

OWL NEWSLETTER - January 2004

A privilege to work with you

A very happy new year to you all. In the words of one of the messages I received from Bo recently:

***May every member of your family witness the beginning and the end of the year ahead,
no evil shall befall you and
no plague come near your dwelling place.***

One of the problems in producing this Newsletter is that a number of things have happened which many of you would not have known about, but possibly wished you had! Events can take place at short notice and it is not possible to let everyone know in time. For example, as I write, there is this coming Saturday evening (Jan 17th) a talk being given in Warwick by a student at Oxford University on the causes of the conflict in S.L. We're sorry if you did not know about it. However, it is possible to inform people quickly on email, so, if you have an address, please send it to [John Myers](#) and he will keep you informed.

Since the last Newsletter, we have seen three visitors from Bo who were 'passing through': Mrs. Nicholas, the Town Mayor of Bo, together with her P.A., Amadu Sheriff and later Joseph Bengali, Manager of the Creative Crafts Training Centre in Bo. Both were visiting England for other reasons, but they were pleased to be able to spend a couple of days with us, too. Also, we have had the offer from Maria Franchi to go to Bo as part of her world-tour and, while there, to do some work for us with the Kayoma Women's Group and the Bo linked Schools.

As a result, she spent 2 months there during November and December, making a very valuable contribution to the Link, has returned and continued on her tour! Our Treasurer, John McFarlane, has also called in on Bo while on a Business trip to S.L.

We have also had our Annual Meeting when Lord Frank Judd addressed us. This proved to be an excellent gathering, very well attended and extremely stimulating. We also benefited from the facilities at Bath Place Community Venture, which were very satisfactory for us and I think we will probably be using this venue for our main meetings in future. 3 of us subsequently attended the UK One World Linking conference where, surprise, surprise, Frank Judd was again speaking! Again, he was very supportive of what we were doing and said, in the context of a visit he had made as Director of Oxfam to Mozambique, what a privilege it was to work with these people, who, despite having lost everything in their war, were so determined to make a future worth living for themselves. His words echoed in my mind as I listened to Maria Franchi on her return from Bo when she told us how the One World Link people were "just fantastic", that 'their commitment is stupendous' and what they are trying to do in building their community centre with their limited resources and expertise is going to have an enormous impact in Bo. Indeed, what a privilege to work with them!

I might mention that this may be my final Newsletter (I produced my first in September 1986 and have issued 50 editions since!). Time to 'move on' as they say. Hopefully Marie Thornby, who has recently volunteered, will produce the Newsletter in future.

[Brian Austin](#) (Editor)

Newsletter
produced
for OWL by
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VISITORS FROM BO





MRS NICHOLAS, MAYOR OF BO TOWN

In view of the strong and long lasting links between the communities of Warwick District UK and Bo District Sierra Leone; we were grateful for this opportunity to host Mrs Nancy Nicholas and her Personal Assistant Mr Amadu Sheriff

During their visit, they were able to meet the Chief Executive and the Chairman of Warwick District Council, to attend a meeting of the Leamington Spa Town Council as guests of the present Mayor, and to meet the Chairperson, nominated link Councillor and European Officer of the Warwickshire County Council. They were also able to visit four primary schools that are linked to primary schools in Bo, to view the Sierra Leone resource section in the Leamington Library, to be entertained by local groups, to see the local botanical collection, and to be given a demonstration of bell ringing. They were given photographic and video records of their visit.

Achievements.

- Mrs Nicholas was able to reciprocate the visit that the Mayor of Leamington made to Bo in 2001 and help to cement the official link between the two Town Councils
- Her meetings with leaders of the District and County Councils helped to buttress the support that those Councils give to the community link, and to progress their willingness to explore ways in which they can contribute to the development of local government in Bo District
- Each school visited received an endorsement of the value to the people of Bo of the efforts they put into school linking. They were also able to use the visit for educational purposes. In one school Mrs Nicholas and Mr Sheriff answered questions about their country from the assembled year 5 classes. In another a whole school assembly was devoted to appreciating the musical culture of other lands and to furthering ideas of global citizenship. Another school was warmly thanked for the money it has raised for its link school and for a centre for war orphaned children in Bo; and the other school put on a display about their knowledge of Bo.
- Mr Sheriff will endeavour to send books and other materials to augment the Leamington Library resource
- Through Mr Sheriff and Mr Salim, the leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslims in Leamington, the link between the Muslims in each town has been strengthened
- The possibility of a link between groups of disabled people in the two communities has been advanced
- Mrs Nicholas and Mr Sheriff have seen that, through our link, local (indigenous) people have come to learn, appreciate, and perform aspects of Sierra Leone (Mende) culture
- They will have gained a small first hand appreciation of the architecture, organisation, governance, amenities, and home life of our community.
- They are the eighth and ninth citizens of Bo to visit our community since the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone. We have found that each such visit, however short, has helped to raise awareness of our link, to further understanding of Sierra Leone, and to make personal bonds between people. During the same period nine citizens of Warwick District have been to Bo. This visit has been part of a cumulative and reciprocal process.
- The Mayor of Leamington elect, Councillor Mota Singh, has indicated an interest in visiting Bo during his year of office, if invited to do so

JOSEPH BANGALI, MANAGER



Sunday 14th December

Evening Informal 'drop-in' reception at John and Marion Myers'

Monday 15th December

Morning John Myers takes Joseph to a number of venues in and around Southtown: **Africo-Caribbean Project, Community Arts Workshop, Regenesi**s, ending up at **Bath Place** for lunch.

Afternoon Continues to see the One World facility at the **Library**, followed by **Mid-Warwickshire MIND**. Evening Vist to **Bambadinka Drummers** practice.

Tuesday 16th December

11 a.m. Brian Austin collects Joseph from John Myers' house. He takes Joseph to **St Peter's School**, then onto a **Pub Lunch** after which he goes to **Ferncumbe Primary School**, Hatton Green (for the school's Christmas play). Ferncumbe is linked with Kakua Primary School, Njai Town
3-15 Janet Alty collects Joseph from Hatton Church where the play has been performed and takes hi m to **Warwickshire College** to meet Sheila Grainger. He then returns Joseph to Janet's care and for some food.

7 p.m. Janet takes Joseph to **St Peter's Church** where he is met by Brian and Janice Austin for a meeting of the Christian Life Community at the Parish Centre and then returns home to be looked after by Marion Myers

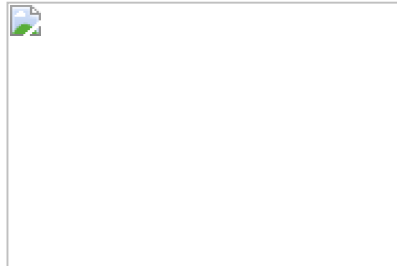
Wednesday 17th

9.15 a.m. Janice Austin collects Joseph from John and Marian's house and takes him to **St Anthony's R.C. Primary School** which is linked with St Francis Upper

10 a.m. Sheila Grainger collects Joseph from St Anthony's and looks after him until 3.30 when she delivers Joseph to Leamington Station.

Final Report by Maria Franchi
Visit To Bo - November and December 2003

These are a few extracts from Maria's report - this is just a 'taster'.
The full report can be obtained from John Myers



Maria handing resources over to OWL Chair, Bill Evans, on her return from Bo.

Introduction

I arrived in on Tuesday 28th October 2003. The programme for the first few weeks was decided at a committee meeting on the Wednesday and this included visits to all the local dignitaries, Secondary schools and Primary schools involved in the Link, and also the Kayoma Women's Group. This programme was again discussed at the meeting of Friday 14th November 2003. My working week was agreed to be - Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings spent doing visits, afternoons writing up, Tuesdays and Thursdays time off, Saturdays Kayoma Meetings, Sundays off. After my trip to Freetown, I designed my own itinerary based on follow up work and to tie up work initiated.

Aims of the Visit

· **School linking**

To facilitate communication and understanding between schools who already have links to maximize mutual benefit in achievable ways

To research and obtain materials that will be useful for classroom teaching in UK schools and to explore what materials would be of value for classroom use in BO

To explore ways in which school linking can be developed.

· **Kayoma Women's Group**

To assist the Kayoma Women's group to develop and identify means of implementing its goals and to assist in any other way

To liaise with the Warwick OWL support group and help it identify constructive means of support

To identify that Kayoma have satisfactory security of funds and that they have received funds already raised for the benefit of Kayoma by Warwick OWL

· **Community Centre**

To assist Bo OWL to develop their plans for the Centre in any way that Bo OWL identify

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- **Community Linking**

To explore ways in which linking between community groups might be encouraged to develop

- **General**

To reflect on the nature and purpose of the Link and report whatever observations or suggestions come out.

Recommendations

School Linking

- That the Bo committee continue to convene meetings of teachers from registered schools from time to time
- That a teacher from the meetings is included in the next visit to Leamington
- That work is undertaken to set up a review and development process for the Pack involving teachers in Bo and Leamington once it is published and being used
- That the visit from Bo is set as the launch for the Teachers Pack in Leamington and they are also able to return to Bo with the Pack for teachers here.

Women's Groups

- Kayoma and OWL executive should discuss and agree some formalization of the relationship, particularly in terms of financial accountability
- Kayoma should be given responsibility for convening and servicing a network of women's groups registered with OWL, including liaising with outside agencies for access to training and other benefits
- Kayoma and the Support group in Leamington should agree system of micro credit and its funding

Community Centre

- That proposals regarding various activities and equipment pertaining to the community centre be agreed and applications for funding be made
- That funding be sought to provide wages for a project manager for the final stages of building and initial stages of running the community centre
- That the committee considers carefully the issues and options regarding utility supplies to the centre bearing in mind its intended usage.

Community Linking

- That members of OWL concentrate their efforts in relation to any projects, on identifying and using their contacts and knowledge of the resources and capabilities of any other registered groups that may be beneficial to the Link.
- That any knowledge and skills gained within the committee and Kayoma be spread through internally run training

General Remarks

I have had an extremely educational and hugely enjoyable experience in Bo, thanks to the efforts of the committee and the friendly and open nature of the people I have met. I will never forget this trip or the knowledge I have gained.

I have tried my best to meet the brief given to me, though at times this has been frustrated by time (especially BMT) and resources.

I hope I have made some contribution to the standing of the group in Bo through the work I have done and that what I have learnt can be transferred to the committee in Leamington.

I would like to thank my sisters Theresa and Catherine, David and Jo, as well as the whole committee for their generous hospitality, their patience in the light of my constant questioning and interrogation, and their friendship.

My overall impression of the work that they are doing here has been one of admiration and respect, in the light of extremely difficult circumstances. I believe that their contribution to their community is committed, energetic and extremely beneficial.

Summary

The majority of the aims of my visit have been met but my overall feeling has been that the time was not long enough. I have had the opportunity to get to know the people and situation here in Bo well,

which has given me an insight into the possibilities for development that could not be facilitated before the end of my visit. I hope that I have equipped and enthused the groups enough to continue in my absence and I have assured them of my eventual return!

The future development of the areas I was asked to work on will depend on the ability of the groups to build their capacity in terms of continuing to develop and cascade their skills and knowledge within the link.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please make sure your annual £10 subscription is paid

Also, ensure you have signed a Gift Aid declaration.

Our Treasurer is [John McFarlane](#),
87 Larch Walk, Yardley, Birmingham, B25 9QP

WRITE TO SOMEONE!

Can we urge you to have your own friendship link with someone in Bo - contact Brian Austin on 428635 or [email](#) for details.

COMMUNITY CENTRE UPDATE

Our most recent picture of progress: 14 November

The latest is that the electrical wiring has commenced. All the materials for the floating of the roof have been obtained; and the roof will be completed once the electrical work is completed.

Finally, sanitation has to be provided (fresh-air latrines) and water supplied, probably in the form of a concrete tank filled from a lorry or standpipe (when it works!).

Our treasurer John McFarlane visited Bo in December and discussed progress and budgets with the Bo-OWL Committee. To date we have provided 100,000,000 Leones! That equates to £30,500. Of this there is still 11mL in their account in Bo. A further 26mL (£6500) is now needed to complete the build and this is available in our fund here.. However, there are no funds for any equipment or start-up costs, which were in the original budget.

Maria Franchi reported that she was impressed with the control that the OWL Committee exercised by obtaining their own materials, 'counting it out and counting it back in again' so that everything was accounted for.

She also has told us that, in her opinion, what OWL is doing will have an enormous impact and will transform life in Bo.

A SHORT SCHOOLS REPORT

Our schools sub-group is continuing to work hard and some progress is being made with the Schools showing interest. We hope you have seen the press reports in the Courier on January 9th (p130) and January 16th (p144) describing involvement at Ferncumbe and Brookhurst respectively. Good work has also been carried out at St. Mary's.

Teaching materials are being prepared in conjunction with St. Anthony's and Maria has brought back pictures, tapes, stories and other materials for us to incorporate into lesson-plans.

Both Mrs Nicolas and Joseph Bangali were also able to visit a few of our schools with great benefit to the children there having the opportunity of face-to-face contact.

Hopefully in the near future we will make more progress with the Secondary Schools, with interest being shown at Castle Hall 6th, Kenilworth and Aylesford, Warwick.

<p style="text-align: center;">AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONTROL ARMS CAMPAIGN Saturday 31st January, 10.30 - 3.00,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leamington Library Have your photograph taken to declare your support and be part of the million faces on the web, the world's largest photo gallery. VIP's are joining us at 12.30 p.m.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TRADE JUSTICE MOVEMENT Saturday, 21st February 2004, 3 - 5 p.m. Queen's Road Baptist Church, Grosvenor Road, Coventry Mike O'Brien, M.P. Minister of State for Trade and Investment and MP N Warwks and other speakers. Further details: Jo Rathbone 02476 678735</p>
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BUY A BRICK CAMPAIGN

Have you bought your brick for the Bo Community Project yet?
Send your £10 donation to The OWL Secretary,
44 St. Mary's Road, Leamington Spa CV311JP

Attractive leaflets are available from Jane Knight:
2, Gaveston Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 6EU. Tel: 01926
311807 or email jknightuk@ntlworld.com

OWL POSTBOX

How to send letters and materials to Bo

Put your letter or package into another envelope or wrapping and send it to

OWL POSTBOX c/o 31 The Greswoldes Radford Semele Leamington Spa CV31 1TP
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This is a monthly service: please ensure that materials reach the
OWL POSTBOX by **the last day of the month**

Please ensure that:

- There is a return name and address on your letter or packet
- Letters and packets are unsealed (British Council security requirement)
- No cash or 'things' are enclosed

Your letter or packet will then be forwarded to the British Council in Freetown that has facilities for delivering to Bo Town.

They will be taken to One World Link in Bo and distributed by them. (You may be asked to pay for the cost of sending bulkier items).

Further information and/or advice can be obtained from

OWL POSTBOX: Tel: 428635 or [e-mail](#)

A leaflet about penfriendships is also available - please ask for one.