



*Promoting friendship & understanding
through financial support for Nigerian education*

The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust

(formerly The Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Memorial Trust)

Patron : Sir Mervyn Brown, KCMG, OBE

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August 2008

Dear Member,

NEWSLETTER

Warmly I welcome you to our very first Newsletter. Its format is one of simplicity, for maximum economy, and its purpose is to inform not only about our charitable work in the support of Nigerian education but also about matters that will be of interest to you, our valued members. How often we publish will depend very much on the level of news at any given time but we shall endeavour to circulate an edition at least twice a year. At this point it seems appropriate to ask for contributions from willing volunteers! There is no section covering Nigerian current affairs as our *Nigeria Digest* will continue to be published separately.

As this is our first Newsletter I would like to start by bringing you up to date with the creation of The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust (BNET) and the closure of The Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Memorial Trust (ATBM Trust). BNET was established as an organisation on May 31, 2007 becoming operational from that date. Our application to become a registered charity was approved by the Charities Commission on September 17, 2007 and the Trust was listed as number 1120876 in the Central Register of Charities. At a meeting of the ATBM Trust held in September 2007 the Trustees considered its dissolution and agreed the most timely and appropriate date for the closure to be December 31, 2007. Consequently by the end of last year all of ATBM Trust's assets, and the on-going responsibility for its educational projects, had been transferred to BNET. Since then the accounts have been audited and a copy of the final accounts lodged with the Charities Commission who, having approved of the action taken, formerly removed the ATBM Trust from its Central Register of Charities on July 17, 2008.

GOVERNANCE

We are fortunate to be directed by a Board of skilled and experienced Trustees who, between them, provide a wealth of knowledge and understanding on most matters Nigerian, derived through their many years of close involvement with companies and organisations whose activities serve Nigeria.

Current Board members are: -

Chairman:	Mr Derek Reeves
Vice Chairman:	Chief David Griffin
Secretary:	Mr Gary Clark
Treasurer:	Mr John Lee
Membership Secretary:	Mr Kevin Rafferty
Trustees:	Professor Lalage Bown, OBE
	Mr David Brandler
	Mr Dick Clarke, OBE
	General Yakubu Gowon
	Nigeria High Commissioner's Representative
	Mr Bayo Oladimeji
	Mr John Smith
	Mr John Storey
	Mr Tony Williams

A brief write-up about each Trustee may be found on our website www.britain-nigeria.org. And to complete the team we have Mrs Frances Tarr as our Administrator who so efficiently manages our Vincent Street office. This is manned usually on Thursdays between 10am and 5pm when Frances will be pleased to answer any of your queries.

In this age of compliance BNET is bound by the rules and regulations of the Charities Commission who have approved our governing Constitution. It is a comprehensive legal document and is available to view on or download from our website.

PATRON

We are privileged to have as our Patron Sir Mervyn Brown, KCMG, OBE. Sir Mervyn was the High Commissioner in Nigeria for four and a half years (1979-1983), longer than any other British High Commissioner. After postings in Buenos Aires, New York, Singapore and Laos, he spent his remaining career dealing with Africa, with two spells in African departments in the Foreign Office followed by appointments as Ambassador in Madagascar, High Commissioner in Tanzania and a short spell as Deputy Ambassador to the UN in New York, before his final posting to Lagos.

Sir Mervyn was a teacher before he joined the Foreign Office. He maintained an interest in education and was a Trustee of St. Saviour's School in Lagos. After retirement he became a Vice-President of the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council and consultant to the Council of British Independent Schools in the European Community. His involvement with Nigeria continued with membership of the Executive Committee of the Britain-Nigeria Association and later served for four years as its President.

MEMBERSHIP

When the BNA closed its doors at the end of August last year its membership was invited to transfer to BNET and I am delighted to report that we had a very positive response from 70% of its active members. The Trustees really value this level of support and on their behalf I welcome all 390 who readily made that transfer. Your annual subscriptions provide a regular and valuable income, all of which is disbursed in support of our various projects. Encouragingly we have already welcomed seventeen new members so far this year and we hope that many more will join in the months ahead. They bring our membership strength to a respectable 407.

Several of the joining new members found us through the internet and if you have not already done so please take time to visit our website www.britain-nigeria.org. We are doing our best to make it user-friendly as its purpose is not only to raise awareness of BNET and its objectives but also, importantly, to attract new members. We also intend it to be of benefit to our members either as a reference medium or a source of helpful links and so any comments or suggestions you may have on how to improve it would be appreciated.

Whilst on the subject of the internet, I appeal to anyone who has recently established an e-mail address to let me have it as it is the cheapest and most efficient way for us to keep in touch. Presently 56% of our members have e-mail, if we could raise this to 70% it would make a significant reduction to our administrative expenses!

Sadly I bring to your attention the passing of Mr Geoff Gibbins whose death occurred on August 3, 2008. On behalf of his many friends I extend our condolences to his beloved wife Joyce and their family.

EVENTS

So far we have two forthcoming events, both scheduled for October, and are:

➤ **Sussex Regional Meeting – Saturday 11th October 2008**

The programme for this event, which will be held in or around Brighton, East Sussex, is in the process of being finalised by Alastair Burt and details will be made available shortly. In the meantime please make a diary note of the date.

➤ **Scottish Regional Meeting – Saturday 18th October 2008**

The next meeting of the Scottish Branch will be held at The Royal Over-Seas League, 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 3AB (telephone: 0131 225 1501) on Saturday October 18, 2008 commencing with coffee and biscuits at 10.30am.

The guest speaker will be Brigadier Charles Ritchie, CBE who is renowned as an excellent and entertaining raconteur. During a distinguished army career with the Royal Scots he visited many African countries and came to know several former Heads of State. Since retiring from the army Brigadier Ritchie has been active in Scottish life, being secretary of the New Club, a Royal Archer and is closely involved in the organisation of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

The talk will be followed by a 3-course lunch with wine. The charge for attending this meeting, which is open to members and their guests as well as to those who are interested in becoming members, is £32.00 per person. For those who just wish to have coffee and hear the talk it is £8.00 per person.

If you would like to attend this meeting please complete the enclosed application form and return it together with your cheque made payable to The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust direct to our organiser Mr Ian Kerry at The Beehive, Dolphinton EH46 7HH (telephone 01968 682239; e-mail Ian.Kerry@tiscali.co.uk)

Details of other events will be brought to your attention as and when they are organised. Needless to say I should be very happy to hear from any volunteer organiser who might like to arrange an event, or outing, for members in other parts of the country.

CURRENT EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

Over the last twelve months the Trust has spent (or committed) more than £80,000 on a diverse and extensive programme of aid in its support for Nigerian education. Here follows a brief summary of the various grants: -

❖ Aleka Academy - £7,500

We have maintained our support for this school which continues to go from strength to strength and has, recently, graduated their 3rd set of 32 students. Many of these students have registered for the Jos University entrance examination, and all of those passed with flying colours. Due to a national teachers' strike, the students have only just started their NECO examinations, but the school is confident that they will do well. (The WAEC result has not yet been released.) New admissions have been progressing since May and more than 60 new children are registered for JS1. For the third year running the school is sponsoring their NCE teachers for their part-time degree programmes and this year seven members of staff have taken advantage of that assistance.

Aleka has always been disadvantaged by the lack of pipe borne water and supplies by tanker are notorious for its typhoid content. In March the Trust gave a grant of £7,500 (N1.8m) for the construction of a borehole which has now been dug and clean water has been reached. The overhead tanks have been fixed, the plumbing work undertaken and by the time the students resume on 1 September, they should have access to clean drinking water. In addition, the community of Opulega, which is where most of the children attending Aleka and their families live, and other surrounding villages will benefit directly with water pumped from this borehole.

❖ Umutu Girls' Boarding School - £18,600

The construction of this girls' secondary school at Umutu is a joint project with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Warri. It began in 2006 with site clearance, fencing, roadways and a borehole and while progress has not been as fast as originally planned the classroom and hostel blocks had reached roofing level earlier this year. In order to keep to the target date of September for admissions the Trustees released a further N4.0m last March for the roofing, plumbing and electrical work to be completed. The Trust's total investment in this project to date is N10m. A more detailed report about the school, and its opening, will be given in our next newsletter.

❖ Gethsemane Rehabilitation Centre - £5,000

This Centre, which is located in Jos, was set up to help with the education for children orphaned of their fathers killed while serving in the Nigerian army. Currently they have over 200 students and in addition the Centre runs rehabilitation courses, such as cooking, sewing and hair dressing for the widows to help make them become self reliant. This grant of £5,000 was given to help the Centre expand its teaching facilities and will fund not only classroom furniture but also a wide range of essential teaching materials.

❖ Hope for the African Village Child (HAVC) - £1,000

HAVC is a small but dedicated charity that helps, amongst many other of its activities, local communities to build or renovate their village primary schools. Presently it is involved supporting twenty-five schools in remote villages in a 20km radius of Kaduna and the Trust has given another £1,000 to buy English textbooks and other essential but basic teaching aids.

❖ Federal University of Technology, Yola - £4,300

Funding has been provided for two students, who have been selected as part of their MSc study programme, to participate in a major university project studying the effects of environmental change and its impact on rural development in Nigeria. It is a two-year project the findings from which could be of critical importance in North-Eastern Nigeria and, possibly, further afield. The Trust's commitment is solely to the students and their training aids while the university has undertaken to fund the balance of the project costs estimated to be a further £7,500.

❖ Students- £3,500

Three Nigerian students have been awarded continuing grants in respect of their university fees, two of the students are attending Delta State University while the third is at Anambra State University. A fourth student has gained admission to Sheffield Hallam University to study for a MSc degree in Information Systems Security and has received a grant to cover the cost of his study materials.

❖ Tafawa Balewa Teacher Award Scheme - £7,000

As part of its commitment to teacher training and development this scheme was launched in March 2007 with the co-operation and support of the National Teachers Institute (NTI), Kaduna. Its purpose is to assist deserving teachers to upgrade their skills and qualifications through one of the four-year open-learning courses run by the NTI. The inaugural group of 37 qualifying teachers (one from each State) was selected at the end of the course's first year (so that their performance could be assessed) and the Trust has committed to funding their course fees for the remaining three years. It is the intention of the Trustees to sponsor a second group of 37 teachers later this year.

❖ University of Benin - £24,100

Phase I of the UNIBEN project was completed at the end of 2006. It cost £50,000 and covered the building works for a computer centre, the purchase and installation of 50 computers with their workstations, ancillary equipment, air-conditioning, appropriate security and a standby generator. The whole facility has been named *The Donald Partridge E-Learning Centre*. However, in order for the students to derive maximum benefit from the E-Learning Centre the Trust has agreed with the University to provide the equipment necessary to establish 'internet connectivity' and state-of-the-art teaching facilities with access to a digital library. The cost of this secondary project is £24,100 and will make the E-Learning Centre the first of its kind in Nigeria. The Trustees hope to expand the facility with another 50 workstations in 2009.

❖ Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) - £9,500

The Trust continues to support the VSO and currently sponsors (£2,000) a Teacher Trainer who has been seconded to the Kano State Education Board. In practice it is the placement of VSO volunteers who can best identify schools in need of support and the Trustees have agreed to make available £5,000, through VSO's Abuja office, for allocation as small grants for basic school equipment and training needs. A further £2,500 has been given as a contribution towards the cost of local training seminars for those volunteers.

2008 CHRISTMAS CARD

A sample of this year's card, which features a watercolour by David Wilson of Calabar circa 19th century, is enclosed. Titled *Trading Station, Old Calabar* it is reproduced by kind permission of John Holt & Co (Liverpool) Ltd to whom we are most grateful for their support. The price, including envelopes, has been held exactly as last year and is £6 for packs of 12 (£7.50 for Europe or £10.00 for overseas) or £10.00 for packs of 24 (£11.50 for Europe and £14 for overseas) all inclusive of postage.

The proceeds from the sale of these cards are a valuable contribution to the financing of our various projects as just described above and we do hope we may count on your continued support. To order please use the enclosed form and return it in the envelope provided (please remember to add a stamp) with a cheque made payable to **The Britain-Nigeria Educational Trust**. Should you wish there is provision on the form for a donation and any amount, however small, will be much appreciated. Gift Aiding your order, which will be despatched around the middle of October, or donation will make it worth almost one third more by allowing the Educational Trust to claim back the tax.

PROMOTING LINKS BETWEEN UK AND NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

The UK Government currently encourages schools in the UK to create partnerships with schools in developing countries. Over 1,500 UK schools are known to have such international links – mostly with schools in Commonwealth countries of Africa. The aim of these partnerships is to provide:

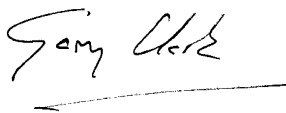
- a global dimension in the UK school curriculum,
- better understanding between different countries and cultures and
- support for the "Education for All" Millennium Development Goals.

A task group has been set up by the UK National Commission for UNESCO to investigate (among other things) why so very few UK schools have established partnerships with schools in Nigeria, compared with other Commonwealth African countries. In spite of its size, population and substantial Nigerian community in the UK it is believed there are only 7 UK schools with links to schools in Nigeria. As there are no official figures there may be several more the task group is not aware of and we have been asked to help with this investigation.

If you know of any school in your local area that has established links with any school in Nigeria, or is planning to do so, please will you let Mrs Frances Tarr have as much information as you can about those schools so that she can collate the returns for the task group. It will be an interesting exercise the findings of which might well have an influence on own future strategy.

Thank you in advance for your help and I do hope you have enjoyed this, our first Newsletter. Any comments or suggestions you may have to improve future editions will be most welcome.

With kind regards,



Gary M Clark
Secretary to the Board of Trustees