

# 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

## There's so much going on ...

... that we have summarised current One World Link on this page, with full articles on the following pages. To find out more and hear first-hand accounts, please **come to our AGM** at 2pm on Tuesday, 2nd March, at the Dale Street Centre, Leamington

Here is a summary of some of our activities during 2018 and plans for 2019

### Education

We maintain close school ties between fifteen Warwick/Leamington Schools and Partner schools in Bo.

The present emphasis is on the environment and what we can do.

Four teachers visited Bo in February 2018, visiting all partnership schools, developing good practice and exchanging projects.

A return visit from Bo had been programmed for June, but unfortunately had to be cancelled as a result of visa application problems.

Day of the African Child celebrations were held in June, very successfully, with attendance from almost 500 local children.

### and and and ...

UK teachers go to Bo in February 2019 and a return visit is planned during the

summer. These visits are funded by the British Council.

Teachers in Bo and UK have a vigorous WhatsApp group keeping them in touch daily.

The next Day of the African Child will be on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> June.



Schools formalise their link

### Health

The potential for a health link continues to grow. A visit was undertaken in November/December to investigate the potential for developing a health support link, focusing on the Yemoh Town health

clinic. This was positive and further exploration of how such a link can develop.

### Waste Project

The success of the waste management project in Bo has led to its expansion to the towns of Kenema and Makeni.

Technical specialists visited Bo in May providing training and advice to the project. There is potential for extending the project further and another technical support visit is in the offing.

Linked schools in Bo will be introduced to waste project activities.

### Local Government

The Prince's Foundation project on urban management is being developed further following the workshop sessions in Bo the previous year. We continue to develop our links with local government in Bo City and Bo District and shall be represented at an important workshop early in 2019.

## The Waste Project expands again

Glenn Fleet and Derek Greedy have been visiting Bo regularly over the past ten years, advising the council on waste management. Following the civil war the disposal system had stopped completely and rubbish was becoming a major problem and health hazard. From early beginnings where One World Link facilitated funding by UNDP and later the British aid programme, the project has now extended to two further cities, Makeni and Kenema, working with a German NGO.

Their visit in May 2018 was a technical mission to provide training and capacity building to field technicians and managers of the three cities. The seven days of training covered everything from waste

collection to disposal and the management of controlled waste sites and Glenn and Derek provided manuals for site management. A major component was training in organic waste shredding and composting, enabling green waste to be recycled back to the land. For this to succeed, local councils will need to ensure that householders sort their waste carefully; councils in the UK face the same concern.



Feeding green waste into a shredder

Following the success of the project, first in Bo, then in Makeni and Kenema, it is to be rolled out nationwide. It is amazing to see how the limited project of ten years ago has blossomed into a national programme.

## Chairman's Notebook



There has certainly been much going on within our link as you will see from the articles in this newsletter.

And the reason for this? Two main factors - the continued commitment of people here and in Bo and the network of long-standing relationships between our two communities. These have enabled us to build partnerships that enable sharing and learning each way. It's the personal touch that makes things work.

Of course, we aim to pass on skills and experience where these can help our partners meet their aspirations for development. But retaining personal contacts and equality in relationships is the key to maintaining our close involvement over the long term.

All relationships evolve over time. OWL has seen activities move between various areas as individuals come forward and issues change. As well as maintaining progress in education and local government links, we are now also exploring the development of a health link.

This is particularly exciting as the sharing of friendships and expertise in health can provide benefit in a key area for the future of the Bo Community.

I have every confidence that with the people and the relationships that we have in place, OWL will keep us all closely and happily linked for many years to come.

## Six years as Chairman of OWL UK

*John Archer reflects on a period when the link has withstood the Ebola crisis and come out as strong as ever.*

Just over six years ago I took on the role of Chair of OWL. It has been a fascinating time, during which I have learned so much about a remarkable community.

To be involved with people who manage life in such positive and direct way has been an amazing experience. In a country where infrastructure of any sort is in limited supply, there is no shortage of friendliness, human support and sheer pleasure in human contact.

It has been a great privilege to have been Chair during a time when we have seen significant advances in our relationship. School links have expanded, the waste project has seen major benefits and local government contacts have developed further. Many visits have taken place both to and from Bo and we have continued to maintain our public presence here in Leamington/Warwick through social and public events.

Of course, there have been difficult times, none more so than during the Ebola crisis a few years ago. During that dreadful time it was more important than ever to keep close contact and OWL

also helped coordinate responses from other groups here in the UK to do what little we could to help the situation.

I was a member of the first visit to Bo just after Ebola and whilst there had been great sadness, I could see how the community was already looking ahead to better things with determination.

Whilst I have enjoyed my role, I feel that it is right to step down at this point to allow someone else to move into the role. A healthy organisation will draw benefits from seeing a change to individuals in key roles, allowing fresh ideas and new approaches to develop. I am sure this will be the case with a new Chair for OWL.

I shall still be closely involved and am happy to continue to serve on the Committee and take part in the many exciting areas we are developing.

And to all those in OWL who have given me support, both here and in Bo - it has been a brilliant time - thank you all so much.

John

## Other news in brief

### UK teachers going to Bo

Another group of four teachers will visit Bo during February. They can expect a busy programme of teaching, training, visits and social events - just like the group who went last year.

The theme this time is the environment and the things that individuals can do to protect and improve it. Schools in Leamington and Warwick are already taking practical steps by making Ecobricks. These are plastic bottles rammed full of plastic that cannot be recycled, then used as decorative fillers in masonry.

Meanwhile, in Bo, they will learn about the Waste Project. The manager wrote: "As part of the project scope, school based waste management/sanitation is central to our work in the three cities and therefore a timely decision for OWL to give it a focus as this will augment our joint support the sector."

This teachers' visit, and the return visit planned for the summer, are supported by the British Council's Connecting Classrooms scheme.

Hear more at our AGM in Leamington on 13<sup>th</sup> March

### John Myers - 80 for 80

John Myers has been an active member of One World Link for many years. He moved to East Sussex 5 years ago but has stayed on as a long distance supporter making occasional visits to OWL events in Leamington and staying in touch with old friends in Bo.

On achieving his 80th birthday he decided to mark his 80 years with a fund raising 80 kilometres walk across East Sussex from Lewes to Rye over 5 days. He chose to support One World Link so that all the people who know him in that connection would have an opportunity to help him raise funds for OWL. He set out on 30th June and arrived in Rye on 4th July and is very grateful to all those who showed their support. John's magnificent effort raised more than £350 for One World Link.



John on his way

# My last visit to Bo

**Jane Knight looks back on more than 35 years since she initiated the link with Bo.**

In 2017 on what must have been about my 20th visit to Sierra Leone since 1981, I announced that I would not be returning as I am getting too old.

So, imagine their surprise when I turned up in Bo again in October 2018!

However, I had to go back to say good-bye to Bishop Koroma whose health had deteriorated so badly in 2018, and he had ended up blind and very fragile.

I am sorry to say that he died 6 weeks after I left. I have lost three of my closest Sierra Leonean friends whom I first met in 1982, and who guided me through the years of establishing our One World Link partnership. Had they lived in this country, I am sure they would have lived much longer.

Going back 37 years after my first visit to Bo brought back many memories. Armed with a few contact names given to me in England from OXFAM and others, I spent 2 weeks asking various individuals if they would be interested in a friendship link between the people of Bo District and Warwick District? Would such a link (based on equality) be possible or desirable? It took 2 more visits in 1982 and 1983 to be confident that the answer was yes.

In the early days there was much stopping and starting as people lost interest and communications were limited to snail mail and hand delivered letters via the early visitors, and the progress was small but it was there.

At least the first exchange visits between Bo and Leamington helped to recharge everyone's batteries and the link started to grow.

Even today, the expectations especially in Bo were and are wide ranging. Doubts about changing the relationship between people in such different worlds, long influenced by donor recipient attitudes wrought by colonialism and charities over the years are slowly being eroded... White people are now being taken on as real friends with trust and love shared by many across the divide. We now have rich and inspiring partnerships between

teachers, medical staff, and local government officers and members. From hesitant one to one school links, we have teacher training programmes across many of the primary schools in both Districts, and health worker and local government planning and waste schemes. The latter is reaching out country wide. And then there are the personal engagements and sheer love between all the OWL members.

On a practical level, there have been some dramatic changes, and in other ways nothing has changed. Most dramatic has been the development of mobile phones (by-passing any significant development of land lines). On my first visit to Bo, I had to queue at the post office and wait for the telephone operator to connect all the cables and plugs until 'Hey Presto!' I

*“On my first visit to Bo, I had to queue at the post office and wait for the telephone operator to connect all the cables and plugs”*

heard my husband's voice crackling down the line from England. Now, not only does everyone (even in the villages) have a phone, but they can call for free and send pictures of everything that is happening, on Whats App.

On my first visit the pound was worth 2 Leones. On this last visit, it was Le10,000.

The challenges of keeping OWL alive despite disappointments and frustrations remain, but our link survived the civil war and Ebola. There is further optimism now because of the political change last year from the Northern dominated APC government to a new President (Maada Bio) from the Southern region (SLPP) party. He has brought optimism that the country will at last, go forward.

When I first arrived, the country was being stripped of all its wealth by the dictator, Siaka Stevens. During this last visit, Bo OWL arranged for me to meet the President (the last one I met was President Tejan Kabbah just after the civil war). This was a dramatic end to the experience of arriving in Sierra Leone, knowing no-one, and now leaving with a handshake from the President!



Early days - Fathers Fabian and Koroma and Jane Knight



The One World Link Centre under construction in Mattru Road, 2004



Jane with President Maada Bio, 2018



Bishop Patrick Koroma

# The Day of the African Child, 2018



Day of the African Child 2018 Five hundred children, from 15 schools in Leamington and Warwick, met for a day of celebration and learning, the "Day of the African Child" on 15th June. They gathered in a large marquee and listened to a poem "I am an African Child" and heard about the day in 1976 when school children were killed during protests in South Africa

Each of the participating schools has a partner school in Bo (Sierra Leone) through One World Link (OWL) which has been promoting friendship & mutual learning between Bo District and Warwick District for 37 years. The school links are maintained through activities such as annual teacher exchanges, children sharing work & projects, pen friendships, school clubs, teacher & children's friendships & teacher training delivered in Sierra Leone.

The Day of the African Child celebration saw children enjoying a series of contrasting workshops. In two rooms there was quiet as they listened to West African stories told by Sierra Leonean guests. They made plenty of noise in the drumming workshops as they learnt to play rhythms on djembes.

In two other classrooms there was drama as they acted out a cliff-hanger story about a boy stuck in a tree surrounded by crocodiles, a snake and a lion; how could he escape? Nearby there was vigorous dancing and in a marquee there was equally enthusiastic singing.

*"St. Pauls children and staff had a very memorable day. It was a delight to invite so many children, staff and parents from local schools to join us in this celebration."*

On the field children were enjoying football (the favourite sport in Sierra Leone) and an obstacle race.

There were formal proceedings too. Pupils from each school presented 'Send My Friend' children's rights posters to our MP, Matt Western, calling for schools to be made safe havens for children all over the world. Finally all 500 children joined in the songs they had learnt earlier in the day – what a loud and happy sound to round off the day!

Liz Garrett (OWL Schools' Co-ordinator) said, "It is unique & incredibly special to have so many Leamington & Warwick primary schools linked with schools in Sierra Leone. Strong bonds & friendships have grown between school communities & it is a joy to see children & teachers from the UK & Africa learn from each other & work together mutually."

Matt Bown, Headteacher of the host school, St Pauls, commented: "St. Pauls children and staff had a very memorable day. It was a delight to invite so many children, staff and parents from local schools to join us in this celebration. We were blessed with lovely weather and lovely people, the perfect combination to focus our thoughts on the 'Day of the African Child' and what it really means."

One World Link is very grateful for the support for this event received from Warwick District Council Arts Development Strategic Project funds.

We are now planning for the Day of the African Child on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019. This will be the tenth anniversary year for the celebration. Once again we shall bring some 500 children together. In addition to singing and dancing, the programme includes teachers from Bo telling traditional stories.



# Teachers visit to Bo 2018

*Five teachers from Leamington and Warwick visited Bo in January 2018*

Siân Atkins, Claire Wright, Tim Bladon and Tim Hussey, all teachers in the Leamington and Warwick area, visited Bo together with Paul Atkins, our Secondary Education Coordinator. For Siân, Claire and Tim Bladon this was their first visit to Bo and of facing classes 60 pupils or more, without any modern materials or technology. It

gave them a new perspective on teaching and a real understanding of the difficulties facing their counterpart teachers in Bo.

They ran workshops at the OWL Centre for their brother and sister teachers in Bo covering modern teaching techniques that could be taught using local materials.

As always this was a period of hard work (see the week's programme below) mixed with the pleasure of meeting new

colleagues, who made them very welcome, and the excitement of experiencing a new environment.



The UK teachers and some of their hosts in Bo

Paul Atkins and Tim Hussey visited all the remaining partner schools to see how the link was progressing and to highlight any issues.

Tim introduced the people of Bo to the strange sport of making, eating and

making pancakes. A real cross-cultural event that introduced a hilarious competitive element.

Paul visited to the Secondary schools that currently have a connection with One World Link to see how they felt their relationship was progressing. It appears, at

this stage, that there is a more positive response from the Bo end than here in the UK. It is now for discussion how best to develop a programme that is mutually beneficial.

Paul went to Kenema to visit Bishop Koroma, as his health had been deteriorating recently, in order to send regards from all who know him in the UK. Whilst there, Paul also visited the missionary hospital in Panguma.

All finished the rewarding visit with a short period of rest and recuperation at Bureh beach before leaving Sierra Leone. They agreed that it had been an enjoyable and instructive experience and their lives changed for the better. They made many friends and would welcome a chance to go again.



Maths workshop led by Tim Hussey

## What do teachers do when they visit Bo?

*Is it all work, no play? Or all play and no work? Here is the itinerary for the group who visited in 2018*

Monday	Arrive in Bo (and wait for lost luggage to arrive) Meet head teachers in linked schools and plan the week's programme Welcome meal from Bo teachers
Tuesday	Tim B, Siân and Claire visit their linked schools. Paul and Tim H visit three other schools each Visit Children's Hospital Meet Maada Fobay, Chairman of Bo OWL
Wednesday	Tim B, Siân and Claire work with their linked schools. The others meet senior inspectors of schools Paul visit four secondary schools to investigate possible links All visit the Bomeh Park project - the site of the former central garbage dump
Thursday	Tim B, Siân and Claire work with their linked schools. Tim H visits three other linked schools Skype call to schools in the UK from BDEC Messima and New Jerihun Road Afternoon football tournament
Friday	Training session for Bo teachers led by visiting teachers: Maths, Phonics, Health education Paul visits Bishop Koroma and Panguma Mission Hospital in Kenema, others visit orphanage
Saturday	Free day - visit the market
Sunday	Pancake races! Farewell dinner at the OWL Centre
Monday	Paul, Tim and John Sandi interview prospective candidates for the return visit of Bo teachers to UK All leave Bo

# A new health link?

*Helena White and Sarah Galloon\* went to Bo to look at the prospects for a health link - a new venture*

In October 2018 Helena and Sarah made a short visit to Yemoh Town Community Health Centre in Bo with a view to developing a supporting friendship, continuing the ethos of One World Link.

Yemoh Town Community Health Centre was built to support the people of Yemoh Town and the surrounding areas - approximately 18,000 people and has recently been extended to offer a more comprehensive maternity service with new rooms for delivery and post natal care. There is also potential for a laboratory, enabling quicker diagnostics without need for patient transfer.

Lansana Deen is the senior Community Health Officer (CHO), a very friendly and dedicated man who provides good leadership and is very keen to nurture our friendship into a supportive and reciprocal relationship.

Yemoh Town Health Centre is the highest level Peripheral Health Unit in the Kakua Chiefdom, with a number of Community Health Posts (CHP) referring to it, and for which Mr Deen is responsible

There are 3 CHOs and 2 Maternal and Child Health Aides who provide ante-natal, labour and post-natal care - there are no midwives at the health centre. The majority of the staff are volunteers.

Ante-natal consultations are being encouraged in order to detect problems earlier and are around: 120-180/month – women are seen any day of the week so care is not missed for want of being

free on a given day. There are 12-20 births per month; 18 due this month

The extension of free health care to more categories of the population means less income for the health unit; such income is used to fill gaps in medication and supplies (eg sutures for perineal repair) from Ministry of Health and Sanitation. This gap is filled in part by patients or even staff paying out of their own pocket.



Visitors and the staff at Yemoh Town Community Health Centre

There are also children's clinics held at the centre that are mainly for vaccinations but all sick children brought to the centre will be seen and referred on appropriately.

Looking into the future in regards to our Link I feel very positive. The team of staff at this unit are very engaging and very keen to learn as much as they can to improve services offered. The building itself is ready to be utilised as a centre

able to serve a growing community with plenty of scope to sustain further children's clinics and inpatients when required. It has also been earmarked to become a centre for Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care which means further input from the Government. This is great news as it currently has no running water or electricity which is essential for any health facility. I believe that if we Link with Yemoh Town Health Centre and work with the great health team there we can make a tangible improvement to the health care offered to the people of the area.

*\*Helena White is a midwife with extensive experience in Sierra Leone and Sarah Galloon is a health visitor, also with African experience.*

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## More Planning support for Bo

*Phil Clarke and Mair Evans are heading back to Bo*

Bo is currently a city of approximately 180,000 people, but is expected to grow to nearly 600,000 by 2040. Over the last couple of years, OWL has been working with the Prince's Foundation to help Bo City Council think about the implications of this grow and to try to develop a plan for the city.

Following a very successful workshop we ran with the Prince's Foundation in 2017, the city council is keen to carry this work forward so we are going out to Bo at the end of January to do a follow-up session. This will be an intensive three-day

workshop with councillors, council staff and other stakeholders in the city. While we are in Sierra Leone we will also be visiting other projects in Bo and meeting with DfID in Freetown.

By happy coincidence our visit will overlap with the teachers' visit, so we hope to be offering them some support also.

They will also be following up on our fledgling health link and, whilst in Freetown, will be maintaining our contacts with DfID and other agencies.

