

Olney—Newton Link

August 2011

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

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Newton Headteachers' Visit

In the last issue we featured photos from the visit in May by three headteachers from Newton. We are now delighted to have the Schools Report on the visit.

“The three headteachers from Newton visited their partner schools for ten days in May. It was a very busy visit—as well as visiting all three primary schools and Ousedale (Olney Campus) they spent a day in London, visited the John Bunyan event at Elstow, went to Olney Market and MK Centre, looked at some allotments, saw basket making, walked around different areas and were even allowed into the Snowdome to experience a temperature of -5°C and touch real snow!

The children in all three schools gained a great deal from the experience as the visitors spent time talking to them and working with them, sharing stories, songs and information about life in SL. The children in Sierra Leone had made beautiful drawings for our classes and we sent back information about our children's life outside school.

Feedback from visits

The headteachers from Newton commented on:

- The good rapport between children and teachers in the UK—children are very receptive.
- The weather—too cold.
- The enjoyable visit to London.
- The essential role of Teaching Assistants in the classroom.
- The impact that their knowledge of how the UK lessons are taught will have on Newton.
- Children are not flogged—currently a law is being passed in SL to ban it. They observed how discipline is by discussion and reminders.
- Teaching styles—ideas which they can adapt for use in SL.
- UK teachers use ‘junk’ to make things in school.
- How well UK parents cooperate with the schools. SL parents often don't have time to attend meetings.
- How neatly dressed the children were. The UK teachers said they thought the Newton children were very well dressed in their uniforms.



- On the inadequacy of government supplies in SL, e.g. 30 books for 90 children.

The UK teachers commented on:

- The way in which Christians and Muslims work together in SL.
- The independence of the children in Newton—they walk miles to school on their own (although there have been some kidnapping scares).
- SL children do not usually eat at lunchtime. The government does sometimes provide rice and beans which local people cook at school and children pay a small sum for 'condiments'.
- SL children are very observant—evident from the detailed drawings which they sent to us.
- The increased amount of food and variety of crops compared to four years ago.
- The impact that education will have—future parents will be more involved with their own children's education.



Plans for the future

To improve communication, it was agreed that each school would send at least one email each month giving information about school events. The classes will exchange letters with each other.



All the schools have requested support to purchase metal storage cupboards, as well as money to purchase stationery items such as exercise books and pens. It was agreed that the Newton headteachers would email details of the cost of cupboards. We will send money when we can via the Olney-Newton Link and inform the SL headteachers when this has been done.

In the future, the aim would be to develop topics, especially history. We also hope that other members of staff could exchange visits.

It was agreed that partner schools would try to have 'focus weeks'. When the UK visitors are in Newton the SL schools would have a week focusing on the UK—its culture, history, geography, etc. When the Newton visitors are in the UK the Olney schools would have an 'Africa'

week. Both weeks would include the telling of traditional stories. Both sets of visitors would use videos/photos/books etc and leave all the resources there for the schools to run another week the following year."

TV COVERAGE—from Chloe Kegg

There's been a lot of coverage on British TV recently about Sierra Leone, in particular Kroo Bay. I've pasted the links below to the videos, etc. I understand that 'Save the Children' charity has had a big part to play in getting free healthcare and free vaccinations for kids and mothers across Sierra Leone. There was high profile coverage by Chris Tarrant on the One Show recently—it's about time that mortality rates were reduced!

Dr Hilary on ITV 'Lorraine'

<http://www.itv.com/lorraine/health/nochildborntodiepart2/>

Chris Tarrant on BBC 'The One Show' on 4 August.
(item half way through show)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007tcw7>

Save the Children webpage

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/sierra-leone.htm>

Big focus on Kroo Bay - watch the video!

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/kroobay/>

*Items for the next Newsletter will be welcomed by the editor,
Sheila Ware.*

Email: swandsw@btinternet.com

*The next deadline is:
Friday 4th November 2011*



SUMMER FUND RAISING!

This year in an attempt to try to bring in more funds during the summer the intrepid ladies on the Fund Raising group, and a few reluctant husbands, set up stalls at four events, Newport Pagnell Strawberry Fair, Olney Infant School Summer Fair, Olney Cherry fair and Newport Pagnell Carnival. On the whole the weather was kind to us the exception being a massive rain storm which sent people scurrying for cover during Newport carnival. The most successful was Olney Cherry Fair as people still seem to like trying their luck at a Tombola. This event brought in approximately £200, the others approximately £60 each.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed tombola prizes etc, please keep them coming!

Rachel Lintern



Rachel Lintern & Sheila Woodhead at the Olney Cherry Fair



They are always out running. Aren't they healthy?

They might even be entering Marathons, half marathons or pentathlons.

Who do they raise funds for?

If they live in Olney or just like to support communities in Africa, how about suggesting they support us!!

Maybe you would like to do something. No, I am not suggesting running a marathon. How about a coffee morning, or making some jams to sell, or growing some plants to sell from your front garden?

Or like me, you could sell your old paperbacks on Green Metropolis. I end up giving the Link £2 for each one I sell on the internet. I also have some I sell from my front window. So far I have raised more than £150.

If each person reading this had an idea of one small thing they could do, or maybe they could do with a friend or two, it could be fun and beneficial to us as well, without costing you anything!!

Don't forget to talk to your running friends too!!!

Take a look at our web site "olneynewtonlink.org.uk", you'll get all the information you could possibly want from there, but if not, why not contact one of us.

P.S. Don't forget to send us a picture of you or your friends doing whatever you or they do to raise funds for the Link, running, selling, cooking etc. to include in this newsletter.

Tricia Selwood

OLNEY/NEWTON LINK COMMITTEE SIERRA LEONE

REPORT ON THE SKILLS TRAINING CENTER PROJECT - 16th June 2011

The Olney/Newton Link Committee here in Sierra Leone has held discussions yesterday to discuss the issues of the skills center as well as the Link activities in general. Present were Abubakarr Fofanah, Valicious King, Mabinty Sesay, Oseh Jones and Dominic Usman.

As far as possible the Computer department is set with chairs, the lab has also been completed and the few computers we have are to undergo installation with software. We registered one hundred students from the community who will start their classes in July. Another set of twenty five adult learners has also applied including teachers. The case of the tutors was also discussed; how are we going to pay their honorarium? The Secretary responded that he has long communicate to UK that, for a pilot care Olney is going to help tutors for four months or six month maximum. The proposed monthly salary is £50 that is worth the equivalent in leones.

Additionally, we proposed to launch the project by the end of the month, June 30 2011. In launching the project, we shall invite the community, local press and the media, the local government council and the Ministry of Education. We also proposed to send this information on the web, through Concord times Newspaper. It is going to be a very big occasion. We actually need funding for a lot of things, such as:

1. Launching programme - £500
2. Re- registration of Olney/Newton Link £250
3. Honorarium for tutors - £200
4. Transportation £100

The above outlined would be more detailed in the financial report. Mabinty has been asked to submit her financial report to the committee and to send you a copy next week.

The £800 will be used to pay for media and print news coverage.

We shall use the same sum of money to prepare for the occasion on television coverage, and a lot of relevant issues to be addressed. The former community based organization certificate has expired and needs to be received. We have contacted four tutors to teach the following:

1. Hardware
2. Software
3. Basic Numeracy and
4. Basic English Writing skills

Thus £50 each is the summation of the £200monthly. The final one hundred pounds will be used on transportation. We expect that this idea could be embraced as we believed the link is now putting proposals to action (completing stages).

Apparently, other major tenet of our discussion centered on the completion of the whole place. We still have two more buildings to be finished. Whilst the computer is going on, yet we need to speedily complete the rest of the other building. Another building is carpentry and masonry and the final building is the administrative block and guestrooms. It has long been our dream that our visitors out there should be hosted at Newton instead of Guesthouses. We apportioned four rooms, self contain and two rooms for administrative purposes. We urge and request that we all double up our effort to ensure that we have a happy and successful completion.

Conclusively, we hope to improve on communication. It is also true that the status of the Link is going to improve: we have discussed with the heads of schools and we have scheduled special meeting with them next week to meet with the committee.

Dominic reported that he has bought the motorbike for the St. Mary's church; Mabinty reported that the toilet project is near completion. Bakarr requested for a Laptop, as it is a major problem to communication. There is a modem, so if the Secretary can have a Laptop that will enhance communication. Next meeting with teachers and the entire committee will take place on Sunday, 19th June, 2011. We need urgent reply to this information

Faithfully submitted by,

Abubakarr Fofanah

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Do you have any good quality, unbroken but no longer loved Christmas decorations?



We could put them to good use. Either

to sell or to brighten up our stalls around the festive season! Please contact Rachel.



OLNEY NEWTON LINK presents...



QUIZ NIGHT

FRIDAY 11th NOVEMBER

OLNEY CENTRE
Time 7.30pm

Includes Light Refreshments

Details of tickets to be confirmed!

Teams of 4



Registered Charity 1117694

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

Why should we continue to support the people of Newton?

You may not have seen the following article which appeared in a recent edition of the **Phonebox**:

If you were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of our three visitors from Newton or even speak to them you may have got the impression that all was well and they do not need our support. Delve a little deeper however and things begin to emerge. One of the ladies was in fact in great pain from her hip most of the time and, although we were able to relieve it to an extent with simple painkillers she would have been offered much more than that if she lived in UK. Another of them was suffering from a very common complaint that a simple tube of ointment was able to relieve but it is not available to them due to cost. Komba was complaining that many of his children were late to school because they have to scare birds off the rice and vegetable crops first thing in the morning. When he remonstrates with the parents they merely say that it is more important to be able to feed the family than have an extra hour in school. There were many more 'it makes you think' moments when you got talking to them.

We in Olney cannot solve the problems of the Third World on our own but I can promise you that the little bit we do is greatly appreciated by the people of Newton. Had they had more time they would have told you this themselves. So please continue to support us in any way you can as we try to help these people achieve a reasonable standard of living.

We are seeking educational books, including revision guides in maths, science, geography and RE, stationery items, Laptops and PC's that are in good working order, First aid items (in or out of 'date'). Financial donations can be made by Standing Order or directly to Tricia Selwood (712919) or perhaps you would consider having one of our loose change collecting boxes.

11 August 2011

Sierra Leone university runs out of paper for exams

University students at Sierra Leone's respected Fourah Bay College were unable to take their final exams because of a lack of paper.

The principal, Prof Thomas Yormah, told the more than 4,000 angry students on campus the exams were postponed until new stationary arrived next week. "This is a shame to our society," one student told the BBC. In February, the college's first semester exams were delayed by two weeks as it lacked classroom furniture.

Prof Yormah told the BBC there had been "some hitch" in preparing the examination booklets, but promised a commission of enquiry would get to the bottom of the matter. "I'm very disappointed that Fourah Bay College, once the Athens of West Africa, is faced with this embarrassing situation," student activist Siman-Allie Mans-Conteh said about Thursday's exam debacle. Another student felt there was no excuse for the college authorities to be so disorganised. "Students have paid their fees and we expect the management to ensure that students take their exams on time," he said. Prof Yormah admitted the situation was embarrassing. "But you have to understand we do not have adequate resources to cater for the demands that we have for our programmes," he said.

The college - which is part of the University of Sierra Leone - complains that the fees they are allowed to charge students are very low, ranging from between \$200 (£125) and \$800 a year. The central government does not allow for increased fees and the subsidy it receives is paltry, the college says. The BBC's Umaru Fofana in the capital, Freetown, says it is common to see students at the college standing outside a classroom listening in to a lecture, or lectures being held outdoors. Those who have space in the classrooms sit on benches, not chairs, he says.



Come and walk with us for Newton!

On Saturday 8th October we will be meeting at Olney Market Place at 10.30am, and then walking to Weston Underwood. All ages are welcome—bring along your dog, pushchair, pram, granny, other half.....

Join us at the pub for lunch, or bring your own picnic! If you care to raise funds for the Link, sponsorship forms can be obtained from Tricia Selwood (01234-712919) or Sheila Woodhead (01234-713660), or donate online through UK.VirginMoneyGiving.com

We look forward to seeing you for an enjoyable walk!

NEWTON HEALTH CENTRE



Thanks to
Claire Lintern
for the photos
and text



To our eyes, some disturbing pictures of the Health Centre. The first is the hand washing centre—you can see the state of the water in the bowl underneath. There are hand basins but the water is sporadic to say the least and the basins are often a breeding point for insects. The second is of the bed that was being used when we visited. No net or bed linen is provided—all has to be given to patients by the families. This is the case for ALL hospitals—and food has to be brought in by family as well. The final picture is the bed with the only mosquito net I saw in the building. As it hasn't been treated it's pretty useless. Although health care is vastly improved over recent years it is still incredibly basic. But they are working incredibly hard and with so little make a huge difference to people's lives.

As rainy season intensifies... Flooding Predicted

By David Krueger & Poindexter Sama

The Director of the Sierra Leone Meteorological Department is once again predicting that flash floods will hit the Streets of Freetown this August. Director Denis Sombi Lansana said that come the second week of August, heavy rains may cause annual flooding in low lying areas of the city. "It happens every year," Lansana said. "This is not very abnormal."

Water can fill the gutters and can even reach a high enough level to enter some houses. Lansana warns that children should not play in the streets during heavy rains, because some currents may be strong enough to sweep them away. Last year, Lansana was aware of a couple of children who got caught in currents, but were rescued before they travelled very far. Lansana warns drivers to slow down during flash floods. Visibility is poor, and the wheels can slide over a layer of water, making the vehicles' brakes less effective.

Along with the rain and floods, brilliant lightning will soon be striking across the Sierra Leonean sky, bringing with it another set of dangers. During thunderstorms, Lansana advises that all electronics should be turned off, so that they don't attract a stray lightning strike. Radios, televisions and even mobile phones should be kept off until the storm passes. Similarly, people should avoid standing beside large trees, electric poles and mobile towers as they are known to be big targets for lightening.

It's best to fortify the house against strong winds and remain indoors if possible, Lansana says. He also advised those who are residents of slums and hillsides against hanging boulders and mudslides which have the probability of spelling destruction in mid rainy season.

It could be remembered that last year, and even subsequent years, there have been reported cases of several mudslides and collapsed boulders causing deaths and severe injuries to members of the populace, especially those in slums and hillsides.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2011/2012

Saturday 8 October 10.30am	ONL WALK TO WESTON UNDERWOOD—meet at Olney Market Place (with your dog, pushchair, etc.....)
Friday 11 November 7.30pm	QUIZ NIGHT at the Olney Centre
February 2012	BARN DANCE & HOG ROAST—to be confirmed
Saturday 12 May 2012	ANDANTE CHOIR CONCERT—to be confirmed

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—**Garrard & Allen, David Coles, Stephen Oakley and Souls Garages.**

GOLD

J. GARRARD & ALLEN
SOLICITORS

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

SILVER



David Coles Architects

BRONZE

Stephen Oakley
Souls Garages

A BURGLAR ALARM FOR GOATS?

Fatu Koroma of Makendeh Village has lost her set of goats to thieves at 4.00a.m. today. 8 June 2011

