
Visiting Our Links in Bo

Chris King describes a hectic and productive visit to Sierra Leone in October with JoAnne Fisher, Ben Wesson, Judith Ellis and Jane Knight.

JoAnne and Ben went out to vanguard our fledgling youth group, Judith went as Women's group representative and Jane came as general support, though she also spent time with Bishop Koroma in Kenema.

Before we got to Bo, Jane and I had to take care of matters in Freetown, meeting with DFID, the EU, World Bank, UNDP, the British Council and the British High Commission. What's very satisfying is that these organisations all know of us now. Our reputation is established and we seem to be respected and listened to; we have the sort of experience that they as individuals can never find... we've had 28 years without a change of direction and we always deliver.

Once in Bo, JoAnne and Ben took to the life like ducks to water. They were constantly sought after; their calendars were soon booked solid and they made many friends. They seemed to be just what the many of the Bo Youth groups had been waiting for and a wonderful time was had by all.

OWL matters are in rude health

There were many waiting to visit with Judith too. She has returned having garnered a wealth of information about women's issues: health, maternity, literacy, business and workshops; she turned no-one away and they came to show her their work, to talk and to share their experiences.



Ben and JoAnne with Mary Bakarr and her staff



An IT presentation upstairs at the Centre. An introduction to Global Schools Partnerships

In the mean time, I joined forces with JoAnne and Ben and visited several schools; I had numerous meetings with City council members, including of course our good friend Wusu Sannoh the mayor, and Jo Pine, his deputy. We met for the first time William Alpha the new Chief Administrator, certainly a warm and very capable man, and caught up with Eric Moosa the environmental health officer. I visited the landfill site, the central dump, a soap making factory sited on the dump, the under-construction city mortuary, and the new council buildings.

So, in short, OWL matters are in rude health; the Community Centre is flourishing and in good financial order, we shared thoughts on the way forward, - their hopes and fears. The future looks good. We must recruit hard here, and not just for the Youth Group. They need us to reflect themselves, in energy and in age. There is still much to be done.

First published in the OWL Newsletter, November 2009