

Olney—Newton Link

November 2010

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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Health and Clean Water Project

For some time now we have been supplying First Aid and simple medical equipment as well as a generator to the Newton clinic. We have also repaired two sets of toilets and water carriers for the local schools. We now know that the toilets at the clinic have collapsed. The local council promised to repair them but they are even more cash strapped than ours so nothing has been done.

On 13 November the young people of Sutcliff Church, and hopefully their friends, and anyone else who want to join us, will be walking 10 miles from Stoke Bruerne to New Bradwell/Milton Keynes along the canal towpath to raise money for the Newton Medical Centre, with particular emphasis on hopefully reinstating the collapsed toilets, and are also hoping to make a donation to the final refurbishment of Brima's Church.

We are obviously hoping that we can raise a large sum, and if any of the Friends would like to sponsor the teenagers as a group, then they can contact me on 01234-711196, or by email—anne.mccallum@jgalaw.co.uk.

The young people are very enthusiastic about the whole project, and the idea of helping people less fortunate than themselves. They also enjoy seeing a tangible result. We may also, this year, be able to double the amount raised, as one of our walkers has access to a charitable trust. If we could double the amount, then the benefit to the Link would be even greater.

Finally, if any of the Friends would like to join us on the walk, then we will be starting at approximately 11.00am at Stoke Bruerne on Saturday 13 November. If you don't feel able to attend or sponsor the walkers, then please spare us a thought!

Anne McCallum



The Clinic toilets!



The Newton Clinic



The Olney-Newton Link is now a partner of Virgin Money Giving which means we can collect donations online. This is especially useful if you are doing a sponsored challenge and would like to fundraise securely through the internet. Virgin offer the best value for money to charities as their website is non-profit making, and sponsors can also Gift Aid their donations to make them go 25% further.

Do you pay taxes? Maybe you, or your accountant, fill out your tax forms annually. Do you sometimes get a small refund which really is not worth a great deal to you? It could be worth quite a bit to us, so why not just put our charity code on your tax forms and the people of Newton in Sierra Leone could benefit. This is it: QAT34JG. In case you forget, don't worry you can always find it on our website, just look up Olney Newton Link.

THE DYSON BURSARY

The Trustees are delighted to have been able to establish a bursary to allow a member of the Newton community to study at a Further Education Establishment in Sierra Leone. We have been able to do this as a result of a generous legacy by Dyson von Bibow Aspland who visited Newton in 2003. He made many friends in Newton and we are sure he would have been pleased that they have benefited from his generosity. The first recipient is Mabinty Sesay who has been the treasurer of the ONL Committee in Newton for seven years and who has put a great deal of hard work into the development of the Skills Training Centre. She will be studying for a Higher National Diploma in Business Studies at Milton Margai College in Freetown. We wish her every success.

From Mabinty.... I wish to express my profound gratitude to you and all other members of the LINK for providing me the necessary support for my new course. I am however pleased to inform you that I have paid my fees. I thank you very much. During my first year of this course, I will be residing in the village to monitor work at the S/Centre. This is because Bakarr would be away for his course and Dominic too. Therefore I see it very necessary to be around and see that everything go on fine.

Mabinty

Teachers' visit to Newton

Following their successful bid for a DfID exchange grant, teachers from three local schools have just returned from a 10 day visit to Sierra Leone. They were:

Janet Howe—Lavendon

Marilyn Watkins—Olney Middle

Sheila White—Olney Infants

Janet's husband, John, also visited on a self-financing basis.

Our recent visit to Newton was an amazing journey. It was good to meet people we had heard of through the link like Dominic Usman and Bakarr. We were looked after really well and visited many places in the local area.

The children in the schools were very excited by our visit and listened carefully when we told them about Olney and Lavendon. We shared stories such as 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. John Howe taught one school how to play cricket. Sheila White had taken a guitar and the children enjoyed singing songs such as 'The Wheels on the Bus'. The children from our link schools made posters and drawings of things familiar to them so that we could bring them home and display in our schools. Our pupils had made wall hangings and cut out people as gifts for them. Our suitcases were a lot lighter coming home and we were greatly enriched by our experiences.

Marilyn Watkins

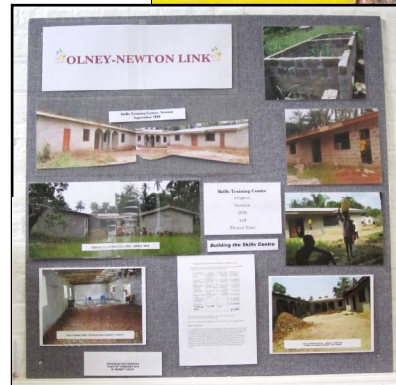
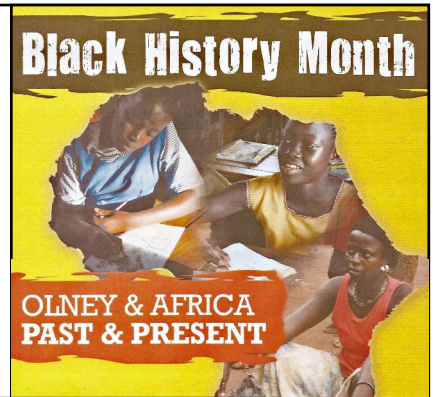


Meeting with the Headteachers of our link schools in Newton

During October we hope you found time to visit the Black History Month display put on by ONL and Advantage Africa in the Three Hares Gallery at the Cowper and Newton Museum. We were delighted to be able to take two Sierra Leonean gentlemen who were visiting Bedford and who wanted to know more about The Revd John Newton.

The Library have also hosted a display of photographs showing the development of the Skills Centre and during November will have displays of work done by Olney schoolchildren during their Africa Week activities. Very well worth a visit!

Rachel Lintern



facebook

We are now on Facebook and we have an up to date website: www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk so you can always find out more about us.

A Good Excuse?

Our Chairman had been asking repeatedly for reports from Newton and had been promised faithfully that "it would be sent tomorrow". They didn't arrive and late that night she received this pretty cool excuse:

"Sorry for the delay in sending you reports and minutes of the meeting on Sunday but due to a visit of the President today in Newton makes us not to send this report today. If God make it we will send it tomorrow."

We can't compete with that!



Our thanks to those who supported our stall at Olney Market Square on a very cold Saturday in October!



WANTED!

Are you (or someone you know) good at Car Boot Sales?

Over the weeks many people kindly donate articles for us to sell or use in Tombolas, etc. We are very grateful for these items but we now have a collection which we think would raise money for us at a Car Boot Sale. Would anyone be willing to do this please?

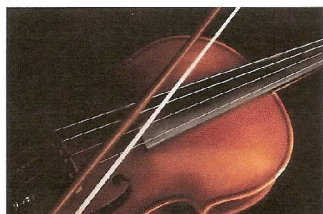
Contact Sheila Ware on 01234-713667.

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

Email: swandsw@btinternet.com

The next deadline is:
Friday 4th February 2011





Music for Newton

*Sunday, 28th November at 7.30 pm
at the Olney Centre, High Street, Olney, Bucks.*

*An evening of gorgeous melody
with the Gregynog Ensemble*

*Robert Hughes and Lesley Pearce - violins; Heather Birt - viola
Lucinda Wright - cello; Alison Eales - clarinet;
Catherine Rose - horn*

Robin Milford
Phantasy Quintet Op.33
V. Eduard Becker
Clarinet Quintet
John Ireland
*Sextet for Clarinet, Horn
& String Quartet*

*Tickets: £8. (Under 16s free.)
In advance from Wardrobe in Rose Court, or on the door.
Refreshments available.
In aid of the Olney-Newton Link.*



The Gregynog Ensemble specialises in music which mixes string instruments with the warm and lyrical sound of the clarinet. This programme introduces two clarinet quintets which are undeservedly little-known. Robin Milford wrote his atmospheric Phantasy Quintet early last century. The quintet by V Eduard Becker is from the early Romantic period, full of flashes and virtuosity. Local horn-player (and conductor of the Newton Ensemble) Catherine Rose joins the group for John Ireland's Sextet. This unusual instrumental combination opens up a new range of lovely sounds in a work which displays elements of folk song. We do hope you join us for the concert!

ONL Family Walk

On Saturday 2nd October 2010, eight intrepid walkers set out to walk to Sherington and back. We were fortunate to be blessed with lovely weather (the two days either side of the 2nd were incredibly wet).

The walk was accomplished by seven of the group with the only mishap being a very slight veering off path (owing to the footpath having been ploughed over). Special mention must go to our eighth walker, Rena Partridge, who was determined to walk to Sherington, stiles and all. Well done Rena.

The walk was a fun event and hopefully it will become a regular feature of the ONL calendar. However, at least £80 was also raised for the Link and will enable the committee in Newton to buy a computer station and chair for the Skills Centre.

Sheila Woodhead



ONL's second Quiz Night

Another very successful and enjoyable Quiz Night was held on Friday 5th November at the Olney Centre. Our thanks to Rob McCallum for being a



brilliant Quiz Master, Claire Lintern for meticulously keeping the scores, and a splendid team of 'behind the scenes' people preparing the food, manning the raffle, etc. Approximately £500 was made for the Link and we are looking forward to the next Quiz! If you missed it be sure to come next time!

The victorious team were Janet & John Howe and Kim & Paul Harris.



OLNEY-NEWTON LINK COMMITTEE MEETING—SIERRA LEONE
REPORTING ON ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS HELD ON SUNDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2010

Discussed Issues

1. The Skills Center
2. The visit of the teacher from Olney
3. Report from school

The meeting held last Sunday was not well represented by members due to activities in the village that cut across all levels in the community. Present were the Chairman, Secretary, Val, Oseh Jones and later Mabinty.

The issue of the skills center was well discussed.

At the moment, we have just completed sealing the roof and we are heading towards painting sooner after; after that you will be able to have a photo. Hopefully, the visitors would take better photos over to you. We now guarantee we have completed this particular building and will be ready for operations. The Skills Center now needs sitting accommodation and other equipments such as extensions, fans and more computers. Basically, we are looking forward to have at least 10 PCs to start and one hundred sitting accommodation. We hope to accommodate at least one hundred youths who await result of have left school awaiting advanced studies and drop outs.

The Chairman raised up the issue about incentives to the tutors for their service. This was the point we all had to look into very seriously. By and large we have suggested to put it forward to Olney that they should help us pay or give incentives for at least six months or at most one year. Afterwards, the management committee will develop strategies in the utilization of school funds such as fees and other thoughtful investment that will let income in the committee. It is worthy to note that the school charges for a start are going to be very reasonable because we want to attract that public and create publicity as a pilot case. The center will need advanced photo copy machines, at least one or two advanced printers that we shall use to make and print invitation cards, school report cards, letters and any other document which will be paid for and such funds shall be utilized for the development of the center and its long term financial sustainability of the project. At the moment the above outlined are our primaries. We shall send to you the cost and sample of the kind of sitting accommodation we need with other little things outlined. We are starting off with computer literacy, hence the building for their components is already completed. Our next phase would be the carpentry and building. We are making negotiations with two tutors for the computer studies. Also, the issue of providing scholarship for Mabinty was discussed. She produced a her acceptance letter from the college to which she has been offered a place to pursue a higher national diploma. The payment period for her fees was due October 10th and it was suggested that should Olney send her fees it should be sent to her bank account or through Robert Claire so that she can pay soon.

The other part of our discussion concerns the visit of our guest teachers coming from Olney who are to arrive here in Sierra Leone on the 20th of October 2010. The secretary reported that he has contacted all the heads of schools we are dealing with including the Ahmadiyya secondary school. All responses were positive as each head of school express appreciation for the ideology behind the visit and its related benefits. The head teacher of Christ Evangelical of course told us that he has reported to his e-mails. Other expectations to meet with from the school side were highlighted such as curriculum exchange, guest and pupils learning schedule, discussions and meetings. The Head mistress of Ahmadiyya primary school was not that alright, as such she has not been able to be in the school. But she is now back. Upon talks we held, she was more pleased. She told me plans they have such as children's drama, fun and other exchange of ideas. She told me that it was too difficult for her to get her e-mail because she was not that much OK; but particularly interested in Mrs Howe whom she told me have been sending her information overtime. She gave to us her school statistics for the attention of Mrs Howe. The school has a total of 342 children. The Ahmadiyya primary does not hold classes on Friday. School week starts on Sunday and ends on Thursday. Any other extra curricula activity can be held on Fridays and Saturdays. The Head Mistress of R.E.C. Newton has also been contacted. She is fully aware and prepared to receive the guests. Surely they will be in good hands, well cared for just as we have been doing overtime. It is important to note that, we shall have to rent a car that will collect the guests from the guest house to the school and from the school to the guest house. There shall be other movements such going around Kent beach, Mama beach, Lumley beach and other exciting places in our country.

Reporting from the schools, Ahmadiyya primary have just completed their school toilet project as well as the Christ Evangelical who have also completed the construction of their local class rooms they requested for. Val reported that he has received monies for guest house that has already been booked, and transportation to collect guest from Lungo to Waterloo. The Chairman, Mr Usman, has asked that Val should check at the guest house to reaffirm the booking arrangement. We look forward to receiving our guest.

The meeting was moved closed until Dominic is back.

Faithfully Submitted by: Abu Bakarr Fofanah, Secretary

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2010

Saturday 13 November 11.00am	Sponsored Canal Walk—Stoke Bruerne to Milton Keynes, all welcome!
Thursday 25 November 9.30—11.30am	ONL Stall—MK Council of Volunteer Organisations Fete/Stalls at MK Snap, 30 Bourton Low, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes, MK7 7DE
Sunday 28 November 7.30pm	Music for Newton—an evening of gorgeous melody with the Gregynog Ensemble at the Olney Centre
Sunday 12 December	Dickens of a Christmas—visit us on the ONL Stall
Wed 22 December	Carol Singing—details tbc

An alternative view of Sierra Leone, by Chloe Kegg

A few months ago I moved to the area after having spent many months working for VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas) in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Whilst going through the trauma of 'Oh my goodness! Life is now so different! What on earth am I going to do with my time?!' I came across the Olney-Newton Link. For me it was a sign of incredible coincidence and fate. The little town of Olney had a fundraising group supporting the town of Newton in Sierra Leone! I was so impressed! And so in an effort to help, I'm publishing one of my blogs from last March, which I hope will give an insight into what an amazing, friendly but messed up country Sierra Leone is. And hopefully that will inspire Olney residents to keep up the brilliant work.



March 2009

"I think I must have a piece missing—an empathetic bit. Or maybe seeing something is not enough—you really have to live it. How do these news reporters do it—try to get someone sat in front of their TV to really relate to whatever bit of human suffering that they're showing? Last week I visited Kroo Bay, a shanty town right in the heart of Freetown, and I didn't feel a thing. Home to 5,000+ people—very friendly community, right on the coast, lovely sea views. A couple of nice schools, health centre, internet café, sports field, cheap rent, featured regularly on TV and all good magazines...

Of course, the rivers running through the town wash all the rubbish down from the rest of the city and during the rainy season the waters rise to 6ft and wash away your tin shack home and kids (3 children died in recent years). The alleyways are a bit mucky but the nice charities have built a walkway to get you around the worst bits. If you're planning on raising a family there, best to plan for a few kids—mortality rate is 1 in 4 children under 5 (worst rate in Sierra Leone which has the worst rate in the world). But the school is overflowing anyway.... And the nurses in the health center with their drip fashioned from a dustbin charge for their services so keep your traditional healer on speed dial (if you can afford a phone). The Community Centre is currently full of mattresses with little toddlers lying on them—one little boy looked at me and burst into tears. I don't think his parents will be picking him up later—I'm not sure they're alive.

I tried to tell Mr Mohammed Kargbo, Secretary of the Kroo Bay Community Society, how wonderful it was that everyone was smiling despite the hardship. He told me not everyone was smiling. I just wanted them to be so I didn't have to face reality. At the end of the tour we were asked for money and I tried not to feel irritable as I now didn't have enough money for lunch....big deal my guilt shouted at me. I bought a couple of oranges from the lady selling them off an upturned bucket at the end of the road to counterbalance the karma – I let her keep the change."

