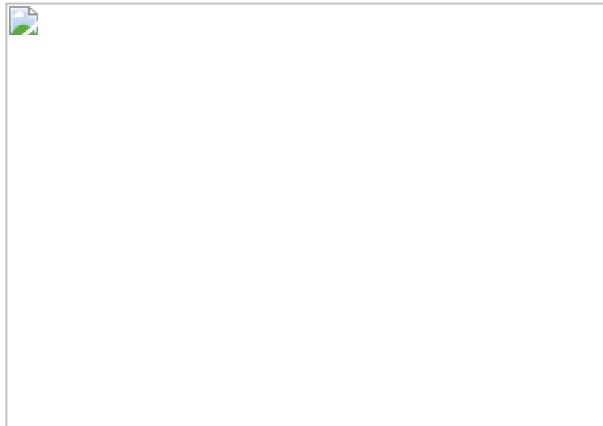


# OWL NEWSLETTER - February 2005

## A Historic Occasion



Mayor Cll. Mota Singh and Mayor Dr Wusu Sannoh signing the agreement between Royal Leamington Spa Town Council and Bo Town Council

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## Local Government Visit to BO

A four person delegation has just returned from a two week action packed bridge-building and fact finding visit to Warwick District's link community of Bo District in Sierra Leone

Councillor Mota Singh went in his capacity of Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa Town at the invitation of Dr Wusu Sannoh, Mayor of Bo Town

Councillor Bill Evans went in his capacity as Chairperson of One World Link the community organisation which supports the friendship activities between the two places.

Janet Alty went as convenor of the Women's Group that supports a sister Women's Development Association in Bo

Hussinatu Yumkella, herself a Sierra Leonean, went on behalf of the Warwickshire County Council to assess the opportunities for cooperation with the newly formed local councils in the wider Bo area.

The main achievements were:

- The formal conclusion and signing of a linking agreement between Royal Leamington Spa and Bo Town Councils to sit alongside the three twinning agreements with European towns.
- Mayor Singh was the guest of honour at various public events in Bo (A further account of Mayor Singh's visit will form the substance of this press release)
- High level exploratory meetings in Freetown (the capital of Sierra Leone ) with Government Ministers and representatives of the British Government, European Union, World Bank, and VSO, involving Ms Yumkella and Mota Singh who is also a County Councillor ( further information from the County Press Office in due course)
- Visits to a range of public services including a water filtration plant, Bo Hospital, and a camp for refugees from Liberia
- The last stages of the building of a multi-purpose community centre in Bo with money raised by voluntary donations from the people of Warwick District
- The rolling out of a women's groups micro-credit scheme to promote co-operative income generating enterprises into a second stage, and the start up of a Credit Union for individual loans (this will be subject to a separate press release in due course)
- The confirmation of three further primary school links for mutual benefit.
- The identification of two young people from Bo to visit Warwick District to promote friendship and cooperation between young people in each community ( this will be subject to a further press release)

This was Councillor Singh's first visit to Sierra Leone . It has made a great impression on him, and reinforced his commitment to building peace and understanding between communities across the world during his period of office and afterwards. He said: “ *I found my visit to Sierra Leone very fruitful. As our Government is committed to help African countries, now was the right time for me to visit Sierra Leone – one of the poorest*

*nations in the world. There is peace in the country and stable government. Bo Council is led by a very intelligent person, Dr Wusu Sannoh. It was a success to sign the agreement with him to cement our link. The work done by One World Link is very praiseworthy. The community centre is nearly ready. The One World Link is very solid and well respected in Bo. I was very impressed with the religious tolerance in the community. Muslim, Christian, and other minority religions live peacefully together. I visited many schools. They are in desperate need of school materials. The teachers are very committed and the children very healthy and enthusiastic. A small gift here can make a big difference there in a school, or a clinic, or other service. When given through the link it is not a hand-out but an act of friendship”*

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*The above is taken from our Press Release, but unfortunately the local papers chose to focus on the ensuing illness of Bill Evans rather than the reason for the trip and its outcomes. This means that this has not had the coverage that it deserves. (I hope the Editor is reading this!)*

*However, we are pleased to report that Bill and Hussinatu, Yumkella, who both contracted Malaria, have now recovered, as have Mota Singh and Janet Alty who were also unwell on their return suffering from the effects of 'Harmattan Flu', named after the dry, dusty easterly wind that blows from the Sahara at this time of the year.*

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## **Some personal reflections**

### **Mota Singh**

“On the 7 th January, I departed the U.K. on a two week visit to Bo District in Sierra Leone in West Africa . Warwick District is linked with Bo and the Town Council recently agreed to recognise this Link more formally. Part of my visit was therefore taken up with meeting our opposite numbers in Bo Town Council, concluding with the signing of a Friendship link between our two Towns.

“My visit was extremely interesting, but also quite humbling. Sierra Leone is a poor country that has been ravaged by bitter civil war. It is now one of the world's most impoverished nations according to United Nations statistics. During my stay I visited people throughout the District, in their homes, schools, hospital and meeting places. The impression I was given was that, despite the country's recent experiences and the poverty, people remain welcoming, cheerful and optimistic.

“I was accompanied by representatives of One World Link, an organisation which has worked unceasingly to raise the profile of this country and to direct resources and help that is so badly needed. It is hoped that through such links the fragile democracy now enjoyed by the citizens of Bo can be sustained and life improved for all.”

Extract for ‘ *Leamington Link* ', the Newsletter from Royal Leamington Spa Town Council

### **Hussinatu (‘Hussine’) Yumkella**

“As a Sierra Leonean, I sensed that my fellow countrymen shared my belief that we all in some way contributed to the ten-year conflict, which left tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters dead and many more mutilated.

This is why the peace agreement was not reached by blaming the rebels for the war but instead through reconciliation

and attempts to reintegrate the rebels back into society. For that reason, we have an obligation rather than just the responsibility to rebuild our motherland, which we fought so tirelessly to destroy. The Councillors of Bo Town Council described themselves as people-oriented development workers, which to me means that the local government platform is there to ensure that government is more representative of and accountable to the people who gave them political power.”

### **Janet Alty**

“The high point of my visit was the “Launch” of the Kayoma Women's Development Group. A really large number of women representing different women's groups associated with Kayoma marched (danced!) from the Holy Rosary School to the hall at the Bo Town Council – with a brass band from Christ the King College in full regalia at the front of the march, and a “cultural band” – drums and singers and shakers and a dancing Ngoboi in mask and straw costume – at the back!

"I look forward to reporting in greater depth on the work Kayoma and the women of Bo are doing – truly inspirational."

There will be a meeting of the Kayoma Women's Support Group as soon as Janet can find time to organise it – and find a time to suit all – so anyone who wants to be kept informed should get in touch with her: 427773 [janet@alty.net](mailto:janet@alty.net).

### Bill Evans

At the time of going to press, Bill was still unavailable to make any comments, since he is believed to be having a holiday after his Malaria to fully regain his health and strength. We look forward to hearing his opinions on his return, especially at the meetings on 5 th and 24 th March 2005.

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## Teachers' Group

### *Supporting Global Aspects in Education Teachers' Group*

We now have a **Primary Teachers' Group** that has met every half term since last summer, consisting of teachers in our linked schools that have increased to 8 - Brookhurst, The Ferncumbe School, St Anthony's, St Peter's, St Mary's, Clapham Terrace, Telford Infants and Emscote Infants. The exchange of letters, resources and children's work is gradually growing, making the two communities more real for teachers and children.

OWL also has a **School's sub-group** that is working to provide support to the teachers, especially by preparing **Teaching Notes and Lesson Plans**, some of which are being piloted. The **Bo-OWL Teachers' Group** have helped us by responding to questions from us, giving us valuable information to incorporate in this material. Our

recent visitors are also a source of facts and have provided us with more pictures. The sub-group is also approaching the Secondary Schools with a view to encouraging the linking of their schools.

Two of our schools and their Bo partners were recently jointly awarded a Race Relations Award for their friendship building, presented by the Chief Education Officer, Eric Wood.

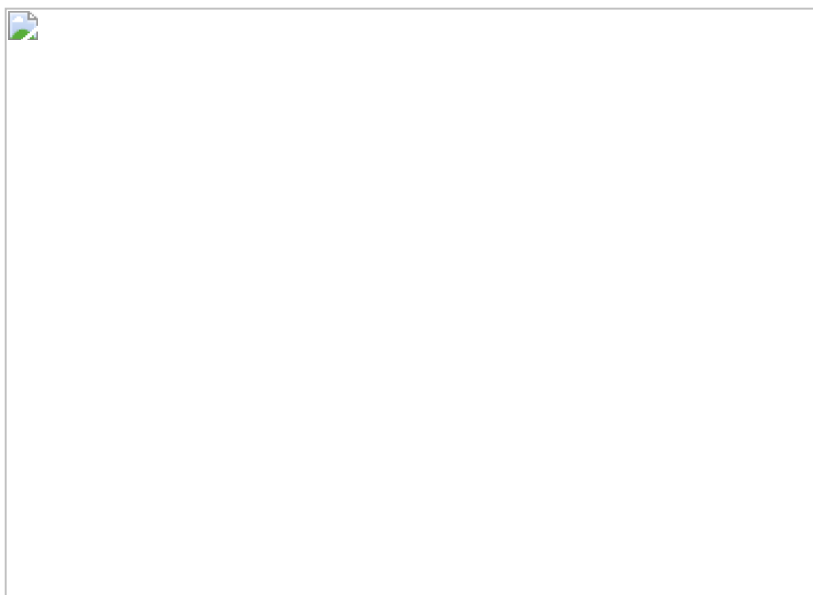
3 teachers are continuing to pursue obtaining a grant to visit Bo on an exchange basis later this year, after earlier setbacks.

Overall, progress is encouraging

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## The Bo Community Centre – one year on

January 2005



January 2004

Thanks to Janet Alty, we have these most recent pictures of the Community Centre taken in January. As you can see, the first phase of the project is nearing completion, which is a tremendous achievement for the Bo OWL

...; the last phase of the project is nearing completion, which is a tremendous achievement for the DSC and the Committee, who have worked tirelessly to bring this to fruition, especially considering that they have their own families and jobs as well. (How well would we be able to accomplish the building of a comparable structure over here?)

The latest report on progress identifies that £3500 is needed to complete the building and £5500 to furnish and equip it. We have about £3500 in our Development Fund, but after that is transferred we will have then exhausted the current fund raising effort. New means to raise funds for the furnishing would then be required, such as breaking it down into parts to fund-raise for specific purposes of the multi-purpose building as separate projects. Money provided by us for furnishing would be spent on locally sourced and produced items as much as is reasonably possible.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, we learned that they are tiling the floor and the toilets, the doors and windows are installed and the wiring is being completed.



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## Notes from the Committee

(Last meeting 1 st February)

### Observations on The Visit

Janet Alty was asked if she noticed many changes from her previous visit in the 1980s. She said that she had not spent much time in Bo itself on her first visit, but from this visit she has great admiration for the efforts at post-war recovery. She was particularly impressed by conciliation resources in Bo and hoped that they might form a closer relationship with OWL.

Mota Singh said that it had been a very busy and very successful visit, both in Bo and Freetown . He spoke highly of Hussine. He had attended a Rotary Club meeting and brought back a message to the local Rotary. A member of DRIM (Disability Rights and Independence Movement) was at an OWL meeting and expressed the wish for a connection. Mota was very pleased to meet Fr Peter Konteh.

No contact was made with Magnus Lansana who worked with Lee Hales on the computers, but emails have since been received from Magnus and he is still involved and expects to run the I.T facility at the Community Centre.

Bill Evans dealt with Youth links and the new Schools links, but due to his illness these will be dealt with when he has recovered. However, **we now know that two people have been selected to represent the Bo Youth Council on a visit to Leamington possibly in April – George F Mbayo, age 30, a Laboratory Technician at Bo Government Hospital and Jane Myambe, age 31, a Teacher at SLMB Secondary School.**

The Women's Group has now started a Credit Union in addition to the group-micro-credit scheme. Contacts were made with VSO.

The Bo OWL committee has not held elections recently: the current committee feel that they have a commitment to complete the Community Centre Project as a body.

A delay aborted the final OWL meeting in Bo, so some ends were not tied up. Face-to-face meetings are important in developing understanding of each other's ways of working.

Meetings in Freetown with representatives of international agencies and Ministers carried on until the very last hour before departure.

### County Council interest

It was felt that the County Council's interest in developing a partnership with the Bo area could be very valuable and is in tune with the aims and activities of the community link. The contribution that Hussinatu Yumkella (known to her friends as Hussine) has made to explore that potential and the organisation of the visit is greatly appreciated. John Myers was asked to write to Hussine to express our appreciation and to confirm our desire to work closely with the County.

### Hospital

Mota Singh visited Bo Hospital and observed that they are still in great need. As he is now a non-executive director of the Warwick Hospital Trust and has already had discussions with the Chief Executive, he will pursue possible areas of cooperation between the 2 hospitals with his fellow trust members. The hospital has just agreed to donate surplus books to Bo Hospital, so that is a start.

### Visit of Mayor Dr Wusu Sannoh

Wusu Sannoh hopes to take up Mota's invitation to visit Leamington after his attendance at the Local Government Conference in Aberdeen , arriving about 18 th March. It was felt that it would be suitable to have Dr

Wusu as guest of honour at our planned public meeting.

**Community Centre** - see Notes with pictures above

**Next Committee Meeting:** Monday 14 th March 8 p.m. 18 Lillington Road , Leamington Spa

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### **Dates for your Diary**

**Saturday 5 th March** , 12.15 p.m. St Paul 's Church, Leicester Street , Leamington Spa UN Association AGM “A North-South Link 23 years on” Mayor Cll Mota Singh, Cll Bill Evans, John Myers will be talking about the Link Ploughman's Lunch and Coffee £3.50

**Thursday 24 th March**, 7 p.m. Pump Rooms Annex Leamington Spa OWL Public Meeting “Old Friends – New Horizons” Report back by the party that went to Bo together with special guest The Mayor of Bo Town Dr Wusu Sannoh

**Thursday 14 th April** Global Week of Action meeting “Justice, Conflict and Peace Building from a Sierra Leone perspective” Mr Alithur Freeman MA Venue to be confirmed – please phone 425403 for details

**Saturday / Sunday 18 th / 19 th June** Leamington Peace Festival Pump Room Gardens

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### **Vist of Bo Town Mayor, Dr Wusu Sannoh**

Dr Wusu Sannoh, Mayor of Bo, elected in the first local elections in Sierra Leone for 30 years, will be visiting the area as the guest of the Mayor of Leamington Cllr Mota Singh. They will resume their fraternal friendship that started with Mayor Singh's visit to Bo in January. Mayor Sannoh will be here from the **18th to 24 March** . On the **19th March** he will be a special guest at Mayor Singh's Civic Evening in Leamington Town Hall . On **24th March** 7 pm in the Pump Rooms Annex he will be a special guest at a public meeting organised by One World Link which will report on the visit to Bo in January.

In between he expects to be busy with visits to the District and County Councils to continue to the process of making partnerships at all levels of local government. He will also expects to get around about meeting community organisations and local people.

While in the UK , Dr Sannoh will be in Aberdeen at the Commonwealth Local Government Forum International Conference, which will have Presidents and Mayors and leaders of local government present. Jane Knight and Hussinatu Yumkella will be joining them as well.

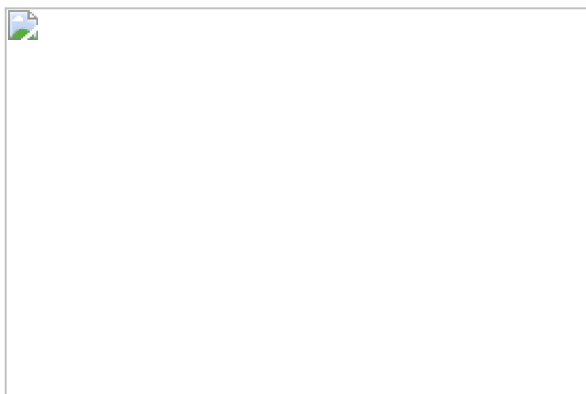
Dr Sannoh is a person of very good standing in his own community. He has been the Chairman of the Sierra Leone Red Cross in Bo, and he is the Chairman of Bo Koloseum sport for youth project supporting his long-term friend Moussa Conteh MP.

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### **One World Link Youth Exchange**

On his visit to Bo, Cll. Bill Evans met with representatives of the Bo Youth Council. Two people have been selected to represent them on a visit to Leamington (Leamington Town Council have given £1000 towards this) and the wider district. This is planned to take place in April for 2 to 3 weeks. Their programme is still developing, so ideas and suggestions are welcome.

They are: **George F Mbayo** . Age 30. Lab technician at Bo Government Hospital; a Baptist, and **Jane Myambe** . Age 31 Teacher at SLMB Secondary School , Nikibu Section, Bo; a Methodist.





**Aims:** to promote awareness of global issues and encourage global citizenship through the linking of youth groups in Warwick District and Bo , Sierra Leone .

**Objectives:**

- To host a visit of representatives from Bo in April to develop links between youth in the two areas, funded by Leamington Town Council
- To organise a return visit of young people from Warwick to Bo
- To encourage the involvement of young people in both districts to share ideas, experiences and skills in a reciprocal way
- To develop and promote youth exchange between the two districts

**Visit from Bo –**

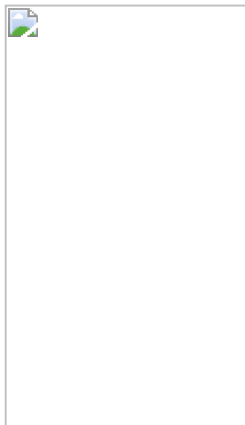
Two people have been identified to come from Bo. We hope that they will be able to visit for the first three weeks in April We hope that the visit will provide them with a taste of life for young people in Warwick District and provide opportunities for them to take part in a range of activities including:

- Attending school, college and University, social and sports activities
- Taking part in local youth community activities arranged by the Youth Service and local community youth groups
- Take part in volunteering activities undertaken by young people in Warwick District
- Meet young people from all walks of life in Warwick District and gain an understanding of the issues and problems as well as the opportunities they face
- Give young people in Warwick District an understanding of the differences and similarities in their experiences
- Begin to develop relationships with young people and youth leaders in Warwick District
- Identify how the links between youth in both communities could develop into a longer term relationship, including a visit by young people from Warwick District to Bo.

We also hope to support them to film a video diary of their visit in order to show young people in Bo and to encourage a similar video to be made in Bo and sent to youth groups here.

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## Report on Computers



**Magnus Lansana** , who is our contact in Bo on I.T. matters, has reported that Action Aid has given many schools in Bo Town 16 computers each! That doesn't mean, he says, that the schools are not using the computers we supplied. Although they have low memory and slow processors (e.g. 486), schools like CLC, Methodist High School , Milton Comprehensive Sec. School , UMC Primary School , Craft Shares and Rural Women Vocational are still using these. In some cases they have hard disk problems and some have been upgraded, as have the computers we supplied to Bo Town Council.

In future, if we are in a position to supply computers, we will have to supply at least Pentium processors. However, they are looking for **spare parts** such as Hard Disks of 1G and above, CD Roms, CD writers, socket 7 processors 200MHz, memories, power supplies, modem and also installation software such as modem drivers, Windows 98, 2000, XP, Office 97, 2000, XP and the most recent anti-virus disks.

**Lee Hales** , who advises the committee on I.T. matters, has recommended that we should re-focus our efforts on

components that would be useful. Now they have the hardware we can look at providing things to go with this. But there is always the problem of getting packages out there!

**Emails** Progress! It is worth reporting that a number of our contacts are now accessible by email, although it is expensive for them to use it. We have addresses for a number of contacts, so if you have a requirement to get an important message to Bo for any reason, please contact the OWL Secretary, John Myers at [jmyers4544@aol.com](mailto:jmyers4544@aol.com) and he will try to assist.

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### **Leamington Library One World Link Shelf**

Tracey Baker, the Stock Librarian at Leamington Library, has reported that the books in the One World Collection are "ticking along quite nicely" - which is good news. Titles include: Devil that danced on Water, Old Watering Holes, Unscathed, Blood Diamonds, Things fall Apart, African issues: Fighting for the rainforest and Fighting for the rainforest, No nonsense guide to international development, Sierra Leone diamonds, Sierra Leone at the end of the Twentieth Century, World Atlas of Sustainable development, Cooking the West African Way, Flavour of West Africa, Fishing in rivers of Sierra Leone, How de Body, Orphan girl. Do access these and encourage others to do so. If you don't know where to find them, ask at the desk for the One World Link shelf.

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### **Mobile phones needed in Bo**

The advent of a mobile phone network in Bo has made a real difference to communication there. Bo OWL could do with more phones to issue to key people in their network. If you are thinking of upgrading, please hang on to your old phone if you can and donate it to us. Please ask your friends and family to do the same. **Please send them to:** Janet Alty 18 Lillington Road , Leamington CV32 5YY

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### **Phoning Sierra Leone**

**for 20p or 25p per minute**

**These numbers give cheap access to S.L., although John Myers recommends the 25p No. due to the unreliability of the others**

**09055 860 860 25p**

0905 257 00 00 20p

09112 211 200 20p

Dial above these numbe first and then the number you want at the prompt. You will then be billed at the above rates on your bt account.

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### **WRITE TO SOMEONE IN BO**

*We have people in Bo wanting to have a correspondence with someone here.  
Further information and/or advice can be obtained from Brian Austin: Tel: 428635 or e-mail:  
[owl@31cv311tp.freemove.co.uk](mailto:owl@31cv311tp.freemove.co.uk)*

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### **Only £10 a year!**

£10 is all it costs to become a member of One World Link.  
We need many more members, so do join us by making a regular annual subscription, especially if you met our visitors while they were here and you would like to keep in touch with events as they develop.

Send donations and subscriptions to:

OWL Treasurer John McFarlane, 87 Larch Walk, Yardley, Birmingham , B25 9QP  
[mcfarlanej8@aol.com](mailto:mcfarlanej8@aol.com)



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# OWL Public Meeting

Thursday 24 th March, 7 p.m.

Pump Rooms Annex

Leamington Spa

*“Old Friends – New Horizons”*

Report back by the party that went to Bo

Special guest:

The Mayor of Bo Town

Dr Wusu Sannoh

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## 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

This is a monthly service: please ensure that materials reach the OWL POSTBOX

***by the last day of the month.***

Please ensure:

- 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 or collected by 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: owl@31cv311tp.freemove.co.uk

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

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Newsletter produced for OWL by Brian Austin, 31 The Greswoldes, Radford Semele, Leamington Spa CV31 1TP

We are still looking for a volunteer to produce future editions of this Newsletter! Can you help? Please contact me.