

Olney—Newton Link

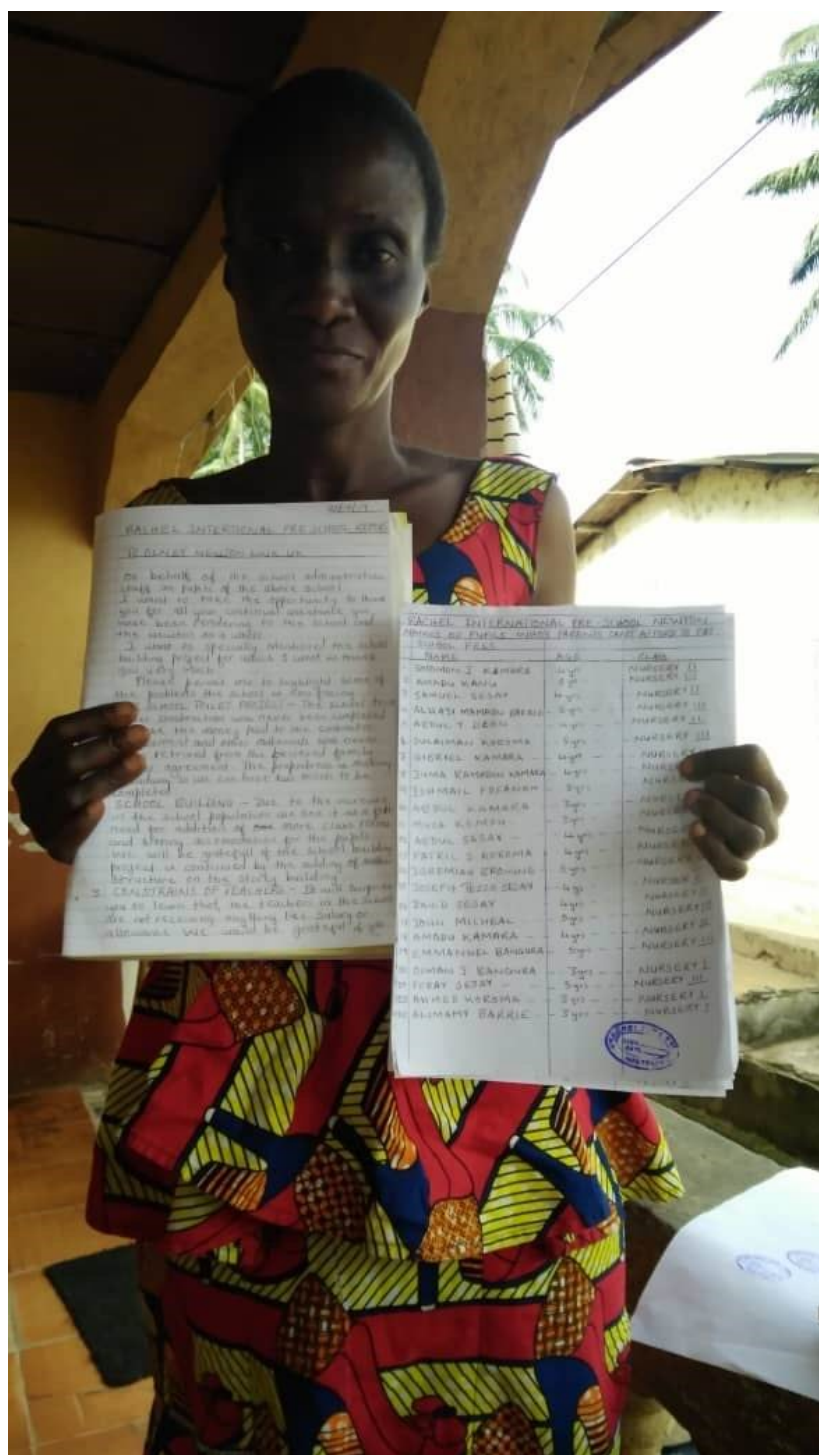
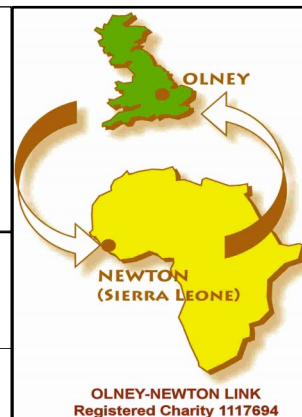
"To advance education and to relieve poverty

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

November 2019

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

ONL



**The Principal of the Preschool -
read her report on p2**



**The school run in
Sierra Leone?**

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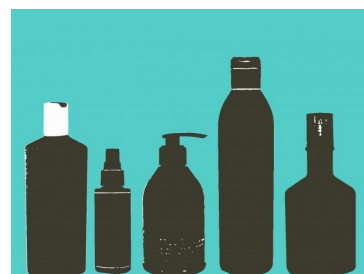
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Dickens of a Christmas

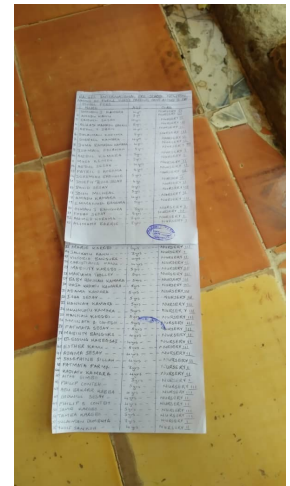
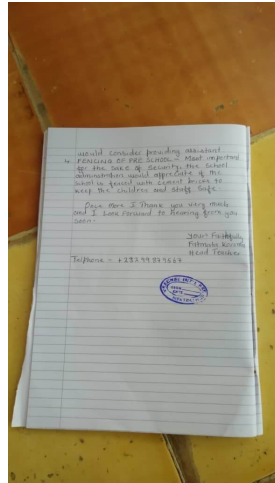
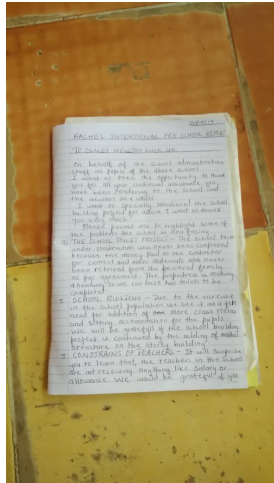
We are running our bottle
tombola again.

Please donate bottles
(anything in a bottle)

Give to any trustee please



The Newton Pre-School



We have received a report from the principal of the preschool. It was sent as photographs of four handwritten pages, pictured above, via Whatsapp. This is a surprisingly efficient way for us to receive information from Newton.

Two pages list the names of pupils and whether their parents can afford to pay the fees for the preschool. This is a transcript of the text of the report:

Rachel International Preschool Report To Olney Newton Link UK

On behalf of the school administration, staff and pupils I want to take the opportunity to thank you for all your continual assistance to the school and to Newton as a whole.

I want to specifically mention the school building project for which I want to thank you very much.

Please permit me to highlight some of the problems the school is now facing.

1. THE SCHOOL TOILET PROJECT

The school toilets under construction were never completed because the money paid to the contractor for cement and other materials was never retrieved from the bereaved family as per agreement. The proprietress is making a headway so we can have two toilets completed.

2. SCHOOL BUILDING

Due to the increase in the school population we see it as a felt need for the addition of more class rooms and sitting accommodation for the pupils. We will be grateful if the school building project is continued by the adding of another structure on the storey building

3. CONSTRAINTS OF TEACHERS

It will surprise you to learn that the teachers in the school are not receiving anything like salary or allowance. We would be grateful if you would consider providing assistance.

4. FENCING OF PRESCHOOL

Most important for the sake of security, the school administration would appreciate if the school is fenced with cement bricks to keep the children and staff safe.

Once more I thank you very much and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

*Yours faithfully,
Fatmata Koroma
Headteacher*

Trustees agreed to send a further £400 to Newton for the preschool at the end of September, requesting a report from the principal at the same time. This was the speedy response received. We are not able to pay teacher salaries as we cannot legally employ anyone in Newton. We have been encouraging the preschool to charge those parents who can pay (the normal situation in Sierra Leone) so that they can pay salaries. They are also trying to get government registration to help with costs—for which toilets are needed, hence the money trustees agreed to send. There will be further discussion about how to help at the trustees' meeting later this month.

Wells



This is the fourth well we have financed in Newton since 2017.

We thought readers might be interested to know that the ONL has facilitated the building of 7 wells in the last 6 years, as follows:

Well A	2013	£3361.13
Well B	2014	£790 (Well enlargement)
Well C	2016	£2500

Well 1	2017	£3000
Well 2	2017	£1500
	2018	£1500
Well 3	2018	£3000
Well 4	2019	£3000

More are needed to ensure everyone has access to clean water.

The Newton Legacy

An interview with Brian Lintern

As part of the Amazing Grace Pilgrimage, Brian Lintern was interviewed about the Olney Newton Link by Mark Braithwaite. His responses tell a lot about the ONL.

You live in Olney, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I have been involved with the ONL since around 2003 when the initial link was established through the parish church, and my wife and daughter went to Sierra Leone and returned with much enthusiasm to support the rebuilding of Newton community following the ending of the long civil war. I have lived in Olney for over 46 years having moved to the area to work on the development of Milton Keynes new town.

You are a trustee of the Olney Newton Link: please tell us about the history of that charity and why was it was formed.

The Link was initiated following a visit to Newton after the ending of the civil war, early 2000s, when a group in Newton known as KRYDO, Koya Rural Youth Development Organisation, presented a proposal for the rebuilding of houses destroyed during the war and sought our help to purchase the necessary materials. They themselves were providing the labour as a community effort, supporting those in their community who were in greatest need and assessed independent of tribe, faith or politics. This was an important factor in our agreement to give support, and the affairs were managed by a committee drawn from various separate groups within Newton elected to create a balanced representation.

In 2006 it was realised that the Link could be more effective if it were set up as an independent local community charity, whose aim is "to advance education and relieve poverty in Newton, Sierra Leone by the provision of charitable assistance." Our policy is to listen to the needs of the people of Newton, encourage THEM to do the projects with assistance in purchases so that THEY take ownership and responsibility for the projects. By dealing direct with the community we avoid syphoning off of funds by others and encourage accountability to the community and dealing with individuals with whom we can relate.

Sierra Leone is a desperately poor country. What are some of the problems it has endured recently. How are things like there now?

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, with little income from exports and therefore has extreme difficulty purchasing materials when competing on the world market where prices are determined by First World standards and income.

Much of the infrastructure was either destroyed or perished during the long civil war, which was in fact started by Liberia invading and seeking to raid the diamond fields, known to many as the 'Blood Diamonds' war. This invasion fuelled the release of tensions which existed politically in the country due to the disparity between the richest and poorest; resulting in 'child' warriors' being forced to fight and even kill some of their own families!

More recently there has been a determination to overcome corruption and the recovery of funds which had been misappropriated by those in power and influence.

Health care and life-expectancy was poor, and to some extent continues with the lack of medical staff, facilities and materials. This situation was exacerbated by the Ebola epidemic the spread of which was advanced by the lack of education and further promoted by tribal crafts and witchdoctors which obstructed the education of locals on preventative measures. To overcome this required the education and understanding of respected members of their community who would overcome the natural resistance to being told by 'the white man' from whom they ran away when their large white 4x4s appeared in the community.

There are many lessons learnt, from both sides, on how to communicate, the differences in our cultures, and an improvement in forms of support has resulted.

The country remains desperately under-funded due to the limited resources available for export. There are improvements in power supply and water distribution, and these alone are making a difference. Education, which was lost to many by their displacements during the war, is improving. Whilst there is intelligence this is of little value without the relevant education to develop skills and self-respect, confidence in themselves and a community spirit.

What is the single thing you are most proud of that the charity has achieved?

Some of the major works have been, initially the building of over 80 houses which was the initial KRYDO objective, followed by the development of what was initially a Skills Training Centre which has developed into an Institute associated with the university producing much needed education. Our achievement has been the development of self-esteem and abilities in the people of Newton.

Your family has made a significant investment in Sierra Leone's future...

Our daughter was in the group that went to Sierra Leone in 2003 and subsequently returned on a personal visit, then again as a volunteer for a year to teach biology, and this resulted in her meeting and marrying a Salonean teacher with whom she has worked to build their own home in Bo where she continues to teach and has settled in well, developing their own horticultural garden growing all sorts of native crops along with some plants established from the UK.

How do you see the legacy of John Newton?

The more one reads about John Newton the more one appreciates his experiences of life and the way that his faith developed to be able to acknowledge the errors of the ways that were prevalent at the time, man's inhumanity to man, and his determination to change the attitude of man to enslave others. It would have been some fantastic experience to listen to his sermons. I envisage a man used to giving orders on board ship on the high seas, expecting everyone to comply unquestioningly with those orders. This is the same man whose sermons were so appreciated that a balcony had to be constructed in the church to accommodate his audience, and was able to address parliament with confidence to abolish slavery. I envisage him proclaiming 'Amazing Grace' with such strength of conviction and from the heart. The ability to so forcibly proclaim the error of his ways is one which is worthy of emulating, and appreciation of our fellow human beings and mutual support is the legacy I believe is the foundation of our Link.

A tale of 2 children



Alice was found sitting by the gate of a primary school holding a very tatty pair of men's trousers and 3 pairs of well worn trainers. On enquiry, she said her father had asked her to sell the items so that she could have a school dress and some exercise books in order to go to school. Education is described as 'free' in Sierra Leone but parents have to buy uniform, an exercise book for each subject and another one for exams. They also supply their own pens and pencils. To us this doesn't seem unreasonable, we do that in this country, but to many parents in Sierra Leone it is a real struggle. Alice was given some money for her uniform by a kind donor and my daughter and her husband gave her some exercise books and pencils from donations to ONL. The photograph shows Alice standing with her peers in the school yard holding her bag of exercise books.

Baimba is a young lad of about 10 yrs, born into a large extended family in a town about the size of Olney. He was attending the local primary school but his parents were concerned about his progress and began to seek help among his many uncles, aunts, cousins etc. My daughter and her husband, both school teachers in a nearby large town, agreed to take him on, give him accommodation and pay for him to attend a local school.

Baimba arrived carrying his possessions in a carrier bag, a pair of jeans and 2 teeshirts. He was wearing a pair of jeans and a teeshirt and a pair of flipflops. They soon discovered that he had never used a toilet, or a shower or a tap. He had cleaned his teeth---with something. He was also carrying a school report which didn't look very promising. After buying him some simple underwear and a tooth brush they began to show him how to use a bathroom.

They then discovered that Baimba was unable to read or write. It is very possible that he is severely dyslexic but such a problem is not recognised in Sierra Leone schools where he can only be 'taught' in a class of 50+ others. At his request he has returned to his village school in the hope that he can at least gain a basic education but it doesn't look very promising.

Rachel Lintern

Fundraising and Events

AMAZING GRACE

The organisers of the Amazing Grace Pilgrimage, a walk from CMK to Olney, invited four local charities to take part. We were delighted to have an information stall and talk to so many interested people.

It was a beautiful day, too warm for walking really! We are very grateful to the organisers for the £500 donation received.



TINKERS LANE CONCERT

An evening of music and fun! A very sincere thank you to Ian Roberts and friends for their amazing music and for waiving any fee.

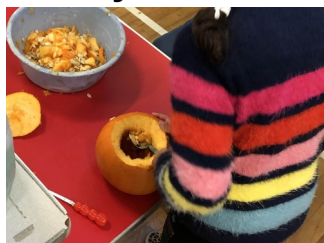
Also a huge thank you to David Church for allowing us to hold the event in The Two Brewers and for providing the main course for supper.

The event raised £420 for the ONL.



AUTUMN ANTICS

Our annual event for little ones, which seemed to be enjoyed by all. Pumpkins to carve, block printed bags to decorate, doughnuts on strings, conker spiders to create... and hot dogs too! To quote one grandparent who came—*'thank you everyone—we had a great time!'* And a birthday to celebrate—Christine helped despite it being her celebration day so of course there was cake too! The ONL benefited by £240—**thank you!**



FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2019

Friday 8th November	Quiz at The Olney Centre, 7 for 7.30pm, buy tickets in advance
Sunday 8th December	Dickens - support our stall please. Donate a bottle if you can—use those BOGOF offers—anything in a bottle is great!
Comments for the newsletter: e mail: <i>olneynewtonlinknewsletter@gmail.com</i>	To get in touch with The Olney-Newton Link contact Anne McCallum, Chair, Telephone 01234 711196

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

GOLD

	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

SILVER

BRONZE