



# NEWS LETTER

Hastings Sierra Leone Friendship Link

Issue No. 3 September 2021

## Major Health Care Projects in Hastings , Sierra Leone get underway.

Following the successful visit to Sierra Leone in February 2020 just before lockdown, plans were drawn up for an extension to the TB Unit and the construction of the much needed Triage and Isolation Unit for the Health Centre in our twinned village.



The extension to the TB Unit was completed recently and has provided much needed extra space for TB victims to help keep them apart from mothers and babies in the main building. An additional toilet was also provided to help prevent cross-infection.

See page 3 for further information.....

## Helen Grant MP champions Girls Education in Sierra Leone

Helen Grant, MP for Maidstone and the Weald and Special Envoy for Girls Education, visited one of our partner secondary schools in Sierra Leone. She was accompanied by members of the British High Commission and the Minister of Education. See Page 2 for more.....



## Claverham Book donations to help schools in Hastings, Sierra Leone

English, Mathematics and Science text books, and some reading books were packed ready for shipping to Sierra Leone by staff at Claverham Community College, coordinated by senior leader Mrs Vicky Swatton. See page 3 for more



## Chairman's Welcome

As we emerge from the Covid-19 lockdown, our minds must focus on ideas for raising the desperately needed funds for our major projects in Hastings, SL. This edition of the Newsletter highlights the ongoing success of the School Farms Project and other projects evolving from it such as the Hastings Gardeners Association and the Hastings Community Learning Centre.

We also report on the shipment of books donated by one of our twinned colleges and the visit of Helen Grant, MP Special Envoy for Girls Education, to one of our partner secondary schools in Sierra Leone. The TB Unit extension at the Health Centre has been completed and we are pleased to announce, in this edition, the start of the Major project to build a much needed Triage and Isolation Unit. This is a huge project and will cost around £20,000 so your donations are more critical than ever if we are to help our twinned community survive the ravages of Malaria, Ebola, Covid-19 and other infectious diseases alongside providing ante- and post-natal care. Keep an eye open for announcements of fundraising events on Facebook and our website at [www.hastingshastings.org.uk](http://www.hastingshastings.org.uk)

What is certain is that we are more reliant than ever on you as members of the Link for your support, for spreading the word about our work, helping raise much-needed funds and encouraging your friends and family to join us in delivering these exciting projects and making a real difference to the lives of our friends in Hastings, Sierra Leone.

Richard Homewood,  
Chairman

## Who knew Pigs might fly and roots of the School Farms project would spread afar?

The School Farms Project grows from strength to strength with a wider variety of crops being grown and many schools looking forward to their second harvest! Such is the enthusiasm that some schools are even venturing into livestock! See page 2 for more details.

I another twist, thanks to David Lewis, the project has expanded to support women, both young and old through other local community groups. See page 4 for more



# School Farms Project Flies as it extends into livestock

Now that the rainy season in Sierra Leone is well underway our School Farms project has really taken off under the expert supervision of Mrs Jeitta Kannah, retired Head Teacher of REC Kossoh Town, one of our longstanding twinned schools. Virtually every day we receive photographs and videos from the 25 schools taking part. These show scenes of busy, energetic pupils, together with their teachers, tending crops in plots full of green vegetation.



All schools are growing a range of green leaf vegetables (cassava, crain crain, greens, groundnuts, maize and okra), some are already harvesting their second crop. REC Kossoh Town are also growing rice and Edest are raising pigs!



Participating schools have committed to future project sustainability, providing benefits for school and local communities, delivering practical experience of agriculture and raising awareness of its importance to the economy.

## Helen Grant MP visits Huntingdon Jui Secondary School.

Helen Grant, MP for Maidstone and the Weald and Special Envoy for Girls Education, visited one of our partner secondary schools in Sierra Leone. She was accompanied by members of the British High Commission and the Minister of Education. The visitors were greeted by the Principal of Huntingdon Senior Secondary School Jui Hastings, Mrs. Bernadette Massaquoi, who gave a brief background on how and when the school was established. The delegation was then taken by two IPC (International Pupil Council) members to visit their school farm garden project, which had resulted from a gift of seeds from Battle Horticultural Society. Francis Mason, Schools Coordinator for HSLFL in Sierra Leone, gave a brief background of the project and the school to school links and reciprocal visits that have taken place over the years with the help of the British Council.



Isatu Kamara, Principal of Huntingdon Junior Secondary School, spoke about some of the things she learnt during her visit to their UK partner a few years ago. She said, "I was impressed with the class size and the method of teaching which was really child centred". She told the visitors that they have had a project on Zero Waste and that the children have become more conscious of taking care of their school environment.

The visitors then split into two groups – Helen Grant led a focus group with the students while the Minister of Education talked with the teachers. After the focus groups' discussions, Rev Sia was introduced to the visitors by Francis Mason as the Principal of Huntingdon Secondary School Kola Tree. Rev Sia told the visitors that she had taken part in an exchange with Claverham Community College, Battle. She said she admired the way teachers dealt with behaviour management in the school and noticed that the teacher pupil ratio was very good. She explained about the solar panel and the data projector which their school had been given by Claverham.

## Major Health Care Projects in Hastings, Sierra Leone get underway.

In spite of lockdown we were able to give the go ahead for the extension to the TB Unit.

Health Centre staff told us how urgent it is to identify patients presenting with highly infectious diseases and to treat them away from the healthy mothers and babies. The Covid Pandemic further heightened the need for the facility but has also severely hindered our fundraising efforts. Estimates for the new building are around £20,000 and whilst we do not have sufficient funds for the whole project at the moment, such is the urgency for the unit that we have given the go-ahead for phase 1 (building the structure).

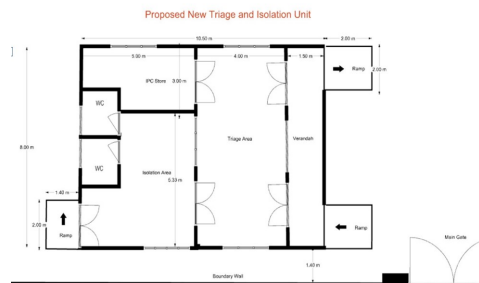


The formal handover of land for the construction of the new Triage and Isolation Unit was completed in August and work has begun on site by the contractor GraceMack.

The video clip at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VV1Tft\\_40sVpaV4IN9\\_o6K3yVqoUQcIN/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VV1Tft_40sVpaV4IN9_o6K3yVqoUQcIN/view) shows the handing over of the site to the builder this week so that work can start. We will be posting further progress updates as we receive them.

Now that lockdown restrictions are easing, the fundraising has to begin in earnest to raise the rest of the money to complete the project and give our twin community the facilities they desperately need.

Hastings Health Centre,  
Hastings, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
30 March 2020 - Richard Homewood



Donations would be welcomed as we need to raise a further £10,000 to complete the project. If you can help us to complete this hugely important project by making a donation, please go to the Support Us & Donate section from the Home Page, at [www.hastingshastings.org.uk](http://www.hastingshastings.org.uk) and click on Make a One-off Donation. Don't forget to Gift Aid your donation if you're a taxpayer.

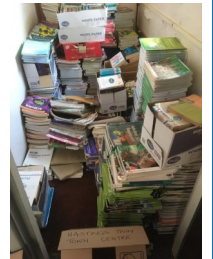
Our Sierra Leonean friends begin a major undertaking like this with a formal act of thanksgiving. If you would like to see a video of the handover of the site to the builder, click on the link above. The little ceremony takes place in the wooden construction that serves as a triage unit at present.

## Membership is the foundation and lifeblood of the Link

Your continued Membership, help with fundraising and donations are vital if the work of the Link is to continue. The stories here show how just a small amount can make such a big difference to peoples lives, so the extra fees will make a huge difference. Please renew your membership now, help make our projects a real success and change people's lives. Details of how to join can be found on our website [www.hastingshastings.org.uk/support-us](http://www.hastingshastings.org.uk/support-us)

## Claverham Community College donates text books to senior schools in Sierra Leone.

A large consignment of over 600 English, Mathematics and Science text books, and some reading books were packed ready for shipping to Sierra Leone by staff at Claverham Community College, coordinated by senior leader Mrs Vicky Swatton.



The College is having a new building and teachers were asked to empty cupboards in preparation. The large quantities of text books will arrive in Hastings Sierra Leone ready for the new school year and will be shared

between our three secondary schools, Huntingdon Kola Tree, Huntingdon Jui and Kelly's Vocational College. A big thank you to Claverham and their staff for their generosity.



## Help raise funds with on-line shopping

We are all shopping on-line more since the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. You can raise funds for the Link with every penny you spend on line.

If you're an Amazon user you can sign up to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/>

Sign up to Give as You Live for all of your on-line shopping . <https://www.giveasyoulive.com>

Alternatively you can sign up to Easy Fundraising <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/hslfl/>

In each case, you just nominate the Hastings Sierra Leone Friendship Link (charity n° 1127137) as beneficiary.

It is SO easy. It costs absolutely nothing for you as the customer and there is a popup that says how much is being donated.

## Sowing the seeds for the future

The Link Strategy has four key strands for development: Education, Health, Infrastructure and Livelihoods. Trustee David Lewis, leading on Creating Livelihoods, is proposing projects to support vocational training, provide local employment and create sustainable businesses. Following the success of last year's Seed Challenge, he and Isabel Hodger are working via Zoom with Jeitta Kanneh and Francis Mason, who have signed up over 20 schools for our Schools Farm Project 2021.

## Schools Sanitation Project



Clean water, basic toilets and good hygiene practices are essential for the survival and development of children. According to UNICEF, every day, over 800 children die, worldwide, from preventable diseases caused by the lack of these basic facilities. It is acknowledged that Sub Saharan Africa, which includes Sierra Leone, lags far behind other continents in addressing the problem. In Sierra Leone the lack of these basic facilities in our twinned schools is impacting on their education and their futures.

Children often miss out on education because they spend hours every day collecting water and are exhausted if and when they get to school. Many older girls have to miss school on a regular basis due to the lack of menstrual hygiene facilities. We realised that whilst we couldn't tackle the problem in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa, we could improve the prospects for the future of children in the schools we are twinned with in Hastings, Sierra Leone by ensuring they have a sustainable water supply, good basic sanitation and hygiene facilities.

This is a huge project and we have been working with other established organisations in Sierra Leone and the individual schools to plan how we can improve the facilities and give the children a better chance for the future. A survey of the schools was undertaken to establish what facilities they currently had and didn't have.

Ahead of the visit in February 2020 funding was sent to four schools to enable them to start work on improving their water supplies.

During the February 2020 visit all other twinned schools were visited to see what we need to do to ensure they have a sustainable water supply. The needs of each school were evaluated with the Head Teachers and work began on drawing up the specifications for each school. The Covid pandemic and the difficulties with fundraising have inevitably delayed progress but we are hopeful that we can start to raise funds and make headway in the near future as we come out of lockdown.

More information and Photos can be found at <https://www.hastingshastings.org.uk/current-projects/schools-sanitation-project/>

Registered charity no. 1127137  
[www.hastingshastings.org.uk](http://www.hastingshastings.org.uk)  
Hon Sec. Robin Gray  
secretary.hsfl@gmail.com

Issue No 3 September 2021

## Roots of School Farms Project spread further afield

David Lewis, has been spreading the word on how the School Farms Project can help with peoples livelihoods and through his work with Mohamed 'Success' Kamara, HSLFL are presently supporting 50 women, mostly widows, who had to relocate their gardens from waterlogged sites near the river following the start of the rainy season. Five groups of 10 women who belong to the Hastings Gardeners Association (HAGA) were provided with funds to buy seeds and fertiliser and develop five new plots in drier locations around Hastings.

HAGA was founded in 2017 by Mohamed, the principal of the local vocational training centre, Hastings Community Learning Centre (HCLC).

Currently, 'Success' is managing the HAGA project in order to help increase productivity. In future they will also plan to add to the list of crops grown to include rice and other vegetables and fruits high in protein and a source of important vitamins, improving dietary intake of nutritious foods for home consumption and school meals for pupils. It is also envisaged that sales to restaurants, hotels, shops and market stalls may result in an income stream for HAGA women.

At HCLC 'Success' delivers a certified Ministry of Education training course to girls and young women who have been prevented from attending school, thus enabling them to return to formal education.

### STOP PRESS!

**Generous Donations from our supporters are helping to fund our projects. We would like to express our thanks to all of them including:**



Patrons: Peter Penfold, former British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone, Michael J.Foster DL and Dain Jensen.

Chairman: Richard Homewood 07712 088648. Vice Chairman: Derek Tomblin 01424 753768.

Secretary: Robin Gray 07812 487378 Treasurer: Martin Copland 07890 407421. Membership Sec: Jacqui Homewood 07740 965198

Schools Liaison: Isabel Hodger 01424 201624. Roger Mitchell 01424 422299 Health Working Party: Christine Boulton-Lane 07714 557037.

Creating Livelihoods: David Lewis 07412 538013 Fundraising: Nola McSweeney 01424 751295