shovel. The larger one to create the exterior hole and then the smaller one to dig out the hole from inside, when the shaft becomes large enough for a man to get inside it. The usual depth of a water well, to enable the sourcing of clean safe water, is 12 metres. This is a long way down. Clearly because of the weather in Sierra Leone, water wells need to be dug during the dry season. The local community organise the digging of the well, but the materials have to be brought in from abroad. It is, therefore, an expensive and labour intensive business.

One of the problems often encountered, once digging commences, is hard rock. Depending on the type of rock, a fire can be lit at the base of the hole, which will eventually heat up the rock, to such an extent that it shatters. However, if this doesn't work, or the rock is of a type where blasting won't work, the water well has to be repositioned and the digging needs to start again.

Sites can be chosen by reviewing the surrounding trees. Tall trees, such as cotton trees, have a long tap root and will only grow in areas where the rocks do not interrupt root growth. Occasionally, water wells have to be dug to even deeper depths. When we visited Newton in 2014, we saw the need for an extension to the pipe bringing the water from the water table to the surface. This is because in the rainy season, the water table is considerably higher, than in the dry season. If it drops below the end of the pump pipe, then clearly the water well becomes useless, because the water cannot be extracted.

Therefore, whilst it is not a major project, the provision of water to Newton is probably one of the most important things we have ever undertaken. I would like to thank, not only Sutcliff Baptist Church for providing £1,500 towards the cost, but also one particular family, within Sutcliff, who have supported us over the years, and who provided the rest of the money required to construct that well. It is a monument to their generosity and greatly appreciated by the people who use it.

In addition, this year, we have continued to support the Preschool, as, sadly the funding they were hoping to obtain through the government, has not been forthcoming. We have asked that in the future the children are charged for

attending. This is usual in Sierra Leone, but we have met with some opposition from the Committee, who have expressed concerns that as many of the children come from very poor backgrounds, their parents/carers will not be able to afford the fees. Whilst we appreciate this, it is usual for children to be charged a small fee for attending even preschools. It has also been suggested that we set up a bursary, similar to the one we have for the Institute to assist those children. It should be remembered that Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world.

We have also supported Brima James Kabia, the Baptist pastor in Newton, who has set up a small tailoring business to train girls, who haven't had the opportunity to attend school, and who have no other skills. This work is not dealt with through the Committee, but directly with James himself. We have provided money for manual sewing machines, materials and other items which they can buy in Sierra Leone more cheaply than we can send them, including a small generator. We have sent them electric sewing machines, which have been sourced through Work Aid. In addition, Work Aid has also provided scissors etc. and we are very grateful to them for their input. As usual, we shipped the sewing machines along, with the other items, in cartons through Rockel Shipping.

As Julie mentioned, Sierra Leone has recently gone through a very traumatic election which resulted in the country virtually closing down for a period of several weeks, prior to and after the election. Things look as if they have now stabilised, but there was a point when the country was in such turmoil that the elected representatives could not actually enter the Parliament building. The Secretary of the Newton Committee, Bakkar, has fulfilled his ambition and been elected. Whilst we wish him every success in the future, this has potentially left a large gap in the Newton Committee. It should be remembered that all the Committee members, are volunteers. They work full time, giving what little spare time they do have to the Link. The unfortunate truth is that in Sierra Leone, if you don't work, you don't eat.

This afternoon we received a report from Newton, with a valuable list of possible new projects. Among these another water well and a toilet block for the Preschool children, who currently have to share with the STC students – not a healthy option!

Finally, I would like to thank all our supporters and helpers in Olney, the surrounding area and further afield, both individuals and organisations. We are always amazed by the people's generosity. Not only in terms of money given, but also of time, skills and goods, e.g. calculators, spectacles, football kit etc. We are always looking for more volunteers to help, or to organise events for us, and in any other way.

You will see the fundraising events, which we have been involved with this year in the Events Committee report. Forthcoming projects under consideration are, a bakery, the completion of a building to house the tailoring business and the possible expansion of the Skills Training Centre.

We have also continued to receive considerable support from the Phonebox and we are delighted to say that Debbie Hall has agreed to become a trustee. Sarah Dewey (of our Northern Branch) is still as active as ever providing us with the proceeds from her card and craft stall and with calculators and other materials.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the trustees for their invaluable assistance throughout the year. And once again, thank you all for coming.

Mudslide in Freetown

Those of you with long memories may remember the tragic mudslide that occurred in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, last August killing over 1000 people. The Olney- Newton Link felt they needed to support the relief effort so we donated the proceeds of the raffle held at the Quiz to a charity very familiar to us called Build on Books. This is a small charity similar to our own who we trust to use the funds for their intended purpose. We were delighted to receive this report back from their Chair, Lori Spragg who had recently returned from SL.

Rachel Lintern

Attached is a photo of Mamy Lucy whom ONL has helped. She was living with her son & family in Regent and she had gone to Newton to make palm wine when the mudslide struck. Rosetta found her distraught and destitute as she only had the clothes on her back. She has a daughter who was recovering in the hospital from the mudslide. The rest of her family perished. I don't think she was eligible for any government assistance.

Build on Books immediately gave her food and a few other necessities to get by. . Then in October, I met her in Waterloo and found out she had been a petty trader so we gave her about £125 to start a business so she could support herself.

We have attributed the £125 donation from the ONL to her, thank you very much.

Rosetta sees her from time to time selling her wares and she is doing very well.

Lori Spragg



What's happening in Newton?

A new MP!

We were delighted to hear that Abu Bakarr, our secretary, has been elected MP for Newton and district. Many congratulations to him and we wish him well in his new role.

The Pre School

This has been closed during the run up to the elections (as have all the schools). We have sent some more funding, as agreed, to ensure its continued operation.

Future Plans

The Newton Committee may need restructuring following Bakarr's appointment as MP. Mabinty (Treasurer and Pre School Manager) is looking for ways to further improve life in Newton and considering a bakery to provide employment and more education facilities.

The 2nd well

The second well has been completed. It took a while because they had to wait for the water table to rise after the dry season. Well done to Valicious King who has managed the construction of the wells and the Newton Committee. Well number three is being planned but the rainy season is imminent so it might be later in the year before construction can start.



The Arrival of Cartons from the UK....

James Kabia has received the cartons we sent which contained sports equipment, an electric sewing machine, calculators and books.

He sent this message and photos:

I send you greetings from the people of KPOUBU-NEWTON Village in the most redemptive name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have just done the donation/ distribution to the children and the young people of KPOUBU-NEWTON Village. On my behalf and on the behalf of the people of KPOUBU-NEWTON, I register our appreciation for your relentless efforts in promoting our people and putting smiles on the faces of our people. Extend our appreciation to the Dewey's. My colleagues in the pastoral ministry are grateful for the books. We are using them on rotational basis as the need arises. Once more thank you. Stay blessed. James Kabia



If your friend or colleague complains they haven't seen this newsletter, it's because they haven't said we can send it—we have to comply with the new GDPR Act.

*Ask them to e mail agreement on
olneynewtonlinknewsletter@gmail.com*

The next newsletter is due in August. Is there anything you'd like to add? Write a letter for publication, perhaps? Send me a photo?

Fund Raising

PANCAKE DAY

The weather was fine when we arrived and we were lucky to get a sheltered spot in the corner.

It was quiet at first but became very busy after the children's races.

Our bunny biscuits were popular, as was the lucky dip for the little ones. The Easter Egg gifts sold well. And the bubbles flew off the table and the windmills blew well!

We had a super Easter Egg raffle, thank you very much to all who donated prizes, those who won were so pleased. The winners included Debbie Hall, it's always good when the prizes go to people we know; the two young ladies in the photo were with their grandmother from Lavendon and they were delighted with their basket of goodies.

Rain set in but it didn't dampen spirits too much and by the time we drew the raffle and packed up at 12 30 most items had been sold, raising £150 for the Link.



Soup Lunch

A friendly and tasty occasion! And over £400 raised, thank you so much. A gallery of photos for you to enjoy...



OLNEY NEWTON LINK
SOUP LUNCH
23rd March 2018

Menu

Spicy Tomato [not TOO spicy]
Spring Green Pea and Mint
Broccoli and Stilton
Mushroom
Carrot And Lentil (a little spicy)
All served with Roll and Butter

Tea, Coffee and Cakes served in the Lounge afterwards

Donations Gratefully Received



That Cola Bottle...

Marilyn Watkins enjoyed a lovely holiday touring New Zealand and she was delighted to find that she was also supporting Sierra Leone!

Ousedale Concert



The concert was held at Newport Pagnell campus but involved students from the Olney Campus too. There was a mixed selection of work, both instrumental and vocal and each piece appeared to have a member of staff contributing by joining in the playing. It was a random selection of pieces with the participants wearing random clothes!! The standard was extremely high.

The finale was brilliant with some of the older participants bidding farewell and showing appreciation to their teachers.

It was a packed audience with many of the parents being from the Olney campus.

Congratulations to the teachers who pulled together the participants from both campuses to play together. The magnificent sum of £625.91 was raised.

Tricia Selwood

Windmill Singers

We could have danced all night!

It's hard to believe that the second concert by the Windmill Singers could be as good as the first—but it was *A Whole New World* and even better! The URC was full to capacity and the singing was wonderful. A wide selection of songs (musicals, films and light opera) from *The Lord is my Shepherd* to *Let it go*, *Theme from Love Story*, *You'll Never Walk Alone* and *Titwillow*. Thank you all who came and supported our *Music of the Night* so nearly £1000 was raised. Thank you to raffle prize donors (Davis Optometrist, Toad Hall, Factory Shoe Shop, Marc Andrew, One Stop, Desmond Smail and others).



A million thank yous to the Windmill Singers and *Wouldn't it be Lovely* if we could host another concert next year! *Please, please me!* and come again.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2018

Cherry Fair	16th June—please support us—tombola items needed
Afternoon Tea	28th July, 34 Carey Way, details to follow
Ian Roberts Gig	21st September at The Two Brewers
Quiz Night	9th November at The Olney Centre

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

CORPORATE MEMBERS SCHEME

We are fortunate to receive support from local businesses, both financial and practical. Corporate members sponsor the Link's work through a series of packages:

Bronze Membership, £100 per annum – Benefits:- your website link and name on ONL's website.







Silver Membership, £150 per annum – Benefits:- your website and name and description on ONL's website and your company name and logo in our newsletter.

Gold Membership, £200 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, Novalex Solicitors, Souls Garages and Stephen Oakley.**

GOLD

	David Coles Architects
	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.
	Do you want high quality, commercial legal advice for your business as well as excellent value for your money? If so, call Novalex Solicitors on 01908 440020 or email karen.mason@novalex.co.uk .
	Stephen Oakley
	Souls Garages

SILVER

BRONZE