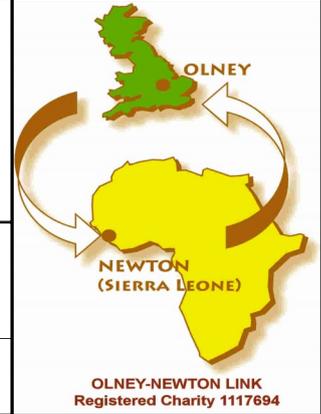


Olney—Newton Link



“To advance education and to relieve poverty

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

November 2024

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

ONL

Good News from Goshen!



Putting the finishing touches to the school toilets - we have just received news that they have been ‘accomplished’!

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News from Newton

Claire (nee Lintern) and Mahmoud Tarawally visited Brian in the summer and we were delighted that they found time to meet with us and talk about life in Sierra Leone—and even more pleased that Claire found time to write an article for the newsletter.



Thank you, Claire!

Whenever we come here the conversation inevitably turns to the weather- are we feeling cold? Have we brought the sun with us? What's the weather like back in SL? This visit here has been a mixed bag so far (August!) with the entire range of sun and rain and humidity. But what did we leave behind? One of the heaviest rainy seasons so far.

When you hear of the rainy season what comes to mind? Some rain every day perhaps. And to a large extent that's the case, but this is no shower. More like a whole bath full of water emptying on your head. For hours. And at times it is horizontal. At the beginning and the end of the season we get very vicious thunderstorms, and as we have metal roofs that's not fun....

So this year has led to some awful flooding in Freetown. High high water rushing down the streets, walls being brought down and houses collapsing. Why? Because Freetown is now so crammed that the hillsides are built on so there is no vegetation to hold the water back. And close to the waterfront are shacks that are so vulnerable to any type of bad weather. The authorities are trying to change things but years of mismanagement take a long time to change. The desire is there but..... Luckily where we live the rains haven't been so bad, although the sun was not to be seen for about 2 weeks! Bad news for solar power systems. And from the photos in Newton it was the same, appalling levels of rain and strong winds but no real damage.

And the rains being heavy this year is needed. The past 2 or 3 rainy seasons haven't been that wet, which meant the water table was really down. So much so that by January some wells had already started to dry up, and there was a serious water shortage by Easter. We would see kids hunting for water to drink and wash in every night, any access to mains water had to be locked up as the owners pay for it so it was a target for desperate people. It was a worrying time and shows how vulnerable we are when it comes to the basics. Trouble is flood waters don't fill wells!

And this is a trend that I fear will continue. This year was very hot, April was in the low 40s in temperature for a number of days and barely dropped at night. People were sleeping outside at risk of mosquitoes and malaria just to try and find a slightly more comfortable sleeping temperature. Climate change is showing us its teeth, and it will affect so many parts of life. The farming calendar is no longer as certain as it needs to be, and building with mud bricks is more precarious. And as a nation we have a very small carbon footprint. Nearly all our electricity come from renewable resources, away from the cities there are few cars and we recycle items you wouldn't think could be reused!

Moving forward we have to diversify, take more control over urban development and build for more rain and more heat. Communities on the edge of poverty will need help, and somehow each and every one of us across the globe must do what they can to mitigate and slow the change to our climate.

Claire Lintern

News from James Kabia

James sent us photos and videos at the end of July showing floods and the damage they caused in Freetown and other areas. He said this happened 'after 8 days of torrential rain, affecting the Rural and Urban Western District very badly. Hastings is badly affected (the town next to Newton) but fortunately Newton less so.'



Freetown



Newton...



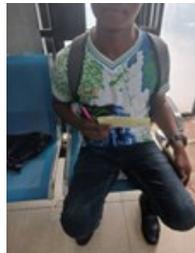
News from the Schools

The new Goshen High School had a problem. There were no toilets and no money to buy materials to construct them. This new school is linked with Olney Ousedale School and Abdul Kabia, the headteacher, sent a heartfelt plea to Olney teacher Stephanie Chadwick asking if there was any possibility of help.

The school is planning fund raising events but had no money yet. Trustees were approached and decided that they could help and in principle would think this a very appropriate use of funds, protecting the health and safety of Newton children. We asked for further details and a breakdown of costs. Once this was received and we were satisfied with it we agreed to send nearly £2000 to create a well for drinking water and to build a toilet block—similar to the ones already funded by local schools for the other linked Newton schools.

The headteacher, Abdul Kabia, has been wonderful at keeping in touch so we know exactly what progress has been made and he has sent lots of photos.

Collecting the money from the Bank



Receipt for materials

Work in progress... delivery of materials, blocks made to construct the building, building built and white goods ready to install.



There was another problem... one of their sponsors was providing money for the roof and doors but sadly he died and so that was no longer possible. Trustees agreed to send a little extra to plug the gap (this may be a unfortunate phrase to use regarding toilets!). The headteacher was delighted and promised photos as soon as possible. In the meantime they had to manage without toilets, as last year.

Wednesday 18th September

Some very good news today! The extra money sent has at last arrived (there was a delay to its arrival which involved many queries in both countries and Tricia having conversations with a bank official in Germany - see Brian's article on funds). *Good evening all, this is to inform you that I have yesterday received the funds from Ecobank and this evening hand it over to the principal Mr. Abdul Kabia for the school's toilet project, on today's dates 18/09/2024. From James Kabia*



Receiving the money
(cash payments are normal in SL)

The final parts of construction...



And on Monday 18th November—
very good news from Abdul Kabia

*The toilet has been accomplished! The staff and the kids have started using the toilet you build for us. We want to say **THANK YOU.***



Sending Funds to Sierra Leone

Sending money to our partners in Sierra Leone can be complicated at times, so we need to be vigilant on the transmission process. Over the years the exchange rates have changed in relation to the Euro and the Dollar; as one can determine from daily news bulletins. The rates depend on international trading which is a global and full time activity. The trading between Sierra Leone and the rest of the world is minimal compared with that between European and American enterprises.

This creates a problem in that the Sierra Leonean currency is weak due to the lack of exports to a buyers market, to the extent that the Leone is not traded in large quantities and frequently Salone trades in dollars even within the country. To purchase a seat on the ferry to the airport the price is fixed in dollars, not surprising since fuel supplies are purchased in dollars which forms a major part of the costs.

So how does this affect our funding of activities in Newton? We send funds via a financial institution called StoneX. We make an enquiry to send either a set sum in pounds or Leones. We get an 'offer' of an exchange rate which we either accept or reject, but generally accept. This requires two of the committee to sanction the exchange and for the funds to go to a recipient account which we specify two signatories are needed to abstract the funds.

By the nature of international trading sometimes the funds are exchanged internationally with a bank other than that of the recipients, and that bank then locally transfers the funds to the recipient's account. Normally this flows without delay, but occasionally there is a delay since this is a manual transaction which is subject to individual interference. On the rare occasions that this happens we have to raise the matter with our exchange organisation, StoneX, and request a document showing the trading route for the funds and arrange for the recipient's bank to chase up the payment.

I know that our exchange rates are the best we can get since I occasionally have to send funds from my own account via my own bank. In this case I can only send funds in dollars to Sierra Leone and that then purchases local currency within Salone, but this results in further reduction due to the second 'exchange' fees so I get a poorer overall exchange rate. Overall our funds are of low value in relation to international trading and consequently do not have great value in the trading market.

Overall our trading has gone well and to date have been able to ensure all the funds sent have reached the recipients as we would wish and generally within a few days. I believe we can honestly be satisfied with the process, with the odd frustration which is short-lived.

Brian Lintern

Fund Raising—

The Quiz

Those who competed on 13th November were in agreement that it had been another excellent evening.

Challenging questions... do you know what film title is *celestial journey*? Or where *the strongest muscle in the human body* is? Some did, some didn't! All enjoyed a delicious two course home made supper. And we were impressed by the revamped Olney Centre which is looking very smart and wowed by the new kitchen too!



A new prize this year, a wooden spoon for the lowest scoring team, The Links or The Lynx, I'm not sure!)



It was a very close contest, with three teams vying for top place, but of course there were exciting prizes for the winners, The Jobsharers—well done!



Thank you to everyone who helped, setting up, cooking, serving, manning the desk, clearing up, washing up, masterminding the quiz and keeping score.

We raised about £1000 for the ONL - a great result!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2024

A Dickens of a Christmas	Sunday 1st December—Come and support our stall!
1st December	Come and see our decorated tree in the Parish Church
Nearer to Christmas	Look out for us Carol Singing

More details can be found on our website: 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 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

	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
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Contact Anne or Tricia for more details of bronze, silver and gold sponsorship