

# One World Link

The friendship link between Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District, UK

[www.oneworldlink.org.uk](http://www.oneworldlink.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 700714

## Return of The Magnificent Seven



Earlier this year, seven teachers from Leamington and Warwick journeyed to Sierra Leone to foster their links with schools in Bo, as part of the OWL schools-linking programme. Here they are as they set off from Warwick Parkway station at the beginning of their adventure. To find out how they got on, **turn to page 3** and read Liz Garrett's personal account of their time in Bo, and how much was achieved.

## Day of The African Child – 16 June

Once again this year, our 12 Link Schools will come together to celebrate the Day of The African Child, to commemorate the Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976 during the Apartheid Era in South Africa. Over 500 African children and young people were killed after 30,000 African school children led a protest against being denied the right to study their own language and culture in school.

The hosts this year are All Saints' CoE Junior School in Warwick, and children and guests will enjoy an action packed day of African drumming, story telling from Sierra Leone, singing, dancing and an African-style sports day! The highlight will be a huge parade, with every school waving huge banners hoping to replicate the scene earlier this year in Bo. The day will come to an end with a concert involving children from all the 12 schools. Fingers crossed that the weather is kind...



The impressive scene in Bo this year - can we match this at All Saints'?

### Bo Chief Administrator comes to Town

William Alpha, chief administrator of Bo City Council, visited us in January, funded by the Good Practice Scheme of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. He had not been to the UK before and it seemed appropriate that he should get to know the UK setting for link activities as he plays a key role in Bo City Council.

As ever, the visit was a busy one: Andy Smith at the County Council had done a fantastic job planning a wide range of meetings covering strategic planning, space planning, finance and aspects of waste management and water and sanitation. William brought enormous enthusiasm and energy to all that he did, managing to find time to ask for additional meetings and visits to be fitted in with everything else. We all benefited from having him here proving that, while these visits are very demanding, they are very well worth while.



William (centre) with OWL Chair, Chris King (left) and Cllr Robert Cunliffe, Mayor of Leamington (right)

## STANDING ROOM ONLY FOR TALKS SERIES OPENER

### The men from DFID spark a lively debate

Back in January, OWL invited experts from the Department for International Development (DFID) to speak about healthcare and some more general development issues. This was the first of what we hope will become a popular series of talks sponsored by OWL exploring different aspects of international development. For this first talk, more than fifty people squeezed into a small church hall to hear **Rob Yates** explain how the removal of fees had seen uptake of essential health services rocket in certain developing countries. Substantial improvements in health outcomes have followed. The connection between removing fees and greater uptake may seem obvious, but until recently the received wisdom was that charging for services made for a more efficient system. Sierra Leone, according to Rob, had managed the shift to free healthcare particularly well. Its removal of charges for children, pregnant women and new mothers was a model of efficiency and has resulted in a significant reduction in sickness and mortality.



Mark Poston poses the questions

**Mark Poston** launched a more general and very vibrant discussion about aid and development. Some of the old questions remain: How can we ensure aid finds its way to people who really need it? How can a dependency culture be avoided? But some new issues are challenging everyone's preconceptions: as budgets get tighter in the "developed" world, while countries like China, India and Brazil grow more prosperous, why should traditional donor countries keep on giving? Conversely, with China investing so much in Africa and elsewhere, why should recipient countries bother with strings-attached Western aid, when they can strike straightforward commercial deals with the Chinese? The whole dynamic of development aid seems to be changing,

OWL Member James Knight, who organised the talk, said, "This was a great opener to the series and has raised all sorts of issues for discussion. It has highlighted the highly 'political' nature of defining poverty and appropriate responses, and OWL hopes to arrange further talks to explore the issues."



Rob Yates proves a point



A rapt audience takes it all in.....

## Chairman's Notebook



We seem to be going through one of those patches at the moment when the impression for some of us is that there are more obstacles to our initiatives than things going right. The one notable exception is our Schools Links - quite rightly on a 'high' after a really positive visit in February, and looking a stronger and stronger group as time passes.

Perhaps there's a message for us here: whilst making progress on our various fronts can, at times like this, seem very frustrating and wearing (the mechanics of the various institutions in this country and in Sierra Leone can be very sapping), we can look in another direction, like the Schools Links, and get a very different impression. Building children to children links takes the OWL mission into the schools and letting the kids see what we're talking about is uplifting and exciting. We can really sense the positivism that the school to school links can generate and know that at a formative level, we're getting our message across to those who really matter. And then when we turn our heads back again, our resolve is strengthened and our spirits revived!

*Chris King*

## HAVE WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU!

OWL runs a **monthly news service** delivering to your desktop all the key news stories from Sierra Leone. It keeps you up to date with articles and features covering a broad cross-section of views and information. OWL Member **John Yates** runs the service and if you would like to receive the service, please email him on [johnyates23@gmail.com](mailto:johnyates23@gmail.com)



# OWL at the



## June 18-19

Leamington Peace Festival

Look out for the OWL stand at this year's **Leamington Peace Festival!**

We also have speaking slots on the main stage for our Bo visitors on both days at 2pm.

**Please come and give us your support!**



## JOHANNES MALLAH – DEAR FRIEND AND GLOBAL PARTNER



Johannes died on 7 April 2011. He was one of OWL's stalwarts from the day OWL began. Here, **Jane Knight** pays her own tribute to a remarkable man

I first met Johannes Mallah in 1981 when I first travelled to Bo on behalf of One World Link to find out if people in Bo would like to get to know people in Leamington and Warwick District. Mussa Conteh took me to the Mallah house and introduced me to Johannes, who was then teaching at Bo teachers' college. Before we started our discussions he dug into his freezer and took out handfuls of Star beers - and that was where our friendship started. The following year he came to study in Reading and we spent many days together discussing all the possibilities and issues re. successful linking. It was such a novelty in those days.

Over the next 30 years, so much interaction has taken place with Johannes on an official link level and at family level that it would take a book to record all the happy memories. When life was hard for either of us we always came together and comforted and supported each other.

Johannes had very strong views of how we in the European culture should listen to and act on the advice of people in the South. He would not let any colonialist, patronising or racist comment go unchallenged. He was a born teacher and communicated so clearly about his ideas. He would not take any nonsense. And yet Johannes was one of the kindest, warmest men I knew. He had such a soft heart and helped anyone in need who came to his attention.

During the war Johannes was so brave and often confronted rebels and stood up to them and even when they were pointing a gun at him, he continued to try and take care of a baby caught in the ambush. He also provided shelter for more than 50 people at a time for most of the war. He was also very practical and the way he managed the building of his house, the Bo Kenema Power Service canteen and then the One World Link Centre in Bo, was most impressive.

Johannes had a major influence on the development of global links between UK and Southern community groups and local councils. In the 1980s he travelled around the UK advising groups and councils on how to relate to the South and he helped to make the linking relationships rich and successful. He spoke at the 1984 UKOWLA conference and many UKOWLA events throughout the 1980s.

There are so many admirable aspects of Johannes' character and achievements and of his loving nature that he will leave a big hole in my life and in the lives of so many people in the UK who were lucky enough to meet and know him. It will never be quite the same for me when I visit Sierra Leone because I cannot visit Johannes any more. But at least he is spared from any more pain and may God look after him forever....

Jane Knight

# 7 Teachers went to Bo



**School Report** ✓  
from Liz Garrett  
Joint Schools Co-ordinator

Yes, seven of us set out on February 11<sup>th</sup> with a shared interest in linking, and an understanding of the educational benefits of having a partner school in Bo - but little did we realise quite what an impact this 10 day 'work' trip was going to have on our lives. We have returned to our schools with a contagious enthusiasm to share with our pupils as much of our experience as possible. Describing what we did and saw certainly challenges our children's (and our teachers') perceptions and has led to diverse discussions about poverty, happiness, family, waste, recycling, governments, wars, charities and sports, to name just a few topics. The video and photo material taken during our week are certainly helping children here engage with a lifestyle and culture very different to their own.

In our preparation for the trip we had discussed how can we make this a sustained cultural link - and what can we introduce that will last? During our week in Bo, each pair of linked schools worked towards their *Action Plan*, which detailed collaborative projects that would benefit pupils on both sides such as Science - how well do different seeds grow? Agriculture - what can we grow on our school allotments? The Environment - how can we improve our school environment? The linked schools also agreed on the content of a *Partnership Agreement* which outlined our motives alongside the commitments required from both partners for effective, sustainable linking.

Back in January, the seven of us hardly knew each other; we returned as a team with a strong sense of a unique shared experience which was a pleasure and privilege to receive. We gained far more than we gave. It has certainly revitalised the schools links and raised interest levels in OWL's work within the 12 linked primary schools in Leamington and Warwick.

For me, as coordinator, one of the significant changes is that I can now put faces to names and visualise schools and roads when discussing a place in Bo. It really helps! It has made the linking real. I'm no longer reluctant to phone or email because the people in Bo aren't strangers now, they're friends who I've talked to, solved problems with, shared meals with, walked and danced with, laughed and cheered with (sports day!). This was made so easy for us because of their very welcoming, generous hospitality. As a team we have reflected on the many advantages we enjoyed in Bo by immediately feeling a part of the wider OWL community, with a history and a future....

*Liz Garrett*

ps *The OWL Community Centre building in Bo makes such an excellent base, a temporary home from home, a place easily accessed by Bo friends and the OWL community. It will be our challenge here with our imminent visitors, to create such an 'OWL Community' feel without the one building to call our 'base-camp.'*



## Please welcome...



V V



Maada

.....our visitors from Bo this summer. They are **V V Bockarie**, Head of United Brethren in Christ School and Bo OWL Chair, and **Maada Fobay**, Bo OWL Treasurer. They will be with us from 12 - 26 June. Make sure you say 'hello' to them at one of the many events they will be attending, especially the **Peace Festival on 18/19 June** when they will be addressing the audience at the 2pm speaking slots each day.

## THE VOYAGE

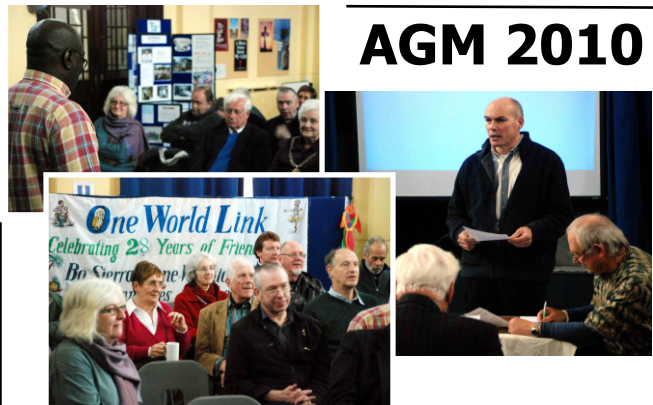
OWL's Youth Group is looking for young people from across Warwick District to take part in 'The Voyage', a once in a life-time opportunity to participate in a youth exchange with Bo.

During the exchange, the UK delegation will travel to Bo to develop friendships with young Sierra Leoneans, as well as gaining an understanding of issues affecting young people, such as sexual health, democracy and bullying. Participants will be involved in all aspects of developing the exchange - including fundraising.

Catherine Moody, our Youth Coordinator, and Ben Wesson, UK Young Ambassador, are urging young people to think about applying. Catherine says, "I think this is a brilliant opportunity for young people in our district to learn about another culture and to come together to address some of the issues affecting young people in today's society."

So, if you're interested, are 16 or over and live in Warwick District, log on to: [www.oneworldlink.org.uk](http://www.oneworldlink.org.uk) to find out how to apply.

*We'd love to hear from you!*



## AGM 2010

At a very well attended AGM in December, OWL members and many distinguished guests enjoyed presentations from John Archer on the planning project (see article below) and from Richard Hall on the water project, as well as being brought up to date with plans for the future from OWL Chair, Chris King.

## Co-ordination is the Key

John Archer provides an update on the Bo planning project

I returned to Bo in November last year with Richard Hall on a joint visit to pursue both planning and environmental health issues.



John Archer in full flow at the AGM

On the planning side, I met again with William Alpha, the Chief Administrator of Bo City Council, to discuss ways of helping plan the future of Bo. We used the new maps prepared by Rashid Ansumana and his team at the Mercy Mission Hospital to discuss how to coordinate and influence development in meetings with the Paramount Chief and the Ministries of Lands and Housing.

I was also able to attend a meeting of Bo City Council to talk through the benefits of planning ahead for development. The Council agreed to set up a **Land Use Planning Committee** to

bring together all the parties involved in land development, and to discuss how best to manage land resources. Further stakeholder meetings were held with infrastructure providers together with the paramount chief.

It was clear that a key to the future is to achieve greater coordination between land holding families who dispose of land for development and the City Council and other infrastructure providers. Close involvement of the wider community through the involvement of the chieftaincy system will be necessary to help in this. To make progress, it will be necessary to get technical planning expertise embedded within the City Council and the idea of a **volunteer planner** working with the Council for an extended period of time is being explored.

On a related matter, I was also fortunate to be present when the OWL land purchase on Matru Road was being surveyed and marked out. As well as providing a supportive presence from OWL Leamington, this gave me a useful insight into the processes of land disposal.



Marking out the Matru Road site

Overall, it was a very successful visit, which I hope will enable progress on the planning project to continue. This was reinforced during William's visit to Leamington earlier this year, during which we discussed in more detail the sort of placement that would assist the city in planning its future and looked at the tasks that would be needed to get real progress in place.

We are continuing to work with the City Council to support its wish to be able to plan effectively and hope to see more real progress this year

*John Archer*

## Money for Nothing!

Don't forget that you can raise money for OWL with a click of your mouse - and it will cost you absolutely NOTHING!

By registering with [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk), and choosing OWL as your beneficiary, you can shop online with all your favorite retailers and they will donate a percentage of everything you spend to OWL. So why not check it out and register today!

**Every little counts!**

## Off the Shelf.....

**OWL has a library of books** on a range of relevant subjects which members can borrow. **Nan Ells** is our librarian, and she is in charge of the collection which, at present, contains just over 20 books. The OWL collection is located in the Leamington Library in the World History section. They can be borrowed from the Library in the usual way.

In each issue of the Newsletter, we carry a short book review. For this issue, **Chris King** recommends a book that has just won the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize and was shortlisted for this year's Orange Prize for Fiction.....

## The Memory of Love

By Aminatta Forna

(Bloomsbury Publishing 2010)



**Adrian Lockheart, a psychologist, leaves his wife and daughter in England to work in Freetown, helping victims of the Civil War who have been traumatised by their experiences. As the patients recall events from those terrible days, we are drawn into their lives and share their sufferings. Adrian himself falls in love, thus jeopardizing his marriage.**

Aminatta Forna grew up in West Africa and writes vividly of life there. We see the Civil War from the perspective of ordinary people, especially the medical teams, who tried desperately to mend shattered bodies and minds. She leaves us asking ourselves what we are trying to do in Africa when we go out to "help".

The author also wrote "The Devil Who Danced on Water", which is also on the OWL shelf.

**If you have a book you would like to recommend or wish to write a review, please email Nan Ells at [annaells@googlemail.com](mailto:annaells@googlemail.com)**

**If you want to know more about any of the projects or topics covered in this issue, you can always visit:**

[www.oneworldlink.org.uk](http://www.oneworldlink.org.uk) 