

# 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

## Gearing up for an African adventure

**PREPARATIONS** are well underway for 'The Voyage' - One World Link's youth exchange to Sierra Leone, which will run from 30<sup>th</sup> March to 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The delegation of ten met with Leamington's Mayor Councillor Alan Wilkinson at its first meeting at Leamington Town Hall in early September, and since then the group has continued to meet fortnightly to discuss fundraising, plan activities and develop a sense of what life is like in sub-Saharan Africa.

Participants have come from schools across the district, via a rigorous application process. The youngsters will be supported by Ben Wesson (OWL's youth exchange coordinator), Catherine Moody (OWL's youth coordinator, and a pupil at King's High School in Warwick) and Paul Atkins (a local teacher).

Ben Wesson, said: "I am really excited to be leading on this project. I think it's really important that young people gain an understanding of their place within the wider world and, by travelling to Bo, young people from Warwick District are exposed to a totally different culture with a totally different way of life, which I hope will leave them with a lasting impression."



The Team meets up with the Mayor

### THE VOYAGE

During the trip, the participants (and leaders) will gain cultural awareness and understanding, plus the communication and leadership skills which, in turn, will help them to become better global citizens. These skills will also benefit the wider community, through follow up work with local schools and youth groups, the media, online social networking, as well as the family and friends of the participants.

The group have already received backing from the Commonwealth Youth Council, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association and Kenilworth School, and participants will be undertaking individual fundraising. However, if you think that you might be able to help the group, please contact Catherine Moody on: [youth@oneworldlink.org.uk](mailto:youth@oneworldlink.org.uk).

## OWL Partnership "can only lead to good development"



**Mark Poston, DFID Programme Manager for Development Awareness. An educationalist by training, Mark previously ran DFID programmes in Kosovo, Palestine, Pakistan and Rwanda. He is in an excellent position to give us a view of the UK government's current line on aid and intervention.**

In the second of a series of occasional talks organised by OWL, we welcomed back as guest speaker Mark Poston of DFID, accompanied this time by Professor Paul Jackson from Birmingham University. Their themes were wide ranging - *What is Good Aid?*, *Aspects of Decentralisation*, and *Post Conflict Development*, including Chinese involvement in Africa. The speakers were, as ever, first class and pulled no punches. However, they were able to reassure OWL members that, in many ways, the type of partnership we have had with Bo over a long period of time can only lead to good development.

They explained how, sometimes, aid and development programmes cannot be long enough to get embedded and enable good local relationships for implementation. OWL's 30 year relationship with Bo, however, meant our development partnership was constantly evolving, with potential for modification to suit local needs. So far, we had achieved a lot - in sanitation, waste management and planning activities. But it was made clear that one of the most effective ways to enable good development in countries like Sierra Leone would be to have much fairer trade arrangements, dropping the subsidies in the North which block imports from the South, and a better global taxation system.



Question time with the experts

But there were other very real and difficult problems facing developing countries, like persuading national or other professionals to leave the comfort of offices in capital cities and operate up country; and the lack of observation of democracy and human rights in the aid negotiations with donors. The 60 people who attended were from all age groups and every word was listened to attentively. The debate was excellent and congratulations go to the organisers (including the volunteer caterers!)



**Prof. Paul Jackson Birmingham University. Paul is a political economist working predominantly on conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. His extensive experience in Sierra Leone immediately following the war led him to focus on conflict analysis and security sector reform. He works on policy with various European governments (including the UK), the EU, the UN and the World Bank.**

**COMING SOON!**

**5th March, 7-15pm, Bath Place: Film Show of new Documentary "When China Met Africa"**  
For further information tel: 01926 424223 or visit [info@oneworldlink.org.uk](mailto:info@oneworldlink.org.uk)

**22 May, 6.30pm: Talk on Mental Health Issues in Sierra Leone by Jane Shackman and Aminata Mansaray, both expert practitioners in this field.**  
For further information email [james.knight1@ntlworld.com](mailto:james.knight1@ntlworld.com)

**COMING SOON!**

## Chairman's Notebook



It's easy to be distracted by the non-stop 'cliff-hanging' drama that is the headline news day after day coming to us from the Euro Zone. And, of course, for those of us directly hit by job loss, reduced hours or belt tightening, there are harsh realities to be faced and who knows where we'll all be in a year's time? But, when I look to our friends in Bo, it can be very chastening to realise that, for all our talk of 'looking into the abyss' or 'the worst ever financial crisis', their life-long companions are financial uncertainty and the premature loss of family and friends - and where having any sort of meaningful job is a real bonus.

Since our last newsletter, we've had a number of very valuable visits from Bo: in the early summer Maada and V.V., our Chair in Bo, and three visitors from local government - Alex, Bockarie and Roland - and most recently Emmanuel and Tenneh, two teachers from Bo. Having visitors from Bo makes such a difference to us all; they lift and inspire us and remind us how close we are despite the physical distance between our two countries. We are so fortunate to hear their views, share mutual experiences and then laugh together.

*Chris King*

## Day of The African Child 18 June 2011



Scenes from a glorious summer's day spent celebrating the Day of the African Child at All Saints' School in Warwick. The day was full of music, dance, storytelling and new friendships made, with the highlight a live link with schools in Bo.

### 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)



## AGM 2011 - a lively affair! James Knight gives us his personal account.....

The fifty or so people who turned up to the OWL AGM on Saturday 5 November were in for a real treat. The event kicked off with a delicious lunch supplied by the catering team at Bath Place in Leamington, and members and guests were able to chat informally over stews and salads before the meeting proper began. Cllr Alan Wilkinson (Mayor of Leamington), Cllr Judy Falp (Mayor of Whitnash), Cllr Phillip Morris-Jones (Chair of Warwickshire County Council) and his wife, Joanna, and Cllr Felicity Bunker (Chair of Warwick District Council) shared the feast and showed a keen interest in OWL's work.

After a short formal session to elect committee members and receive reports, visiting finance officers Alex Allieu and Bokarie Koroma gave us a short and entertaining review of their eight-week working visit to the finance departments of councils in Warwick and Coventry. Then came a presentation by Liz Garrett, Emmanuel Senesie and Tenneh Koroma, who told us about the trip made by Warwick District teachers to Bo last spring, and about plans for Emmanuel and Tenneh's stay over here.

Catherine Moody and Paul Atkins came up next to give us details of the trip they will be leading to Bo at Easter. They will be taking a group of 15-17 year-olds out to Sierra Leone to reinforce links with the youth group over there and take part in a range of activities. The meeting finished off with a quick talk by new committee member John Archer, who brought us up to date with his ground-breaking urban planning work in Bo.

The gathering was a welcome antidote for those of us who feel cold dread at the thought of AGMs! This one was packed with interesting stories and plans, and everyone there - members, dignitaries and members of the public - was thoroughly engaged for the whole two and a half hours.



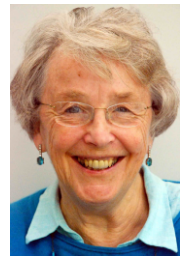
The AGM in full flood



From left to right: Alex Allieu and Bokarie Koroma talk finance; Catherine Moody sets the scene for the youth visit; Liz Garrett, Emmanuel Senesie and Tenneh Koroma talk about the teachers' visit; John Archer holds forth on city planning; visiting dignitaries listen in rapt attention.

# Local Authority Round-up

From Jane Knight



It is now 4 years since the local government side of One World Link went into direct action with the visit of 4 officers from Warwick County and Warwick District Councils to Bo City Council - via a leaky hovercraft! They worked out a 4 pronged programme with the Mayor of Bo, Wusu Sannoh.

Since then, and many visits later, the machines for a city wide waste management programme are in place and the Bo citizens are ready and eager to take part in the programme. Andy Smith attended the evaluation meetings in Freetown which were organised by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The Warwick Bo partnership was highly praised at the presentation to all the Sierra Leone city councils by no less than the President himself, Ernest Bai Koroma.

Meanwhile through the efforts of Richard Hall (WDC Chief Environmental Health officer) and local Rotary clubs, there are various new water access points around Bo. Richard is also hosting a lecturer in Environmental Health from Njala University - Roland Alpha.

John Archer, who was WDC's chief planning officer, has just come back from his 3rd visit to Bo as part of a programme to make a local plan of the city for the next 10 years' development. You can read how he got on in his article on Page 4..

The 4th prong of the local government partnership with Bo is the building of capacity for the Finance Department. Alex Allieu and Bockarie Koroma, who are Finance officers in Bo City Council, are spending 8 weeks shadowing accountants in Warwick District, Warwickshire County and Coventry City Councils. It has been a happy 2-way process with our local officers finding out a lot about life running the finances in a council with far less resources available than here. Meanwhile, Alex and Bockarie adapted well to life in Leamington and found their way around independently of us. Many thanks to Alan Richardson and family and Marcia Watson for hosting all our visitors.

There will be new local elections in Bo next year and Mayor Sannoh will have to stand down. Also the Commonwealth money has come to an end. So the future of OWL's local government programme is uncertain at the moment but there is no lack of enthusiasm to keep it going!



## The Full Sierra Leone Experience!

Catherine Moody, OWL's youth coordinator, reflects on last summer's trip to Bo...

The youth visit of July 2011 was my first trip to Bo, and I think that I got the full Sierra Leone experience: delayed flights, faulty buses, bribing policemen, and Hondas. Jane Knight, Ben Wesson and I travelled out together, and then Jane carried on to stay with Bishop Patrick in Kenema, leaving Ben and I to the youth group.

We had intended to carry-out planning for the youth exchange, but the newly elected Youth Executive had a different idea. Inspired by the OWL strategy document, they suggested we worked together on a youth policy of our own. Many hours later, a document was produced, which I believe really shows the youth group's aims for the years to come. We did eventually get down to planning for the youth exchange, talking about issues like transport, training and possible excursions. We were also involved in making and selling OWL youth t-shirts designed with the new youth logo from Warwick. These sold very well, and made a profit, partly because the members of the youth wing could not attend our leaving party if they hadn't bought one!



Catherine and Ben get involved in the health programme

**"By the end of our two short weeks in Bo, I felt very much at home,"**

At the time of our visit, the youth wing had 17 member groups, although more were signing up even during our time there. We managed to visit many of these groups, which range from music, sport, advocacy to agriculture. The groups we didn't visit still had the chance to meet us at the general youth meeting, at which there were about 70 young attendees.

Although members of the Youth Executive had only planned our packed schedule within a week of our arrival, it all ran smoothly - but to African time! As a thank you to the Youth Executive, Ben and I secretly refurbished the run-down youth office. We worked with one member of the Executive to buy flooring, curtains, a cabinet, notice boards, and stationery. We opened it to a very surprised Executive with a ribbon cutting ceremony, and a crate of Star beer.

Of course the aim of OWL is to make friends, and despite our busy schedule, we managed to be very sociable. We had great nights out seeing members of the youth group perform, visiting Jane and the Bishop in Kenema, and visiting OWL members for meals. By the end of our short two weeks, I felt very much at home in Bo, and certainly did not want to go back to England. It is the personal connections made on a visit which is the enduring memory for all the lucky members who get to visit Bo. It is why I am looking forward to the youth exchange in April so much, to see the friends I made, and to see the young people from across Warwick District make friends of their own.



Outside the OWL Youth Office in Bo

# Best Laid Plans...

**John Archer reports on his follow up visit in December to help Bo City Council (BCC) on land use planning.**



With new digital maps of the city now in place, BCC had appointed a new member of staff, Willie P Momoh to develop planning for the City, starting work in January 2012. My task was to work with Willie to develop a programme of work for this year.

Willie and I got to know each other well. Like me, he is a retired planner, having worked in the Ministry of Lands following qualification in Ghana and the USA. As a local resident of Bo, he was well aware of local issues and concerns. We looked at city land use and could see that a serious problem was lack of coordination of the rapid expansion of the City.

Many areas of land had been sold for development, but there was no overall plan showing where these were. Individual site layout plans existed, but no one knew what the overall impact would be.

We agreed that the first priority would be to gather copies of all layout plans together and draw up a single plan showing what was committed for the future growth of the City. From that BCC would then work with the Paramount Chiefs, landowners and other parties to agree ways of avoiding the many development conflicts that take place. In this way, with continuing UK support, a good start will be made to assisting Bo develop effectively in the future.

*John Archer*



## Nan is moving on.....

**Nan Ells, who has been a familiar face at OWL for many years, is set to start a new life up north.** Nan first joined OWL in 1988 and from then until 1992, when she moved to Cambridge, she acted as Shipping Coordinator, packing books and medicines to be shipped to Bo (they could be shipped free of charge in those days). She returned to Leamington in 2007 and for the last five years has acted as Minutes Secretary and Library Coordinator. She also transcribed the letters written to and from Bo during the long Civil War, so they could be put onto the OWL website.

"I have never been to Sierra Leone but have learned a great deal from meeting with our Bo visitors," says Nan. "I have also enjoyed very much working with the wonderful and dedicated members of OWL here in Leamington. I will be moving to Leeds sometime in the new year in order to be near my daughter."

Chris King paid tribute to Nan's significant contribution to OWL. "There is no doubt that we are all going to miss Nan's quietly efficient organisation, her enthusiasm for the OWL project and her wise counsel and we are very sad to see her go," said Chris. "Our loss is Leeds' gain and, of course, we wish her every happiness in her new life in Yorkshire."

## 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 favourite 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.....

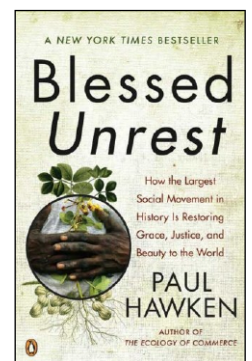
*OWL has a library of books on a range of relevant subjects which members can borrow. The OWL collection, which at present contains just over 20 books, is located in the Leamington Library in the World History section. They can be borrowed from the Library in the usual way.*

*In each issue of the Newsletter, we carry a short book review. For this issue, Chris King recommends a book that he believes will fill us all with hope.....*

### Blessed Unrest

By Paul Hawken

(Penguin Books 2008)



**This book will open your eyes! Paul Hawken is an environmentalist, journalist and author who's been around for a while. The argument central to the book is that all over the world in every corner of every country, there are small movements, groups and individuals, NGO and volunteer, which unknowingly but effectively congeal together to make mankind's largest ever social movement.** Hawken describes how these groups defy the notion that a 'movement' needs an ideology or religious core beliefs, or a strong leader. He argues the opposite, that the very strength and effectiveness of these groups is down to their being smaller, bottom up, very democratic and not linked to each other.

There's more than enough detail about what we're doing wrong, why we continue to depend on corrupt systems, why large organisations can't work and the sure certainty that there can be no separation between the two central pillars: the concept of social justice for humans and the sustainability of all forms of life on our planet.

So, if you'd like to find out more about this in a book that's extremely well thought out and easy to read, then look no further!

**With Nan Ells moving on, WE ARE LOOKING FOR A VOLUNTEER TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE OWL LIBRARY. If you would be interested in taking this on, then please contact**

**John Myers on 01926 425403**

*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)