

# Olney—Newton Link

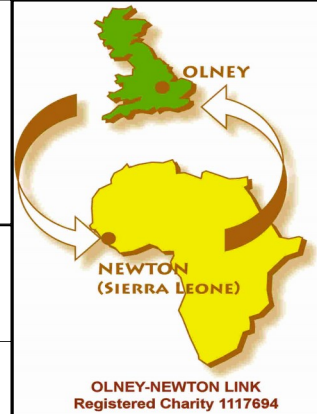
*“To advance education and to relieve poverty*

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

**August 2023**

[www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk](http://www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk)

**ONL**



## The New Community Centre



Work has started on the walls of the new Community Centre that James Kabia is building in Newton Kpoubo. More photographs on page 2...

Kpoubo community centre.....page 2

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# The New Community Centre

James Kabia obtained a grant from The Solar Company to build the foundations of a new centre he is developing for the people of Newton Kpoubu.



He then appealed to the ONL for help with the rest of the building. We had some questions first because the ONL constitution states that we can only be involved in projects that benefit the whole community. Trustees ascertained that the building would be available to all citizens regardless of political affiliation, religious beliefs, tribal or ethnic background or social status. It is a large project - a two storey building, to be used for social events such as weddings, the local Court hearings and educational and health courses, among others. James sent estimates...

'The fund to build the center is big but I believe the link will help us to raise it to wall height. We will there after seek other areas.

We need one ton iron rods @Le 12,000,000.

Cement 150 packets/bags @ Le 150,000

Total=34,500,000Le which is 37500 NLe'

*(Note there is still confusion in SL about old/new money!)*

The Trustees agreed to send sufficient money to enable the building of the walls.

Photos were received on the 3rd June...

'Good morning All, be informed work on the community centre has commenced today with brick casting. James.'

*In Sierra Leone houses are built using concrete blocks that are cast by hand. They dry quickly in the sun.*

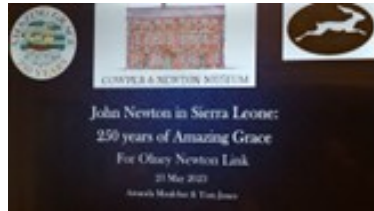


# AGM 2023: Tom Jones

## *John Newton in Sierra Leone*

21 people gathered together in Gravett Hall on 23rd May to hear Tom Jones speak about John Newton's life. He was ably assisted by Amanda Molcher.

Tom spoke about Newton's life and how he was on the crew of a slave ship for many years before coming to the decision that slavery was wrong.



These are some of the points he made that stood out for me. Hopefully they'll interest you too! I apologise in advance for any inaccuracies.

Amazing Grace has been sung for 250 years in a many languages.



This slide compared the numbers of slaves (bondmen) taken across the Atlantic. Sierra Leone wasn't one of the biggest sources but was important as a port for ships patrolling against the slave trade. 204,000 people were taken back to Sierra Leone when Freetown was established. There were about 1500 Africans in London at this time and others in ports such as Glasgow and Liverpool. Most slaves ended up in the Caribbean or the USA. People pretended not to see what was happening in the Empire. One statistic claims 1 in 7 Africans were taken as slaves.



Some ships specialised in young children to avoid insurrections among fully grown men. Ships often travelled along the coast for up to 6 months, picking up slaves, 5 or 6 at a time. Local people sold members of their families and tribes to the traders, generally it wasn't kidnapping but trading for guns and other goods; those sold were sometimes wrongdoers.



In Sierra Leone, Bunce Island was the main fortified centre for the Royal Africa Company. John Newton's first base was Plantain Island, working for Nick Evans, but he got into trouble and asked his father for assistance. His father's friend Manesty found him and shipped him back to England. He then became first mate on The Greyhound. This ship was involved in a storm when Newton realised the evils of slavery and began his conversion. He continued to work on slave traders until 1755. Following his ordination he became curate in Olney in 1764.

Around 1788 the first slaves from London were shipped to Freetown. Few survived due to being left in mosquito ridden marshland. Those sent back from the Caribbean and North America often didn't survive the perilous journey. Eventually settlements of straw roofed houses were built for the ex slaves.

John Newton wrote "I hope it will always be a humiliation to me, my former role."



# **AGM 2023:Chair's Report**

## ***Anne McCallum***

I would like to welcome you all to this year's AGM and thank Tom again for his interesting talk.

The loyal support we receive from our friends and supporters is invaluable. We really appreciate it, as, without it, the Link would cease to function. I would, also, like to thank all our Link schools, both here and in Newton. Cultural interchange between children and young people, from such divergent backgrounds, is paramount to helping understanding and thus, a peaceful World.

This year, as we have continued to return to relative normality, much of the world has been assailed by economic problems. In this country, inflation and the rising cost of living have affected most people. It is bad enough here, but, in Sierra Leone, it has been horrendous!

Inflation in SL rose from 22.44% in April 2022 to 42.71% in February, this year. It dropped very slightly in March, but the overall effect on the SL economy, has been devastating. The current exchange rate is, approximately, 28500 SLE to the pound. Almost all raw materials (including fuel) have to be imported, so everything has gone up in price, with no similar increase in wages. In consequence, the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased.

This means that the assistance that the Link is able to give is more important than ever.

Over the year, we have been able to assist with a number of small projects, including another "farming basket scheme", organised by Brima James Kabia, the Baptist Pastor, for growing vegetables. We sent funds, so that 20 more women could be supplied with plants, seeds etc to enable them to support themselves and their extended families. We have received photos of their "harvested crops"! With the assistance of a number of people, we managed to collect 6 sewing machines, which will help the existing tailoring business to expand, thus providing training and employment for more people plus helping them fulfil the contract they won to produce school uniform, for the new Secondary school, Goshen High School. Our thanks go to all who donated machines, especially to Jo Prince, who managed to source 4 of them for us. In addition, we sent money to purchase stands for the machines.

We have shipped, via Rockel Shipping, several containers to Newton, this year. These have included, not only the sewing machines, but also school uniform and books from the Olney Infant Academy; books from other donors; first aid kits and a large number of T-shirts from the Combined Churches of Olney, after last summer's Holiday Bible Club and various other items, such as spectacles, pencils, crayons and games.

The books and school materials are sent to one of our school's links, Komba Nfalie, at Christ Evangelical school, for use in his school or distribution to other local schools.

Communication with our Newton Committee has been particularly difficult this year, due to the state of the SL economy and the other commitments of the committee members. So we are still awaiting an update on the water well final repairs, but as the country is now in the grip of election fever (due to take place towards the end of June), communication with them is very limited.

We were able to assist in completing a water well, and replacing the pump at Komba's school, through our Schools link Trustee, Marilyn Watkins and our link school here.

However, we have recently received a request from Brima James Kabia, to provide funds to help with a new Community Centre, being built in the Kpoubu-Newton district. The centre will serve all people from the local community, regardless of political affiliation, religious beliefs, tribal or ethnic background or social status. It is a large project - a two storey building, to be used for social events such as weddings, the local Court and educational/health courses, among others. The Trustees have agreed to send sufficient money to enable the building of the walls. The local people have already built the foundations using one-off funding from the Solar company.

As always, I would like to thank all our helpers and my fellow Trustees for all their hard work and support over the last year.

Sadly, one of our dedicated band of Trustees, Tom James, passed away at the end of 2022. He was a great asset to the Link and is much missed.

Thanks also go to the people in Newton, who work hard to ensure the funds we send are used to help the people living there – not easy!

Once again, I thank all of you, who continue to support our work to advance education and to alleviate poverty in Newton, either practically, or financially, or both.

Tonight, I want to take the opportunity to send our very best wishes, for a speedy recovery to 2 of our most loyal supporters, Anne and David Cottrell, who are both in hospital following a serious car accident.

Finally, we are always delighted to welcome new volunteers, either as Trustees or helpers, so if you are interested, please speak to one of our Trustees or helpers here tonight, or email our newsletter, or contact me on 07375 425325. We need your help!

Thank you,  
Anne McCallum

# Fund Raising

## WINDMILL CONCERT

We were delighted when the Bozeat Windmill Singers agreed to sing again for us on Saturday 29th April.



56 Olney residents enjoyed a wide and varied performance by about 30 choristers. They included Supercalifragilistic in the programme and luckily for us the sound wasn't 'quite atrocious'!

We were also treated to some songs with a watery theme...

Raindrops keep Falling on my Head and Singing in the Rain...

favourites from musicals (A Whole New World and Can You Feel the Love Tonight) ... and of course, this year, a wonderful rendering of Amazing Grace. The performance included solos and poems and some drama when a young lady's tooth fell out! It ended very movingly with Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah.

Thank you to all who supported us; the interval was a hubbub of chatter! Thank you to helpers that night—we made a profit of £632.



## CHERRY FAIR



Many thanks and congratulations to all of you who took part (Tricia, Anne, Rob, Lynne, John, Sue, Sally and Janet), donated tombola prizes, or money (even though some of you couldn't make it to the Glebe field), or helped in anyway.



If my addition is correct, we made £390.90!

Particular thanks go to all who helped set up, manned the stall and helped clear away, in the exhausting heat - I hope you all enjoyed a well earned rest and a long cool drink!

Anne McCallum



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2023

Friday 3rd November	The ONL Annual Quiz—more details to follow
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">December</div>  </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <p>Dickens of a Christmas—keep your unwanted and surplus bottles of anything to donate please!</p> <p>Bogof offers?</p> </div>  </div>

More details can be found on our website: [www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk](http://www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk)

**A big THANK YOU to all of you who have continued to donate to the ONL through standing orders in these difficult times.**






If you'd like to contribute, check our website,  
[olneynewtonlink.org.uk](http://olneynewtonlink.org.uk) and select 'donate' from the menu

- or drop an envelope through our treasurer's door -

**Tricia Selwood, 16 East Street.**

You could also ask us for a collection box in which to put your small change - assuming you're still using real money, that is!

### A big thank you to our GOLD sponsors

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