

Olney—Newton Link

November 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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THE SKILLS TRAINING CENTRE OPENS!

The Skills Training Centre has opened with all the ceremony typical of Sierra Leone. We are very lucky to have a video of the event which true to style is in two languages - English for our benefit and Krio for the audience! The event was attended by many of the Newton Committee - unfortunately due to work commitments not all could be there - as well as representatives from the Government, people from Newton, new students who will use the centre and the Head Men of the various parts of Newton. Bakarr ran most of the proceedings, although the programme of events had to be modified when the heavens opened! After all the speeches (the video runs for just over an hour and that is the edited highlights!) food and music finished off the day in Salone style. All the speakers sang the praises of the centre, stating how VITAL education is and how the centre will help Newton train and develop in today's society.



So far, the computer room is the only one in use - and when Tony Locke recently visited Newton he saw a class being taught - about 50 students! The latest figures we have is that about 100 students have signed up for the computer science course, which will last about six weeks depending on what course they have opted for. As you can imagine the demand for computers is incredibly high and the idea will be to eventually hook up to the internet and run the centre as an internet cafe so it will become self sufficient as soon as possible.

The centre has two more “arms” which now need completing. One is the admin and accommodation block, and the other is the technology area to house woodwork, metalwork and other more vocational subjects. So we still have some way to go before the centre is complete.

All through opening ceremony the UK sponsors were thanked - and the representative from the Ministry of Education summed things up so well

“you never forget what you learn, you may not need it today, but you will tomorrow. I learnt to drive before I have a car, when I get a car I know how to drive - that is why education is so important”

What else can we say?!



The number of children under five who die each year has plummeted from 12 million in 1990, to 7.6 million last year, the UN says.

The reasons for the change include better access to health care and immunisation, says a report by Unicef and the World Health Organization.

But they warn that more needs to be done to reach UN development goals on reducing child mortality. About 21,000 children are still dying every day from preventable causes. But even the poorest regions have made progress. Child mortality in sub-Saharan Africa is declining twice as fast as it was a decade ago.

"Focusing greater investment on the most disadvantaged communities will help us save more lives, more quickly and more cost effectively," said Anthony Lake, the executive director of Unicef.

Many factors are contributing to reductions in child mortality, including better healthcare for newborns, prevention and treatment of childhood diseases, clean water and better nutrition.

Most improved

Sierra Leone in West Africa - one of the world's poorest nations - ranks among the top five countries seeing improvements in child mortality in the past decade. The others were Niger, Malawi and Liberia - also in Africa - and East Timor in South East Asia.

One of the reasons for Sierra Leone's success is that the government scrapped all fees for child and maternal health, said Ian Pett, the chief of health systems at Unicef.

About half of all deaths among under fives in the world took place in just five countries in 2010 - India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Babies are particularly vulnerable. According to the report, more than 40% of deaths in children under the age of five occur within the first month of life and more than 70% in the first year of life.

In sub-Saharan Africa, one in eight children die before reaching the age of five. That compares with one in 143 children dying before five years old in developed countries.

September, 2011



**A further
view of the
Newton
Skills
Centre**

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

*Email:
swandsw@btinternet.com*

*The next deadline is:
Friday 3rd February 2012*



CONGRATULATIONS!

The photo is Abu Bakkarr Fofana, the ONL secretary in Newton, who has just been awarded a 2.1 degree in Sociology from Njala University, Freetown. After being held back from his education by the Civil War he began to study for A levels In 2003 and has since gone on to study for his degree. He was in the top three



of his class and has been invited to lecture at the university. However, he is also contesting for nomination to become MP for Newton and Waterloo at the elections to be held in 2012. He is continuing to work hard for the Link and we wish him every success in his future endeavours.

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.



Wilkinson Road workers deprived of fair pay, health, safety

An Awoko investigation has revealed that labourers building Wilkinson Road are receiving as little as Le 5,000 per day, despite a collective agreement that sets the minimum wage at more than Le 8,000 for the lowest-paid construction workers.

Speaking to about 20 workers employed by China Railway Seventh Group Co. Ltd. (CRSG) between Congo Cross and Lumley, they presented payroll forms that showed daily pay of between Le 5,000 and Le 7,000. However, a minimum wage set in a collective agreement for all building and construction workers, made between industry and workers' representatives, states that unskilled workers should receive no less than Le 8,196 or Le 214,000 per month.

The agreement also sets a minimum standard for workers' safety and benefits, which workers say are not being met.

CRSG was awarded a contract from the Sierra Leone Roads Authority to widen a 5.2-kilometre stretch of Wilkinson Road. Construction started in July 2010 and was due for completion in July 2011. Most of the workers Awoko spoke to asked that their names not be published, for fear they would get fired or face other reprisals. Some, however, said they were so frustrated with the situation that they wanted their names published, regardless of whether it risked their job.

A father of four working at Murray Town junction said he leaves his house around 5am, travelling all the way from Kissy Road to the company's office in Lumley to register for that day's work by 7am. He disclosed that if he is a few minutes late, he will be marked as absent and will not receive pay for that day. He said he received a sum of Le 5,000 per day and his monthly pay was sometimes as low as Le 130,000 for a month.

Other workers this reporter spoke to at the Murray Town junction disclosed that they are not covered by insurance in case of accident, nor do they receive any money for medical expenses, even for injuries they get at work. Workers also said they do not receive a travel allowance.

Mohamed Bangura disclosed they work from 7am till 12 noon. They have a two-hour lunch break and then work again until 6pm for a total of 9 hours but they are marked for 8 hours. Some of the time slips the workers carried showed hours added for overtime but workers said they don't always receive pay for it.

Note: The exchange rate at present is around 6,900 Leones per Pound, so 5,000Le equals about 72 pence. One couldn't buy a bottle of water for that amount here!

A LINK FOR IMPROVED HEALTH

Those of you who have found themselves at Cobbs Garden Surgery recently will have noticed a new display on the notice board.

We would like to thank the Surgery team for allowing us to use this board and to Sheila Ware for mounting and displaying the photographs which were taken by Claire Lintern and Sally Odgers during their visit to Newton in 2010. I think you will agree, there's some powerful imagery!

Rachel Lintern



STOP PRESS!

Two very successful fund-raising events took place this week.

On Thursday 10 November the schools involved in the Olney-Newton Link hosted a concert of music and songs at Ousedale Olney Campus, and raised £266 in donations.

Then on Friday 11 November we held another well-attended Quiz Night at the Olney Centre, raising over £500. Pictured here are some of the teams enjoying the tasty supper provided.



OLNEY MIDDLE SCHOOL DISPLAY AT THE LIBRARY

We were delighted that the Middle School mounted an attractive display on the work of the Olney-Newton Link in the childrens' corner at Olney Library (situated in the Olney Centre).



SOLAR PANELS FOR THE HEALTH CENTRE!

The Link trustees have been looking at the request from the Newton Community Health Officer, Joseph Charles, for Solar Panels for the Health Centre. We are absolutely delighted to report that we have received a cheque for £3000 from the Souter Charitable Trust for this project. This was a trust recommended to us by Community Action MK. The total cost of the project submitted by Joseph Charles was just over £5000 and we are now contacting him to begin discussions on how we can get this project moving.

A TABLE TOP SALE

The Table Top Sale held on Saturday 5th November at the Carlton House Club was our first attempt at such an event. The Club very kindly offered us the use of their room and 20 tables all of which were snapped up very quickly. The success of this type of event does of course depend on the buyers coming through the door and spending their cash. There was a steady trickle of people throughout the four hours we were open and I think all the stall holders



managed to make at least some profit.

A pleasing £160.45 was raised for funds, and we were delighted to also receive a £40 donation.

We are hoping to repeat the sale again in the Spring, possibly in March.



HELPING THE NEWTON HEALTH CENTRE

We have been delighted to receive recently a good quality laptop which we are sending out to the Community Health Officer for Newton, Joseph Charles. We have also included a set of 19 CD-ROMs purchased from TALC.

TALC, or Teaching Aids at Low Cost, is a charity based in St Albans who supply books, CD-ROMS, posters, etc for Third World Countries. Started in 1965 by Professor David Morley, a lecturer at the Institute of Child health, they have supplied health materials to doctors, nurses, midwives in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We recently purchased a selection of books and posters which have been very well received in Newton with a request for further copies of one of their most popular books, *Where There Is No Doctor*.



Walking for Newton!

A group of enthusiasts enjoyed a lovely walk through the North Bucks countryside on Saturday 8th October, whilst raising much needed cash for the Link. We met at Olney Market Place and stepped out to Weston Underwood via footpaths and fields—most of us didn't realise how beautiful it is away from the road. The Cowpers Oak made us very welcome for lunch. A splendid £125 was raised (and some of us are a little fitter....).



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2011/2012

Sunday 27 November 11.30am—2.30pm	OLNEY INFANTS SCHOOL FAIR
Saturday 3 December 2.00—4.00pm	LAVENDON SCHOOL FAIR
Sunday 4 December 10.00am—4.00pm	DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS—Gifts for our Tombola still needed, please!
Friday 3 February 2012 7.30pm	HOG ROAST & BARN DANCE at Olney Rugby Club, with dancing to <i>Winnie and the Whirly Pits</i> . Tickets £10.
Friday 2 March 2012	LUNCH (Home-made Soup & Bread) at 40 Midland Road, Olney, by kind invitation of Sheila Woodhead. Plus a Bring & Buy!
Saturday 12 May 2012	ANDANTE CHOIR CONCERT

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**