

Olney—Newton Link

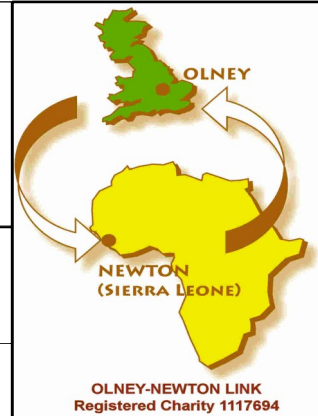
"To advance education and to relieve poverty

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

June 2025

www.olneynewtonlink.org.uk

ONL



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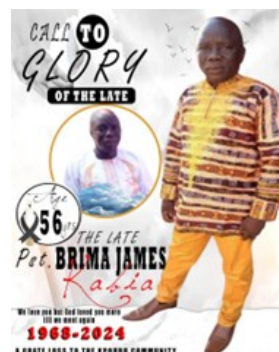
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The AGM: The Chair's report

This has been a year of changes for the Link.

Very sadly, on 27th November 2024, Brima James Kabia, the Newton Baptist Pastor, died suddenly, at the age of 56. Brima had been associated with the work of the Link from the beginning. He was a member of the Dean's Committee, which was set up towards the end of the 10-year Civil War, with the aim of helping returning survivors to rebuild their lives and their homes.



Rena Partridge, a retired missionary, living in Olney, who had strong connections with the Anglican Church in Sierra Leone, mounted a campaign to raise funds, goods and awareness, to help. The Dean's Committee represented all aspects of the Newton Community. It was out of this that the ONL was born.

Brima worked tirelessly for his community, organising help and setting up projects, including the Tailoring Apprenticeship business and the Farming Baskets, in recent years. Both of these need a new driving force and, hopefully, one will be found shortly.

Those of you, who came to last year's AGM, or receive the Newsletter, will know that Brima was also heavily involved with the new Community Centre. Fortunately, we have found a worthy successor, in Abdul (Aaron) Kabia, the Head of Goshen High School, who provides us with much needed "on the ground" information.



He visited Kpoubu and met with Ibrahim Bangura, who worked with Brima and is the Youth Headman for the area. Through Abdul and Ibrahim, we have been able to keep funding the Community Centre. The second-floor walls are almost complete. Apparently, one more concrete layer is needed to complete this phase.



Abdul is a good communicator, like Brima, sending lots of photos and videos! He also acts as "ambassador" for the Link when we need someone to check on progress on other projects or areas of interest.



We have also been involved in helping Goshen High School, where Abdul is Head.

It is linked with Olney Ousedale School, but as the link is in its early stages, fundraising hadn't reached the amounts required to fund the toilet block project, when the request came. So, trustees agreed to use general funds to finance this project, seeing it as helping the next generation and advancing health. This project was worked on by the pupils as well as the builders and is now completed

In conjunction with Ousedale, we have sent money for the digging of a new school well, which is nearing completion. Hopefully, it will be finished before the rains come!



Apart from the link between Goshen High and Ousedale, the schools link between the Village Federation Schools and Christ Evangelical Primary School has continued to grow. Emma Wallace, the Head of the VFS, is very keen to assist their link school, which has had to move to another site, donated by the local community. The school is currently housed in tarpaulin tents – not ideal. There is a need to improve security and the funding of a new boundary fence is envisaged.

In the meantime, the VFS sent money, at the request of the new Head of CE, the Rev. Francis J M Lavalie, to fund their Sports Days trophies. Although, it looked very hot, the children seemed to be enjoying themselves!

The schools' links are very important as they represent the future and the fostering of understanding between two divergent cultures.



Economically this has been yet another bad year for Sierra Leone, with vast increases in the cost of imported goods and materials. The Government has stepped in to implement measures like subsidies and pricing restriction on some commodities, such a rice and petroleum. Donald Trump's decision to withdraw US aid hasn't helped improve matters.

Cement is imported, so there is likely to be an increase in building costs. However, thanks to the continuing generosity of our supporters, we should be able to go on sending funds for these very worthwhile projects.

I want to thank everyone who supports our work, in anyway – financially; through the donation of goods and raffle and tombola prizes; attending our Events or supporting our stalls; through practical work and help, upfront or behind the scenes. Everyone is essential to our continuation. Special thanks go to the Events Team and helpers and to our Northern Branch! My personal thanks to my fellow Trustees for their continued help and support. Many of them, also wear other hats, within the Link!

Thank you all for attending this evening.

Anne McCallum



I'd like to add the thanks of everyone there: when our planned speaker didn't make it, Anne used the slides the speaker had sent and talked about the speaker's role in the UK and Sierra Leone. Unplanned by Anne but very interesting for us to hear.

JH

News from Newton

The Community Centre

When Brima died we were shocked and saddened, and also very worried about the Community Centre as he had instigated it and overseen the whole project. Thankfully Ibrahim Banghura took over from him and work has begun again.

At first there were difficulties because the bank refused to allow Mr Bangura access to the account without James Kabia there to sign as well. This meant we couldn't send money out so a new account was opened with Ibrahim Bangura, Suleiman Siloam (headman) and Abdul Kabia's names.

Money was sent and building of the blocks commenced.



The blocks are used to construct the walls and progress has been quite rapid.



The next step is to construct the roof. We think this will be made from corrugated iron but are hoping a sponsor can be found to install solar panels ... as in the original plan.

Newsletter continues in part 2....