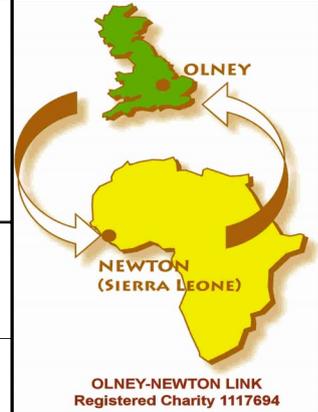


Olney—Newton Link



“To advance education and to relieve poverty

in the village of Newton, Sierra Leone, by the provision of charitable assistance”

May 2022

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

ONL

The AGM 2022... back in real life! Reports start on page 2



**Our speaker was Ophelia Cole
from the
Sierra Leone Community
Milton Keynes**



The Sierra Leone Community Milton Keynes



Our speaker at the AGM this year was **Ophelia Cole**, who is secretary of the SLCMK. Their motto is Unity is Strength, which is very appropriate for people from a country that works together so well. Their association began in 2008 with the aim of providing contact for people who had recently moved to MK. By 2014 they had begun to reach out to the community to share their culture. About 30 families are active in the association but they think there are at least 30 more families in the area... they keep meeting others! They took part in the African Diaspora event in Campbell Park last year, displaying information and crafts and enjoying taking part in the sports.

Distressed by events in Sierra Leone they sent donations to aid the victims of the mudslide in 2017 and to the families of those who died in the tanker explosion in 2021.

Ophelia knew Rena Partridge and took photos for her in Newton when the ONL was building bungalows after the civil war, so we have had a long association.

Sierra Leone has 16 different tribes, all with their own individual culture, but they all work together and celebrate all the festivals together, Christmas, Ramadan, whether Muslim or Christian. They explained that it was normal for people of one faith to have a forename which referred to another, e.g. Christians called Mohammed. In discussion, members asked about the word tribes and said they found it a difficult term and divisive ... Sierra Leoneans consider it part of their heritage and culture and don't have bad connotations. Those who had visited SL recognised the warmth between different faiths. Muslims in SL have embraced the religion but not the Arab culture... they don't wear hijabs.

We asked our visitors what they thought we ought to do to help in Newton. They said we should listen to them express their needs... which is what we do, we work with the Newton Committee who tell us what is needed. The deputy Mayor of Newport Pagnell pleaded with us to consider help for girls especially as they are lagging behind.

The SLMK are launching their association at a meeting on Saturday which we have been invited to. We will also join them in organising an exhibition in the museum as part of Amazing Grace 250.

Anne expressed thanks to Ophelia for her interesting talk and said it was evident from the discussion which followed that members were greatly interested in what she said.



The Chair's Report 2022



It is great to be able to welcome so many of you, in person, after a 2-year gap! Sadly, some of the familiar faces are no longer with us, but we remember their contribution and support with deep appreciation.

I want to thank all our supporters, whether here this evening or not. Without your practical and financial support, the Link would cease to exist.

If there is anyone here this evening, or reading this in our newsletter, who would like to become more involved in our work, please speak to one of our Trustees. We are always looking for new blood either to join our current trustees or to help our small band of dedicated helpers – so please don't be shy!!

If you would rather assist financially, either by a one-off gift or regular donations, or by simply having one of our loose change boxes, please speak to Janet or me, this evening or to our Treasurer, Tricia Selwood.

As with most small charities, we were badly affected financially, by the Covid restrictions and lockdowns – fundraising being virtually impossible until last autumn. Since then, we have been able to hold our annual Quiz Night, have a stall at Dickens Day and hold the Soup Lunch – all of which were very well supported and raised much needed funds, and, in the case of the quiz and soup lunch were greatly enjoyed by those able to attend.

Obviously, the Covid crisis and its effects have been felt in Newton too. Although the number of cases and consequent deaths was limited by the prompt introduction of quarantine rules and limitations on travel, Newton lies in the Western Rural District, in close proximity to Freetown, where most of the cases were recorded. The awful lesson learnt during the Ebola pandemic, meant that preventative action was taken promptly.

However, the economic effects, caused by Covid and now by the Ukrainian war, on world prices, have hit Sierra Leone very hard. Most of its raw materials have to be imported with a dramatic increase in costs. Fuel costs have risen to £1 a litre, in a country where the average monthly take home pay is £59.58! As we know rising energy costs are causing serious problems in this country, but in Sierra Leone, the effects could be disastrous. Hence the need to raise funds to send to help is paramount.

I never fail to be impressed by the resilience of the people of Newton. We will continue to work with them, through the Link's Newton Committee, and to raise funds for projects suggested by them. It was great to receive photos of the Graduation Ceremony last April from Newton College (formerly the Skills Training Centre) – built with funds raised by the Link. We have continued to support the Preschool by sending funds to enable new chairs and tables to be built – the old plastic ones having become brittle due to exposure to high temperatures and UV light.

In November 2021, we received an appeal from the committee in Newton to help them carry out repairs to 5 water wells. After some enquiry into the enormous potential cost of repairs to 2 of the wells and receipt of photos of the wells concerned, it transpired that only 3 of the wells used hand pumps – these having been built with funds raised by the Link. The other 2 have towers and tanks with submersible pumps (boreholes), and were built by a now defunct NGO. Not only was the cost of repair prohibitive, but this type of well is more costly to run and requires considerable maintenance. With very limited funds available, it was felt that we should send funds to enable the 3 hand pumped wells to be repaired. We await confirmation that the repairs have been completed.

We have also received a request for money to build 2 new water wells. The provision of water wells is essential in Newton, where there is no piped water. This is our new project!

We also sent 7 cartons to Newton, via Rockel Shipping. These contained 60 “A” level Maths textbooks, donated by Radcliffe School, Wolverton, for the Ahmadiyya Agricultural Secondary School; some hoodies for the Preschool children; spectacles and first aid equipment, which Brima James Kabia will distribute to those in need; puzzles and games, crayons, pencils and school books for younger children, sent to the REC school – all donated by kind supporters here.

Sending books and goods is a way in which everyone can help fulfil our aim of advancing education and relieving poverty, in Newton. We are always particularly grateful to donors who assist with the shipping costs too! Hopefully, we will be able to raise funds for at least 1 new water well this year.

Please support our stalls at the Cherry Fair on 26th June and at the Olney Infant Academy Summer Fair on 9th July.

Thank you to you all, again, for your ongoing support, to our Northern Branch, run by David and Sarah Dewey, including to Deb Outram for the beautiful hand made cards. Thank you to all our helpers – your hard work is invaluable.

Finally, thank you, as always, to my fellow Trustees for your help, advice and support over the last difficult year.

Anne McCallum



To get in touch with The Olney-Newton Link
contact Anne McCallum, Chair
Telephone 01234 711196

For the newsletter e mail:
olneynewtonlinknewsletter@gmail.com

News from Newton

Water Wells

From Val in SL on 12th February

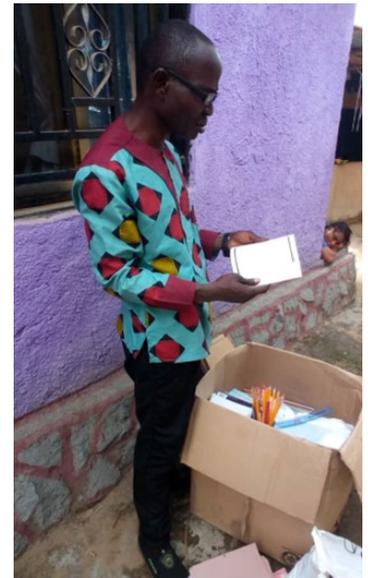
Good morning all, Repairs of wells start today as well diggers are set to start well one and with in the next three weeks all wells will be ready for human consumption, as the head of the well digger assured me.

From chairman Newton Valecious King

Thank you - please send photos and location details of the wells, so we can keep our supporters here updated. Anne

Goods to Newton

Komba Nfalie, headteacher of the Christ Evangelical School opening his cartons of books and other items.



The Preschool Outing

Mabinty Sesay sent photos of the children on their annual outing and sports day. They have 'house' names—the surnames of the ONL officers in Olney!



Fundraising—The Soup Lunch

Friday March 11th saw members of the Events Committee and friends of the ONL gathered together for the first soup lunch since 2020. It was busy for the cooks and waitresses despite cutting down on numbers to aid social distancing!

I want to say a special thank you to those who made soup and cakes, or contributed in other ways. On an initial count we made £400.00, including £83.00 on the raffle! This is a great result, particularly as we had reduced the number of attendees this year. I think everyone had a good time and enjoyed being able to socialise again!

Many thanks, Anne



Thank you all for a lovely lunch.

So pleased you were able to host a fundraising event on behalf of ONL.

It was good to catch up with friends.

Lynne x

As one who was a 'customer' this afternoon may I express thanks to Anne and Rob for their hospitality, and the Ladies who prepared the soups. It was a most enjoyable meal and social time. Congratulations on the success of the event and the funds raised. On behalf of our friends in Newton may I express thanks and hope that we can make good use of the funds raised.

Regards to all, Brian L

Thank you to Anne and Rob for hosting.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2022

Sunday 26th June	Cherry Fair
Saturday 9th July	Olney Infant Academy Fete
Saturday 16th July	Amazing Grace 250 at the museum

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, Souls Garages and Stephen Oakley.**

A big thank you to our GOLD sponsors



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.



Stephen Oakley



Souls Garages

Contact Anne or Tricia for more details of bronze, silver and gold sponsorship