



JULY
2019



MONUMENTS & RELICS COMMISSION

NEWSLETTER

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team, Charlie Haffner takes over Monuments and Relics
Commission

MRC Secretariat

Background and Mandate

The Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC) was established in 1948 following the passing by Parliament of the Monuments and Relics Ordinance of 1946. The mandate of the Commission, spelt out in the Public Ordinance No. 12 of 1946, is to provide for 'the preservation of Ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of archaeological, ethnographical, historical or other scientific interest'. The Commission was set up as a semi-autonomous corporate body, with its members appointed by the government. The Commission has the responsibility of ensuring the preservation, protection and promotion of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage assets. This is achieved by identifying important aspects of our heritage and culture that can be preserved, shared, enjoyed and studied by present and future generations.

In 1962 the Monuments and Relics Ordinance was upgraded into an Act, and in 1967 a very important amendment of this Act gave the power to the Commission to 'acquire, maintain and administer the Sierra Leone Museum founded by the Sierra Leone Society'.

The Proclaimed Assets:

The Commission, acting on the powers granted to it by the Ordinance, declared eighteen (18) monuments, relics and historical objects as Proclaimed Assets. These include Bunce Island, St. John's Maroon Church, St. Charles' Regent, the Gateway to the King's Yard, the De Ruyter Stone, the Old Wharf Steps (commonly called Portuguese steps), old Fourah Bay College building, the Firing Point and Four Guns at Dublin, Banana Island, as well as Two old Tombstones at Dublin Banana Island, remains of John Newton's House and the slave Baracoons at Plantain Island, Captain Lendy's Grave, Waima, Kono, the Martello Tower at Parliament, Tower Hill, the Cleveland Tombstone at Tassoh, the Bastions of Fort Thornton, the remains of John Newton's House, the remains of Earthworks, Masakpaidu, Kono, Kargboro Chiefdom.

In 2016, the Commission proclaimed Bai Bureh's Grave in Mahera Kasseh Chiefdom, Port Loko District and Madam Yoko's Grave in Moyamba as National Monuments while Zion on the Hill as a National Protected Heritage Asset. Mani Sundu's Grave in Koidu, Kono District was also declared a National Protected Heritage Asset in 2017.

The Proclaimed Assets under remit of the Commission have suffered from chronic neglect: many of the country's historical sites have been destroyed or are in a shocking state of deterioration. As such, the Commission is working assiduously to seek funding for the restoration of these sites in order to bring out the richness of the country's culture and its potential for tourism.

PROCLAIMED MONUMENTS & RELICS ARE:

FREETOWN

SITES & RELICS

PROCLAIMED DATES

1.	The Old Wharf Steps – Government Wharf	1955
2.	Old Fourah Bay College – Cline Town	1955
3.	The De Ruyter Stone – King Jimmy	1949
4.	The Gate-Way to Old Kings Yard -Connaught	1949
5.	The Maroon Church	1956
6.	The Bastions of Fort Thornton	1949
7.	The Martello Tower – Parliament Tower Hill	1961
8.	The Old Military Butts	1962
9.	The Old City Boundary Guns	1953
10.	St. Charles Church Regent	1959

PROVINCES

11.	Bunce Island	1949
12.	Remains of John Newton's House And the slave Baracoons, Plantain Island	1949
13.	Banana Island: Firing point & four guns at Old Wharf, Dublin	1959
14.	Captain Lendy's Grave, Waima, Kono	1965
15.	Remains of Earthworks, Masakpaidu, Kono	1959
16.	The Cleveland Tombstone, Tassoh, Kargboro Chiefdom	1950
17.	Madam Yoko's Grave, Moyamba.	2016
18.	Bai Bureh's Grave, Port Loko.	2016

Photographs of the museums

Sierra Leone National Museum

Sierra Leone's National Museum is located at the centre of Freetown under the branches of the city's famous Cotton Tree. It is the hub of many cultural activities in Freetown and holds an important collection of Sierra Leonean artefacts and artworks.

The museum was opened in 1957 as the museum of the Sierra Leone Society, a 'learned society' whose members included colonial officials and prominent members of Freetown's Krio community. With the demise of the Sierra Leone Society in the mid-1960s, the museum came under the control of Sierra Leone's Monuments and Relics Commission and Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, and thus became the Sierra Leone National Museum.

The museum has rarely benefitted from significant financial resources and has survived largely due to the commitment of its dedicated staff. It still occupies what was originally intended to be temporary accommodation in the old Cotton Tree railway station at the junction of Siaka Stevens Street and Pademba Road. The German Embassy funded an extension to the museum, which was opened in 1987 to mark the bicentenary of the founding of Freetown.

National Railway Museum

The Sierra Leone National Railway Museum was opened in 2005 in the old railway workshops in the

Cline Town area of Freetown. The museum has a fine collection of historical 2'6" gauge railway locomotives, coaches, wagons and related equipment from the former Sierra Leone Railway that once connected Freetown to Pendembu via the second principal city of Bo, and to the major town of Makeni.

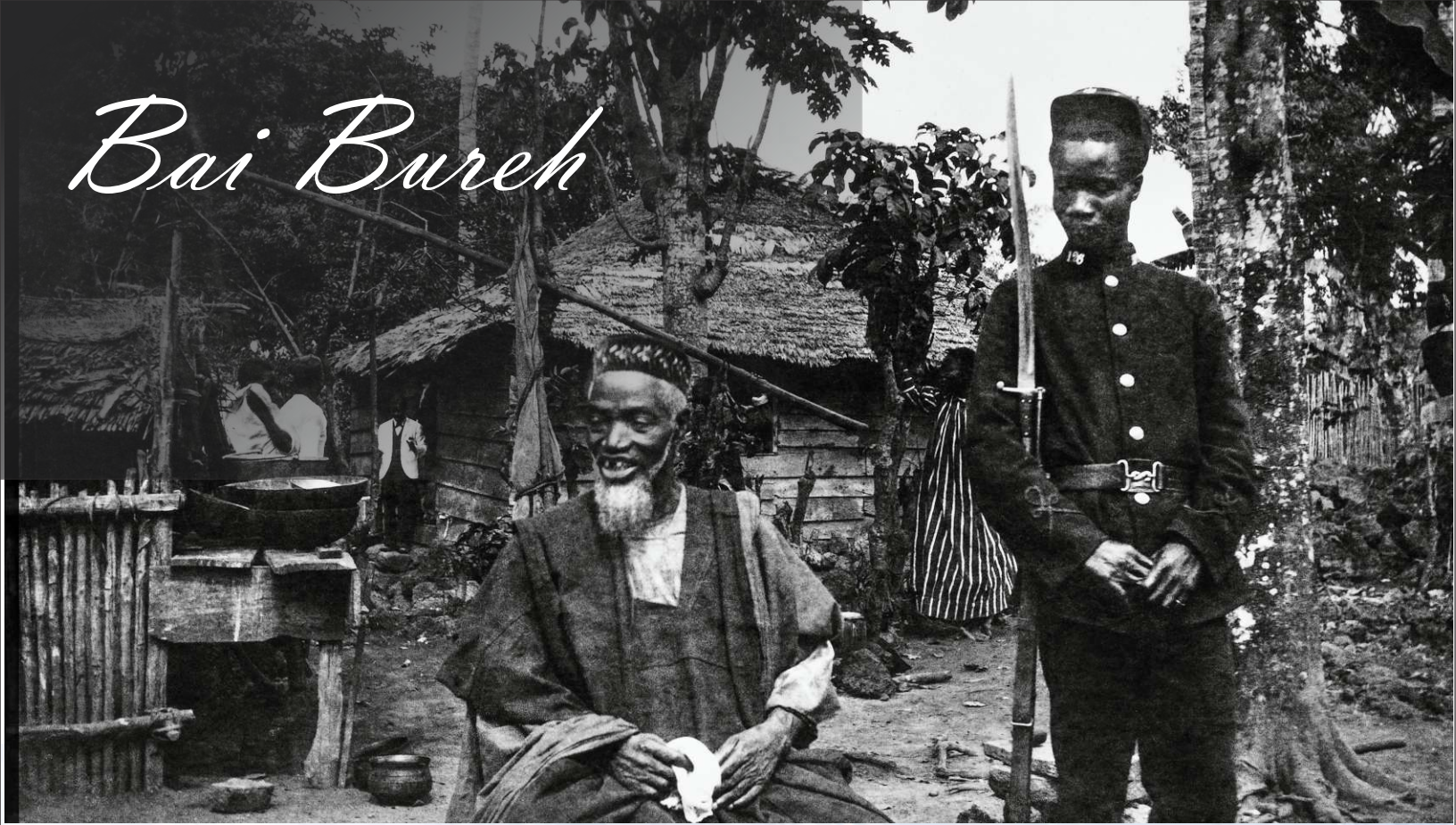
Established in 1895, the Sierra Leone Railway started its first passenger train service to the provinces in 1898. The Railway was closed in 1975 and the locomotives and carriages that now form the major part of the museum's collection languished in the Cline Town workshops for 30 years, suffering from numerous acts of vandalism during the civil war.

The collection is now under restoration by local skilled employees, with guidance and support by the UK National Railway Museum. Exhibits include:

- Beyer-Garratt steam locomotive No.73 of 1955;
- Hunslet steam tank locomotive No.81 of 1947;
- Manning Wardle steam locomotive 'Nellie' of 1915;
- Diesel locomotives from 1958 and 1959;
- HM The Queen's Royal Coach from 1961;
- Various passenger carriages;
- Plus hundreds of photographs and artefacts related to the Sierra Leone Railway.

Please visit <http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org>

Bai Bureh



MTCA and MRC start the process of restoring Bai Bureh's Grave

Stakeholders from the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Monuments and Relics Commission and Prime Engineering Solutions today Monday 13th May, 2019 visited the graveside of Bai Bureh in Mahera, Kasseh.

The visit was to finalise arrangements for the holistic restoration of the graveside with a view to preserving the Monument.

In 2016, the Government of Sierra Leone through the Monuments and Relics Commission proclaimed Bai Bureh's Grave, Madam Yoko's Grave and Zion Methodist Church as national monuments.

Chairman of the Monuments and Relics Commission, Charlie Haffner noted that the authenticity and integrity of the site must not be compromised in the process of preserving it.

The Monument, located in a sacred bush in Mahera village is in a state of disrepair. The urgency of its restoration is beyond imagination.

"We are determined to restore this very important monument and bring life to Kasseh, remarked the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, William I. K. Robinson.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism

and Cultural Affairs, Joseph T. Kanu stressed the importance of preserving the past and the role of Government.

The restoration works is in line with Government's commitment to overhaul the sector and position heritage tourism as an enviable niche for Sierra Leone.

PC Bai Bureh Lugbu of Kasseh Chiefdom applauded the strides made by the government so far and recounted the role played by Bai Bureh during the colonial era.

The project, fully funded by Government of Sierra Leone kicks off anytime soon.

Director of Culture, MTCA, Foday Jalloh provided technical guidance during the assessment. He was assisted by Research and Development Officer, Monuments and Relics Commission, Francis Musa Momoh.

Bai Bureh Kebalai led the Hut Tax revolution to liberate his people from the British. His revolt was widely acclaimed as a heroic effort. He died in 1908 and was buried in his home town Kasseh, Port Loko District.

Such is the importance of Bai Bureh that the country's One Thousand Leones (Le 1,000) note carries his portrait. The main highway leading to the city from the east end was named after him. Many other important structures carry the name Bai Bureh.



The untapped gem that could make fortunes for Sierra Leone

By Mohamed Faray Kargbo



“If you can't speak Temne, you must not say a word throughout the tour of this historic graveside and no one should enter the sacred shrine with shoes or slippers.”

That order from Pa Kombrabai Santi, the Ceremonial Chief of Mahera village sent shivers down the spine of all present. On Saturday 8th September, 2018 an Expert Team from the Ministry of Tourism and Monuments and Relics Commission was doing a conservation needs assessment of the graveside of Bai Bureh Kebalai of the historic 1898 Hut Tax Uprising.

Proclaimed a national monument in 2016, Bai Bureh's Grave remains an untapped gem in the BKM Chiefdom, Port Loko District.

Although the site is undeveloped, the ceremonies associated



with a visit to that heritage speak volumes about the community's rich cultural practices.

Like a Commander of a paratroop regiment, the ceremonial chief led the team into the sacred shrine. He was quick to reveal that such visits usually comes with great economic benefits.

“We can generate billions of leones from touristic visits to

Bai Bureh's grave but we need to improve the asset.” he retorted in his Temne dialect.

As the visitors took off their shoes to enter the graveside, solemnity gripped them to a point that they could only imagine what lies ahead in that thick forest.

Arguably one of Sierra Leone's greatest warriors, the burial site of Bai Bureh has survived since 1908 when he died. Such is the importance of that man that his portrait occupies the front view of the country's 1998 One Thousand Leone note.

Like Bai Bureh's grave, Madam Yoko's Grave in Moyamba, Captain Lendy's Grave in Kono and Marco Conteh's Grave in Lungi urgently need restoration. The team discovered the urgency to restore all these assets during the five day assessment tour to Moyamba, Kono, Port Loko and Lungi.

Occasioned by years of neglect, most of the country's heritage resources are in a dire state of disrepair.

Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Memunatu Pratt is determined to change the state of the nation's cultural assets. She has endorsed the comprehensive rehabilitation of six heritage assets. What better way to diversify the nation's economy than to invest in cultural tourism.

From Fiama to BKM, Kaffu Bullom to Kaiyamba chiefdom, the economic life of the communities hang on the development of those monuments.

Paramount Chief Momoh Foday Gulama of Kaiyamba Chiefdom, Moyamba District while appealing for serious political investment on cultural heritage preservation was optimistic that the rehabilitation of Madam Yoko's Grave would bring great economic benefits to his community.

Ing John Sheriff and Arch Lambert Odokwu of the Prime Engineering Solutions assured that the sites could be restored but cautioned that some of them need urgent actions to prevent further degradation and deterioration.

Restoration and conservation of Sierra Leone's heritage assets coupled with robust marketing could be the engine for cultural tourism development.

In a recent seminar with new envoys, the Minister of Tourism challenged them to market the country as an enviable tourist destination.

“The erection of buffer zones, perimeter fence, signage and other development efforts are amongst the needs of the various heritage sites visited.” remarked Francis Musa Momoh, the Research Development Officer of Monuments and Relics Commission.

A national cultural resource survey would soon be done according to Director, Foday Jalloh.

Preservation of heritage poses huge challenge for low income countries like

Sierra Leone but the Julius Maada Bio led government has promised to diversify the economy through tourism development.

As the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs continues to make strides to overhaul the sector, could heritage tourism be the new goldmine?



The Proclamation Ceremony



The Proclamation Ceremony

MTCA and MRC accord national protection to Bai Bureh's Grave in a Proclamation Ceremony

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission have completed a Proclamation Ceremony recognizing the grave of the leader of the 1898 Uprising in Sierra Leone, Bai Bureh 'Kebalai' as a National Monument. As Mohamed Faray Kargbo reports, this development would change the face of tourism in Port Loko District.



The people of Mahera Village, Kasseh Chiefdom and its surrounding villages were the happiest on Thursday 13th June, 2019. They converged in their hundreds if not

thousands to celebrate the recognition of the grave of their hero, Bai Bureh.

At the risk of sounding pompous, one might easily conclude that that was the biggest ceremony in content and context in the recent history of Mahera. The Paramount Chief of Kasseh Chiefdom, Bai Bureh Lugbu the Second gave a historical account of Bai Bureh where he noted that the Hut Tax was not the only reason for the 1898 Revolution.

Men, women and children, clad in their best attires, danced as if it was their last. Paramount and local Chiefs in their traditional regalia, performed ceremonies handed down from generations. The incantations could easily raise the dead. Happiness was spelt with capital letters in the faces of Government Officials.

Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Madam Memunatu Pratt while handing over the proclamation document to the Paramount Chief reaffirmed Government's commitment to preserve Sierra Leone's enviable cultural heritage.

She revealed that restoration/construction works will soon commence to improve the Site. When completed, the Site would greatly improve the outlook of Kasseh Chiefdom as it would be a hub for heritage tourism in Sierra Leone.

Some cultural practices associated with a visit to Bai Bureh's Graveside were adapted to enhance visitor access.

Monument and Relics Commission, Chairman, Charlie Haffner not only asked the community to safeguard the heritage site but also assured that his Commission would proclaim more monuments.

Chaired by the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, William IK Robinson, statements were made by the Resident Minister, North-West, a member of Bai Bureh's family, a member of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Tourism and others.



Editor: Mohamed Faray Kargbo - Education and Outreach Officer, Monuments and Relics Commission.

In love with Nyangai



By Mohamed Faray Kargbo

It is not often that one has the opportunity to go to distant places and meet new acquaintances. So whenever such circumstances present themselves, one must do everything humanly possible to grasp and hold it firmly.

I first met Nyangai on Saturday 6th October, 2018 when the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Monuments and Relics Commission and the National

positioned such that one is forced to love her at first sight. The pristine, white and shiny beaches connived with the huts, local boats, freshwater and ocean to produce a compelling spectacle. One hasn't got an option but to love Nyangai.

Nyangai like the rest of the islands that constitute the Turtle Islands is extremely beautiful.

It was not long enough that I realized that each of the turtle-shaped islands is unique in their own

way. The twin islands of Nyangai and Nyankai marry on low tides only to divorce on high tides.

“WhoooooshWho oosh” The calming sounds of the waves and the

friendliness of the few inhabitants compete to steal our attention. Coconut was served even before we could alight the boat. This was why I fell in love with Nyangai.

Arguably some of the most pristine beaches in the world, the turtle-shaped islands offer an unparalleled opportunity for human beings to interact with nature.

Strategically located in the South-western coastal areas of Sierra Leone, this group of islands lie

unexplored. Due to its gritty sand, cool salty water, gentle wind, soft scratch of waves overlooking the blue sky; I reluctantly left the Cheppu beach which stretches to neighbouring Liberia.

Although, frequently exploited by foreign tourists, the communities, mostly poor people, sit on treasures that could easily transform their socio-economic status.

From Hoong to Sei, Baki to Moti, the islands are sights-to-behold, beautiful, pristine, clean and breath-taking. They offer an enviable opportunity for tarpon or game-fishing, bird watching and expedition.

Any tourist investor who explores the Bonthe Sherbro Islands is sure to show interest in that area. Once attractive tourist investment areas, the challenging period of Sierra Leone's history led to the decline in touristic activities in those areas.

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the National Tourist Board must speedily continue the process already initiated. Bonthe Island can boom the economy of this country.

“For far too long Bonthe Sherbro Island has been neglected, under the new Direction we cannot allow that to continue.” concluded Memunatu Pratt, the country's Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister.

As I conclude this piece, one thing is clear, that my love for Nyangai remains intact.



Tourist Board made a visit to Bonthe Sherbro Island to assess the touristic potentials of the district with a view to exploiting it for national advancement.

The two hour watercraft ride from Bonthe Island to the Turtle Islands meant nothing to me considering the beauty of this God-given nature. For once, I couldn't convince myself that the likes of Nyangai existed in Sierra Leone.

The palm trees, foliage and shrub on this tiny island are systematically



The Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs today Thursday May 30, 2019 launched the Heritage Club Toolkit for Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone.

Memunatu Pratt launched the Toolkit at the Sierra Leone National Museum in the presence of Teachers/Patrons, the Media, and other stakeholders.

The Chairman of the Monuments and Relics Commission, Charlie Haffner gave an overview of the Toolkit and the need to empower resuscitate cultural heritage education in schools.

The Heritage Education Toolkit for Secondary Schools is a cultural heritage education document that guides School Heritage Club teachers in carrying out the activities of the clubs.

An Orientation Workshop follows the launching of the Toolkit. Teachers/Patrons from 10 secondary schools in Freetown are participating in the workshop.

Monuments and Relics Commission trains patrons on the use of Heritage Toolkit

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission has capacitated teachers/patrons of School Heritage Clubs in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone. The training was to equip them with the pre-requisite skills to efficiently and effectively use the Heritage Education Toolkit to manage the School Heritage Clubs. Here is a report of how it went.

Twenty teachers from ten schools gathered at the Government Secondary School, Bo for an orientation on the use of the Heritage Education Toolkit for Secondary Schools.

The 44-page document contains activities that the School Heritage Clubs would be doing during the course of the academic year. From Theme One to Seven, the Toolkit exposes pupils to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Sierra Leone. The Themes would culminate into a grand cultural heritage exhibition where club members would display the knowledge gained during the whole process.

The teachers were delighted that such a document was compiled by the Commission stressing that the absence of a blue-print to guide the activities of the clubs would negatively impact the clubs.

Facilitated by Monuments and Relics Commission's Education and Outreach Officer, Mohamed Faray Kargbo and Research and Development Officer, Francis Musa Momoh, the training brought out the need to include heritage education in the school syllabus.

What was meant to be an orientation exercise soon transformed into a brainstorming session in which everyone lamented the deplorable state of Sierra Leone's heritage.

The Government Secondary School (Bo School) held the event in high esteem such that the Principal, Mr. Evans Kweku Nyarkoh promised that a special structure would be reserved for Monuments and Relics by the 2019/2020 academic year.

A number of recommendations came out of the orientation programme including the holding of regular meetings, formation of Social Media Forum, publication of monthly reports, the development of a corresponding handbook for pupils, sensitization of parents during Community Teachers Association meetings, restriction of club membership to 30 only.

The Monuments and Relics Commission School Heritage Clubs were developed to instill in pupils a sense of nationalism and patriotism while simultaneously promoting cultural heritage awareness with a view to preserving the country's revered heritage.



Establishment & Launching of School Heritage Clubs in Bo

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission have established School Heritage Clubs in ten secondary schools in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone.

Led by the recently appointed Chairman of the Monuments and Relics Commission, Charlie Haffner, the Education and Outreach Unit and the Research and Development Unit of the MRC formed clubs in the following schools in Bo: Christ the King College, Bo Government Secondary School, Methodist High School, Queen of the Rosary School, SOS Hermann Gmeiner International School, Bo Commercial Secondary School, Centenary Secondary School, St Andrews Secondary School, Tony Blair International Academy and Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School. The Awada School received their letter of request for the formation of same. Their Heritage Club would hopefully be established before the end of November 2018.

Club members will be taught the history of Sierra Leone, cultural practices, tangible and intangible heritage, etc. They will equally be doing series of activities that will promote cultural awareness and promote nationalism.

"We must catch them young if we are serious to preserve the enviable culture and heritage of Sierra Leone." remarked the country's Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister, Memunatu Pratt.

Charlie Haffner, MRC's Chair says the need for cultural education is urgent.

Mohamed B Sannoh is the Principal of Queen of the Rosary Secondary School, he maintained that nation's that were doing well had a great passion and respect for their culture and heritage.

The children were excited to be part of these clubs as they anxiously await the start of the first cultural activity.

Launching in Bo Town

Ministry of Tourism and Monuments and Relics Commission launch Heritage Clubs in Bo District

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural

Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission have launched Ten School Heritage Clubs in Bo District, Southern Sierra Leone.

The launching which took place at the Queen of the Rosary School (QRS), Ngalu Road, Bo attracted officials from various walks of life.

School Heritage Clubs were established in the following schools: Christ the King College, Bo Government Secondary School, Bo Commercial Secondary School, Queen of the Rosary Sec School, St Andrews Sec School, SOS Hermann Gmeiner International School, Ahmadiyya Muslim Sec School, Centenary UM Sec School, Tony Blair International Academy and Methodist High School.

Prior to the launch, the newly established heritage clubs displayed cultural performances to the admiration of all present. Performances range from narrating the infamous Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to the preparation of local cassava leaves cuisine, traditional games and sports to dancing and drumming.

The clubs were launched by the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, William I.K Robinson.

Chaired by the JSS Principal of Queen of the Rosary School, Mr Mohamed B Sannoh, statements were made by the Director of Culture in the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Foday Jalloh, a representative of Civil Society and the Permanent Secretary, Tamba Gbetuwa.

Bo District is the first district in the province to benefit from such club formation. In December 2017, ten school

heritage clubs were established in Freetown.

The clubs are formed to imbibe in children the love for country, respect for culture and appreciation of their heritage. The Monuments and Relics Commission will continue to form clubs in other schools in the provinces.





Makeni School Heritage Clubs Establishment

Monuments and Relics Commission establishes Heritage Clubs in Makeni City, Bombali District

The Monuments and Relics Commission has established 10 School Heritage Clubs in Makeni City, Bombali District, Northern Sierra Leone. The formation was done between the 17th -20th June, 2019.

More than 500 pupils from 10 secondary schools in Makeni opted to join the School Heritage Clubs. Their desire to express their culture in a way that transcends the ordinary was laid bare during the process. The four-day exercise saw the establishment of clubs in the following schools.

1. Ansarul Islamic Secondary School
2. Benevolent Islamic Secondary School
3. Birch Memorial Secondary School
4. Every Nation Academy
5. Makeni Comprehensive Academy (MCA)
6. Modern School of Science and Business
7. Seboria Secondary School
8. SOS Hermann Gmeiner International School
9. St Francis Secondary School
10. St Joseph's Secondary School

From St Francis to St Joseph's Secondary School, Every Nation Academy to Birch Memorial Secondary School, the children showed extraordinary interest in becoming members of the School Heritage Clubs.

Pupils of Benevolent Islamic Secondary School were optimistic that they would benefit from the heritage education. During the process, the pupils displayed some cultural skills to the admiration of the whole school.

The formation of the clubs came about as a result of conscious efforts by the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission to resuscitate cultural heritage education and instill the necessary cultural consciousness in youths with a view to preserving the country's enviable heritage. The Commission has observed, with dismay, the rising neglect of the Sierra Leonean way of life.

According to the Principal of Seboria Secondary School, Makeni; Philip Tholley, "Technology, globalization and cultural imperialism are impacting negatively on the West African State's cultural heritage."

In a bid to heighten cultural heritage awareness and instill a sense of patriotism and nationalism in the younger generation, the Commission initiated the formation of those clubs.

"Between 2017 and 2018, we developed 20 school clubs in Freetown and Bo. Our goal is to have clubs in all districts in the country." Remarked Mohamed Faray Kargbo, the Commission's Education and Outreach Officer.

Research and Development Officer of

MRC, Francis Musa Momoh had this to say, "These clubs will engage in various heritage preservation and promotion activities and events that will culminate in increased awareness about their cultural practices. It is expected that this will transform their perception about culture and create an environment where pupils can appreciate, transmit and enjoy their rich culture."

More School Heritage Clubs would be formed in other districts.



Clock Tower assessment in Magburaka



Heritage Resource Assessment for the construction of a Clock Tower in Magburaka Town

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Monuments and Relics Commission have completed a Heritage Resource Assessment for the construction of a Clock Tower in Magburaka Town, Tonkolili District.

On a visit to the town on Friday May 31, 2019 the team of professionals from the Commission and Prime Engineering Solutions mapped the site for the construction of that historic monument.

Chief Administrator, Tonkolili District Council, Sahr Yambasu, assured of their support while thanking the Government for the bold step.

"The Colonial Roundabout which is located at the City Centre where the original town evolved is the most ideal place to erect the monument", remarked Paramount Chief of Kholifa Rowalla Chiefdom, PC Masakma Kamamanka the 3rd.

The Site is home to a War Memorial erected in memory of sons and daughters of Kholifa Rowalla who died during the 1991-2002 Civil

War in Sierra Leone.

The Monuments and Relics Commission in collaboration with stakeholders would prepare a historic dossier for the recognition of the Site and erection of the Clock Tower.

A visit to Foday Saybana Sankoh's Grave

We left Magburaka in the early hours of Thursday February 21. Using the route that connects Magburaka and Mile 91 we enjoyed the every moment of the journey.

Our first assignment was to locate Masang village, Mamuntha Mayossoh Chiefdom, Tonkolili District, the birthplace of Revolutionary United Front warlord, Foday Saybana Sankoh.

Led by the Headman of Masang, we visited Foday Sankoh's grave at the back of his now fallen home. There lies his grave with the inscription.

"In loving memory of Foday Saybana Sankoh, former leader of Sierra Leone rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF) died July 29, 2003, aged 65 years. Your presence we miss, your memory we treasure, loving you always, forgetting you never."

Day Four: Tuesday February 19, 2019 Comprehensive Survey of Tourism and Cultural Resources in Sierra Leone

Team Tonkolili

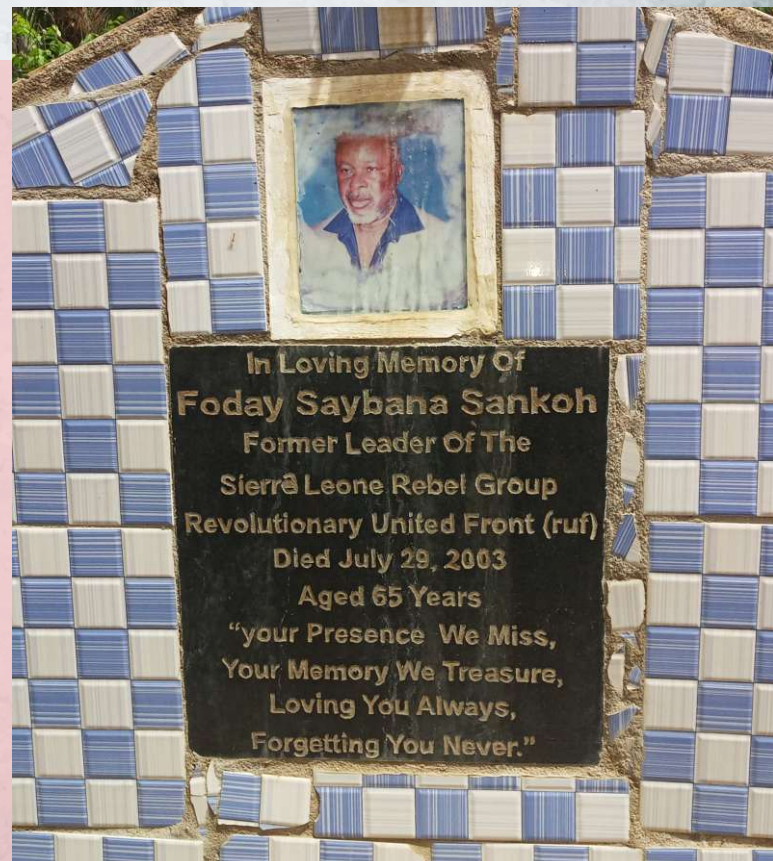
The Team took an inventory of the railway bridge relic in Magbankoh village, Tonkolili District, arts and crafts workstations and others.

The bridge connects Bombali and Tonkolili through the Rokel River. All across Sierra Leone, relics of the Rails are scattered in different shapes and sizes.

At Mamunta, relics of the Train Station signpost remain intact.

The Team held Focussed Group Discussions with few Paramount Chiefs in the Tonkolili District. They lamented that the cultural resource base of Sierra Leone was dwindling due to varied factors and expressed optimism that much could be done to reclaim the nation's heritage.

The Team surveyed the arts and crafts work facilities in Magburaka.





UNESCO forms Memory of the World Committee in Sierra Leone

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has formed the National Committee of Memory of the World in Sierra Leone.

The formation came about following a two day Workshop on Documentary Heritage and Sustainable Development held at the Family Kingdom in Freetown on May 27 and 28, 2019.

Facilitated by Nigerian Expert Librarian, Dr Victoria Okojie, the workshop was jointly organized by UNESCO and Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

The following institutions and/or individuals were nominated to serve as the first set of Committee members.

UNESCO NatCom, the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Monuments and Relics Commission, the National Archives, the Sierra Leone National Museum, the Sierra Leone Library Board, an Expert in the field of preservation and a member of the indigenous community.

The Committee is charged with the responsibility of managing and monitoring the overall Memory of the World Programme in Sierra Leone.

Launched in 1992, UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme is an international initiative to safeguard the documentary heritage of humanity against collective amnesia, neglect, the ravages of time, climatic conditions and willful and deliberate destruction.

Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs holds Civic Peace and Cultural Education Dialogue

By Mohamed Faray Kargbo

Stakeholders in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone have recommended the reintroduction of Civic Education in the Curriculum of the nation.

At a well attended Civic, Peace and Cultural Education Workshop at the Eastern Polytechnic in Kenema on Wednesday 22nd May, 2019 they equally recommended the establishment of cultural groups across the country.

On the area of peace, they noted that peace was paramount for the development of the nation.

"The absence of war doesn't mean all is peaceful. What is peaceful for one person might not be peaceful for another," noted Abdul Kpapa, former President of Peace Society at Fourah Bay College.

Presentations were made by the Director of Culture, Foday Jalloh and the Chairman of the National Agency for Civic Education and Development, Kalilu Totangi.

Speaker after speaker reiterated the need for increased civic education to enlighten the masses about important national issues.

The event was organized by the Directorate of Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

Participants were drawn from the Security Sector, Human Rights Organizations, the Press, Government Agencies and traditional rulers.

A similar event would be held in Bo, Makeni and Freetown.





Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs has assured the International community that Sierra Leone was ready for serious tourism business.

Madam Memunatu Pratt said Sierra Leone had made a number of advancements in the area of tourism promotion.

At a global conference held during the ITB Trade Exhibition on Wednesday March 6, 2019 the Minister emphasized the following:

"We need to come out and speak to the world. Look at our destination, explore our products and see what we can offer."

"Our international advocacy is yielding fruit. The negative perceptions are reducing," says Acting General Manager of Sierra Leone's Tourism Board, Fatmata Abe-Osagie.

Director of Tourism, Mohamed Jalloh welcomed all to explore the diverse tourism resources that the nation is blessed with.

"Come for adventure tourism, wildlife, heritage, skiing, and ecotourism."

Dr M'Baimba Baryoh, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to Germany assured that tourism was the gateway to Sierra Leone.

The Media Professionals asked a couple of questions relating to the development of tourism in Sierra Leone.

Marketing Sierra Leone through food tourism

By *Mohamed Faray Kargbo*

As the compelling aroma of the deliciously prepared meal spreads across, so does the message about Sierra Leone National Day.

Even before the official time of the event, people were already waiting. They all

came with one resolve, to have a taste of the Sierra Leonean food.

Europeans, Asians, Americans and other African nationals queue up in their numbers to be served the meal from Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Stand at ITB had never attracted so much crowd.

From the groundnut soup to the locally-produced rice, ginger drink to the tamarind everything was eaten by the visitors to the pleasure of the National Tourist Board.

"The food is delicious," remarked one partaker. "I love this and will like to have more." commented another.

The ingredients in the food made it even more difficult for the visitors to spare the extras. It was a joyful moment for the

Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Memunatu Pratt. She has always maintained that food tourism could be used to get more tourists to visit Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone has some of the best delicacies and spicy foodstuff that could forge a love relationship between a tourist

and the nation. The cuisine from Sierra Leone could attract more tourists than we think.

The ITB Tourism Trade Show attracts over 10,000 visitors annually. Sierra Leone's participation is part of efforts to attract more tourists to the country.





surprise.

The Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone will do all within its powers to restore what is left of our endangered heritage. The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs is making strides to change the narrative. The National Tourist Board of Sierra Leone will have much to market when the necessary restoration and preservation is done to our historic sites.

Special thanks to our friend, Samuel Amartey, a

Monuments and Relics Commission tours Ghana's Heritage Sites

The Research and Development Officer and the Education and Outreach Officer of Sierra Leone's Monuments and Relics Commission have completed a high profiled visit to officials of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.

Francis Musa Momoh and Mohamed Faray Kargbo held discussions with the Head of Department, Dr Fritz, Associate Professor, Benjamin W. Kankpeyeng and others. They were taken on a conducted tour of the archaeology museum, laboratory, and other essential areas on Wednesday February 27, 2019.

The visit marks the beginning of efforts to develop heritage studies in Sierra Leone.

Ghana has one of the most developed professionals in archaeology and heritage studies with the University of Ghana boasting of MPhil and PhD students.

"We need to train Sierra Leoneans in the field of archaeology, anthropology and heritage studies to fill the gap that we currently have." remarked Memunatu Pratt, Sierra Leone's Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister.

Head of Administration, MRC, Ann-Marie Kamara says trained personnel in the field will greatly reduce the amount of consultancies that go to foreign archaeologists and preservation professionals.

The visit was facilitated by a Ghanaian Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University, USA, Samuel Amartey.

A guided tour of Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in Ghana

My trip to Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in Ghana reminds me of my first trip to Bunce Island in Sierra Leone in 2016.

Unlike Bunce Island, we drove to the castles in Ghana. As we rode through the 132km Highway, many things run through my mind.

We were greeted by the sight of gigantic structures that use to house abled-bodied men and women who were reduced to the status of subhuman beings.

The dungeons, Governors Quarters, gates of no- return, strong rooms, slave yards remind visitors of the harsh realities of life over 500 years ago.

I was particularly thrilled by the incessant flow of tourists and could only imagine the amount of funds that goes into the coffers of the Ghana Monuments and Museums Board (GMMB).

But it's not much about the money than the efforts being made to preserve their heritage. Heritage Tourism is taking the world by



Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology at the Syracuse University, USA.

Job shadowing at the Ghana Museum of Science and Technology.

The Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone. Mamoud Malik Saako, the Head of the MST gladly took officials from the Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone through the collections on Wednesday 27th February, 2019.

Francis Musa Momoh and Mohamed Faray Kargbo were accompanied by Samuel Amartey.

The need for purpose-built museums in Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasized as observed in the Ghanaian scenario

Heritage protection, promotion and preservation

Our mission is to learn the skills needed to better preserve our nation's cultural heritage. Ours is not only a history of slavery and emancipation, colonialism and independence.

There are indigenous heroes and heroines whose contributions to the advancement of the continent need to be popularized.

Sierra Leone can copy a leaf from the way our Ghanaian counterparts have preserved the story of their legendary leader, Kwame Nkrumah.

The Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum and Memorial Park documents the life and times of this great personality.

It's not too late to preserve our history so that our children's children can appreciate and enjoy it.

The Monuments and Relics Commission can start thinking in that direction. Aside from the fact that built monuments can beautify a country, they also serve as a source of income generation for countries.

Imagine we paid 10 Ghana Cedis to access the park. Let's appreciate ours and move forward



The Monuments and Relics Commission hosts Team from the United States of America who traced their ancestry (DNA) to Sierra Leone at the Secretariat.

The Team which visited the Commission was made up of Dwayne Doughty, Dwayne Willis and Thomas Gilmore led by Foday Kunda Conteh formerly Robert Jordan who in 2016, made a lone sojourn after he traced his ancestral heritage to the Themnes of Sierra Leone.

Over the years, Foday has been traveling with brothers and sisters to Sierra Leone helping them reunify with kins after tracing their roots.

From the engagement, it became vivid that the family is having an experience of a lifetime in Sierra Leone from the love they keep receiving and the willingness of people to collaborate and build.

The Chairman of Monuments and Relics Commission Charlie Haffner thanked them for the courtesy call and used the meeting to welcome them home noting, that they were part of a living proof to the many heritage faces of Sierra Leone.

Don't catch or eat fish from that river or be prepared for eternity

During our survey to discover tourism and cultural resources in Sierra Leone. We were told about two sections of a small ditch-like river.

This river in a small village, Bakeh-Loko, Tonkolili District is home to a small variety of fishes whose lives were spared as a result of a curse that was placed on one side of the river.

The curse came about as a result of rampant uncoordinated and unregulated fishing that was previously done on the waters.

The situation was such that the fishes were not allowed to



grow.

A curse (Gbomswenh) was therefore instituted on the waters. "Anyone who eats a fish that was on the right side of the river will die automatically. Those who did the fishing would not be spared."

But the fishermen are permitted to catch if the fishes move to the left part of the river.

That's how the community continue to get fish stoke up to this day. Had nothing been done, the situation might not have been the same.

What a way to preserve the lives of their natural resource in Bakeh Loko.



A curse (Gbomswenh) was therefore instituted on the waters. Anyone who eats a fish that was on the right side of the river will die automatically



Bonthe Sherbro Clock Tower

The Monuments and Relics Commission with funds from the Government of Sierra Leone is restoring the Clock Tower in Bonthe Island.

Ministry of Tourism launches 'Adopt-a-booth' for youth/women's empowerment

By Mohamed Faray Kargbo

The Vice President of Sierra Leone has launched the Adopt-a-booth Project.

Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh admonished users to 'use the booths to sell good things' while disclosing that he felt honoured to be part of the rebranding revolution of the tourism industry.

The event which was done at the Family Kingdom, Aberdeen on Thursday 13th September, 2018 attracted key stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the National Tourist Board, the project will not only transform the beach front but also provide jobs for youths and women.

"We want businesses to adopt booths to specifically support youths and women who may not have the resources to construct such booths." remarked Memunatu Pratt, the Minister of Tourism.

Concerned about the deteriorating status of Sierra Leone's beaches, she assured that the project would link businesses to the creative sectors such that the country's beaches would be sights-to-behold.

Haphazard, unplanned and unregulated booths have occupied the



beach front for far too long.

Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer promised to partner with the Tourism Ministry to make Freetown an attractive tourist destination. "The beaches we take for granted, take the breath of tourists away," she concluded.

Once a preferred tourist destination, international tourist arrivals dropped considerably following the outbreak of civil war in Sierra Leone.

"We have an opportunity to rebrand Sierra Leone but we need to cooperate and mobilize the key players." Deputy Minister of Information, Solomon Jamiru averred.

Fatmata Abe-Osagie, Acting General Manager of the National Tourist Board says there were four categories of support: the Diamond which goes for Le 50m, the Gold-Le 33m, the Silver-Le 19m and general donation for the project.

Adopting-a-booth to improve livelihoods can be a daunting task for Aberdeen community's poor youths and women. The launch of the project is a dream come true for the Parliamentary Representative of Constituency 131, Hon Rahman Coker.

Director of Tourism, Mohamed Jalloh called for private public collaboration to alleviate the plight of adopting such booths stressing that 'tourism is one of the growth sectors.'

"This is a laudable idea, we will make the necessary legislation to improve tourism and develop Lumley beach to international standards." says Hon Tom Issic Tucker, the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

Few institutions like the Rokel Commercial Bank, Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and Ministry of Information and Communications have already shown commitment to adopt a booth.

With unwavering political commitment and a multifaceted approach to development, tourism could once again be the engine of economic growth in Sierra Leone.





A beach at Bonthe Island

Sierra Leone will soon be declared a visa-free country to promote tourism

Sierra Leone's Vice President has disclosed that the government is working on plans to make Sierra Leone a visa-free country.

In a seminar on the 'Role of Sierra Leone's Diplomatic Missions/Embassies in promoting Tourism and Culture' Dr Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh emphasized that the returns on being a visa-free country would far out-way the benefits from visa charges.

Vice President Jalloh said “the government is currently reviewing policies and laws to reduce airfares, develop infrastructure, build capacity, provide visa-on-arrival facilities and promote investment in Sierra Leone.”

This disclosure was made at the Radisson Blu Mammy Yoko Hotel on Monday August 27, 2018 where

the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and National Tourist Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation held a seminar for newly appointed Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

Initiated by the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Madam Memunatu Pratt, the seminar aims among other things at fostering a joint marketing and promotion approach with Embassies to promote Sierra Leone as an attractive tourist destination.

She disclosed that the Ministry was making strides to make significant contributions to the nation's socio-economic development. Among other things the Ministry would

launch its website in September 2018 and introduce a Bachelor of Arts in Tourism in the 2019/20 academic year.

“We will take Sierra Leone to the world,” remarked Dr M'baimba Baryoh, the designated Ambassador to Germany who spoke on behalf of the envoys.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr Alie Kabba revealed that “tourism has the potential to transform this country.”

Presentations showcasing Sierra Leone's touristic and cultural potentials were presented by the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, the National Tourist Board and the Monuments and Relics Commission.

After four years of meritorious service by Isatu Smith and team, Charlie Haffner takes over Monuments and Relics Commission

By Mohammed Faray Kargbo

The Monuments and Relics Commission was almost moribund when they took over four years ago. Everything that should make the Commission a very vibrant entity was either nonexistent or in shambles.

The appointment of Madam Isatu Smith and team of Commissioners saw the rejuvenation of the Commission. In no time, they revolutionized the cultural heritage management sector to the admiration of many.

From the establishment of a functioning Secretariat to the proclamation of three new monuments, the Commission defy all odds to give heritage management a facelift in Sierra Leone.

The restoration of Bunce Island project, construction/restoration of a new jetty on the same Island, restoration of the De-Ruyter's Stone, King's Yard Gate, building of perimeter fence on Old Fourah Bay College and the

eviction of squatters from its premises, restoration works on St John Maroon's Church and St Charles's Church, the review of the Monuments and Relics Act, formation of School Heritage Clubs, recognition of Chief Mani Sundu's Grave, the achievements are too glaring for an entity that inherited a workload of over 60 years with little resource allocation.

During Isatu Smith's tenure as Chair of MRC, the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation provided funds for the restoration of Bunce Island in 2017. This was done at a time when the Island was still on the tentative list of the World Monuments Watch.

In one of her numerous interviews with the media, Isatu Smith said her biggest dream was to witness the declaration of Bunce Island as a World Monument. The new Chairman is Charlie Haffner.

Himself a member of the erstwhile Commission, he brings to the table over 35 years of experience in the field of cultural heritage and theatre arts. The

Parliament of Sierra Leone endorsed him as the Chairman of the Commission on Thursday 2nd August, 2018 following his appointment by President Julius Maada Bio.

Mr Haffner said he was willing to work with other players to make the monuments and relics of Sierra Leone as enviable as possible.

Some members of Parliament described his appointment as one of the best in the history of Sierra Leone owing to his unique sense of cultural awareness and dedicated years of promoting the country's culture and heritage under the aegis of his cultural institution, Fritong Players International.

Charlie Haffner and team have a huge task ahead to preserve the nation's battered cultural and heritage resources.

Unless an uncompromising commitment to the restoration of cultural heritage resources is pursued, Sierra Leone's historic assets would hardly be

comprehensively restored by the next decade. They had suffered years of neglect and deterioration aggravated by massive destruction during the decade long civil conflict.

Over the years, low budgetary allocation has not helped the situation. The intangible culture like its tangible

counterpart is under attack by cultural imperialism, globalisation, modern civilization and technology.

The new administration has pledged to overhaul the situation. President Bio has promised to diversify the economy through tourism, agriculture and marine resources.

The new Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Madam Memunatu Pratt is determined to rescue the sector and position Sierra Leone as an attractive tourist destination. Her strides in the last couple of months speak to the seriousness she attaches to that transformation. But the government must provide the much needed resources coupled with an unwavering political will if any sober economic turnaround could be effected. Until that is done, the road to heritage tourism development in Sierra Leone seem bumpy.



MRC strengthens heritage education as St Edwards Secondary School Heritage Club tours Bunce Island

The Heritage Club of St Edwards Secondary School has completed a guided tour of Bunce Island on Saturday 23rd June, 2018. The tour which forms part of the education and outreach component of a project to preserve the Island was facilitated by the Monuments and Relics Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the World Monuments Fund with funds from the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. As Mohamed Faray Kargbo reports, the need to preserve the ruins is even more urgent.

Apprehension gripped the pupils as they converged at the Sierra Leone National Museum that cold Saturday morning. Aside from the name Bunce Island, most of the pupils knew nothing about the Island or the way to reach it.

They were however prepared to embark on the 300 km journey by road to Pepel and the 15 minute boat ride to the slave fort. By the time they arrived on the Island, their seeming aqua phobia had given way to excitement.

As the local boat comfortably berthed on the newly restored floating jetty, the pupils were greeted by a deafening silence and the awesome sight of trees, shrubs and 18th century ruins. Used as a trading post for enslaved Africans, the once beautiful fort has been reduced to a habitat for amphibians, rodents and reptiles. The ruins are begging to be restored.

Recently, Sierra Leone's Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC) and the US based World Monuments Fund (WMF) collaborated to do restoration work on the slave fort. Thanks go to the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation for the provision of funds. Such preservation efforts require specialized skills and expertise which unfortunately are unavailable locally, hence the collaboration.

The fourth school to tour the uninhabited slave castle, St Edwards Secondary School Heritage Club could feel deeply the untold suffering to which their forefathers succumbed.

"Our lives were incomplete prior to this visit. It is an insult for any Sierra Leonean not to visit that 'arena of carnage.' If anything, it signifies the true origin of our nation." The words of student James Williams reflected the feeling of discomfort and abhorrence throughout that historic guided tour. This was also seen from their facial expressions.

As the Tour Guide, MRC staff member Francis Momoh unfolded the story of the transatlantic slave trade. With

each revelation the students' animosity for the slave masters grew. None of them believed that humans could unleash so much terror on their kind all in the name of doing business.

"The visit is significant to us because it connects us with the past. Such education reinforces our resolve to serve as selfless citizens of Sierra Leone whilst instilling a sense of nationalism and patriotism." remarked 15 year old Saffa Juana.

The Island's importance was endorsed when it was listed as one of the world's most endangered heritage sites in the World Monuments Watch list 2016-2018.

Since the reconstitution of the Monuments and Relics Commission in 2014, the Commission has been working assiduously to overhaul the site. A General Management Plan has been produced, a new jetty restored and environmental and impact assessment done. Chairperson of the Commission, Isatu Smith says Bunce Island is the most important site in Africa for African Americans.

David Lansana, a JSS 3 pupil wants to plead with the Government to continue to provide funds for the holistic preservation of the fort whilst simultaneously appealing to the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to provide more resources to prevent the deterioration of the extant structures.

All club members promised to educate their peers about the island. Together with their patron, they asked the MRC to speed up the preservation of the island to ensure that more tourists visit the site to benefit from that much needed education. The guided tour was done on Saturday 23rd June, 2018. The MRC is coordinating heritage clubs in 10 secondary schools in the Western Area. These clubs engage in cultural activities from time to time and they have an accumulated membership of over 500.



The Monuments and Relics Commission is proud of the enviable heritage that Sierra Leone is blessed with. The Commission is more than determined to preserve, protect and promote all the monuments and relics of Sierra Leone.

Everything that concerns the culture and heritage of this blessed country is the work of the MRC.

We are currently at the National Stadium joining the National Tourist Board to participate in the Chamber of Commerce Trade Fair and Exhibition. We shall be here till the end.

On display are some of the country's finest cultural assets. From the Shegureh to the Kondi, the Ndoli Jowei to the Nafalay.

Check us out around Stand 8 & 9 at the National Stadium Perimeter to get more information.



We must put an end to modern slavery' - St Joseph's Secondary School Heritage Club

Using drama and creative skills, club members of the St Joseph's Secondary School Heritage Club have educated their colleagues about the ills of modern slavery particularly child slavery.

In a sensitization event organized by the Monuments and Relics Commission at their school on Friday 6th July, 2018 the pupils highlighted the plight of children who are caught in such precarious situations.

Abolished over 200 years ago, the children brought out the harsh realities of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its attendant negative consequences. They showed how African chiefs and traditional leaders were selling their subjects in exchange for guns, clothes and the like.

The Heritage Club also did a simulation exercise exposing the seriousness of issues such as child trafficking, sexual slavery, child labour and other forms of modern slavery.

The exercise forms part of a pilot phase of a research to unearth the occurrence of modern slavery in communities. Sierra Leone's Monuments and Relics Commission, the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs in collaboration with

the Wilberforce Institute for Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) and University of Hull are organizing the events.



MRC Chair visits National Railway Museum

The new Chairman of the Monuments and Relics Commission has visited the National Railway Museum at Cline Town with a view to assessing the state of the facilities there.

Charlie Haffner made the trip on Friday 16th November, 2018 together with senior staff of the Commission.

The visit couldn't have taken place at a more opportune time than when the Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum were doing major restoration works on the relics.

The Coordinator of the NRM, Abu Bakarr Nylender-Kargbo remarked that they were doing their best to make the museum an enviable tourist facility.

Helen Ashby of the Friends of Sierra Leone National Railway Museum assured that they were willing to develop the capacity of staff of the museum and to transform the railway relics.



The lady who transforms the face of Sierra Leone in Paris, France

By Mohamed Faray Kargbo

When the decision was reached to bring her to this year's International French Tourism Market (IFTM) 2018, little did anyone realize that she would be the most valuable natural resource of our time.

Arguably the lady of the moment, anyone who sets eyes on her couldn't help but request a photo with her.

I couldn't be prouder as a Sierra Leonean as she becomes the envy of the exposition.

Group Tour Operators, Travelling Journalists, Travelling Agencies and many tourism professionals pledged to do business with Sierra Leone because of her.

"Can I have a photo with you please," remarked a tour operator. "You are beautiful, I will visit Sierra Leone to see more beautiful ladies like you" said another. The demand to take photos with Miss Sierra Leone 2018, Sarah Laura Tucker increased as the days go by.

Her presence at the event gave Sierra Leone a priceless attention. The crown and the sash combined with her beauty and intelligence to improve the image of the country internationally.

Global TV stations competed to have interviews with her. Ze-Africanews.com had to wait for hours just to get an interview.

Other beauty Queens lavished praises on her such that they almost worshipped her.

With over 32,000 professionals and 1,600 exhibitors at

the event, Sierra Leone is set to witness an exponential turnaround in inbound tourism occasioned largely by the presence of Sarah Laura Tucker at this year's event. In a visit to some booths around the exhibition, exhibitors were scrambling to network with her.

"She is our Brand Ambassador for Tourism, that is why we brought her here," concluded Lucinda Kargbo, the Marketing Manager of National Tourist Board.



Indeed, Miss Sierra Leone 2018, Sarah Laura Tucker is the new diamond of Sierra Leone.

Launch of a two-year project to preserve the unique heritage of Bunce Island

The Government of Sierra Leone and the United States of America have joined forces to support the preservation and promotion of the landmark historical site of Bunce Island. Bunce Island, which is located in the Sierra Leone River in Lokomassama Chiefdom, Port Loko District, is a unique cultural monument to Africa's intersection with the United States and the wider Atlantic World. During its 140 years of operation, the traders on Bunce Island exiled thousands of enslaved Africans to North America and the West Indies. It bears witness to this dark period in history.

Today the official launch of the project was announced.

"Bunce Island's history is inextricably linked to America's history [...]. This connection make me as the U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone—and the whole of the U.S. Mission in Sierra Leone—gratified to award this grant to help preserve this sacred place with so much history," said Maria E. Brewer, the U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

The goal of the project is to carry out urgent preservation at the site to arrest decay that is threatening stability of the ruins, mitigate the effects of coastal erosion, which is exacerbated by climate change and sea-level rise, and develop the site's visitor infrastructure.

When cultural heritage is integrated into a coherent development strategy it can become a significant resource for the community's socio-economic development, an engine for local sustainable development and an essential condition for a balanced human development.

Preservation at Bunce Island is an opportunity to help alter perceptions of Sierra Leone and contribute to the country's economic revival, and it will ensure the survival of one of the most important heritage sites in West African with strong cultural and historical links to the United States.

The project will be implemented by World Monuments Fund (WMF) working in partnership with the Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone with funding provided by the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation through the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

"Diversifying the economy of Sierra Leone through heritage tourism remains the biggest challenge facing the government. The launch of a project to preserve Bunce Island will undoubtedly boost the economy and promote cultural tourism at local and international level," remarked the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Sidie Yahya Tunis.

Madam Isatu Smith Chairperson of the Monuments and Relics Commission said that "it is very gratifying that Bunce Island is finally being given the attention it deserves during the tenure of my Commission. Since the 1970s several agencies have made attempts to secure the



funds needed to preserve Bunce Island and develop it into a National Historic Park and it is very historical that this is finally happening."

The World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 45 years, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF inspires an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide.

www.wmf.org

www.twitter.com/worldmonuments

www.facebook.com/worldmonuments

The Monuments and Relics Commission (MRC) is the government agency charged with the responsibility of preserving ancient, historical and natural monuments, relics and other objects of archaeological, ethnographical, historical or other scientific interest. The Commission has the responsibility of ensuring the preservation, protection and promotion of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage assets. The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs is its line ministry.





Government of Sierra Leone restores jetty on Bunce Island

With funds provided by the Government of Sierra Leone, the Monuments and Relics Commission is leading the restoration/construction of a jetty on Bunce Island. The development of the jetty is to a precursor to major restoration works that will be funded by the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and implemented by World Monuments Fund and the Monuments and Relics Commission.

The restoration is being done by Class Diving Sierra Leone Ltd which signed a contract with the Monuments and Relics Commission on 25th October, 2017 for the development of a new jetty on the Island.

The restoration of a new jetty is part of preparatory steps towards a comprehensive restoration of the Bunce Island Historic Park as documented in the General Management Plan of Bunce Island. When completed, the jetty would ease the travelling to and from the island whilst simultaneously creating a perfect landing site for vessels with persons visiting the Island.

The project is expected to last for six months. The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs through its sub vented agency, the Monuments and Relics Commission is providing overall supervision of the project.

Bunce Island was the largest British slave castle on the Rice Coast of West Africa. Founded around 1670, it exported tens of thousands of African captives to the Americas and the West Indies until the British Parliament abolished the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in 1807, and it finally closed down in 1808. During its long and tragic history, Bunce Island was operated by four London-based companies: the Gambia Adventurers; the Royal African Company of England (which had official recognition from the British Crown); and the private firms of Grant, Oswald & Company and John & Alexander Anderson.



Sierra Leone attracts Travel and Tourism investors at the French Market

"I am here as Minister of Tourism to be able to convince and build confidence in the tourism market and also to showcase what Sierra Leone has, what we can offer, not only the beaches but ecotourism facilities. At the end of this exercise, Sierra Leone would surely be a better marketer when it comes to tourism"

Sierra Leone's Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MTCA), Madam Memunatu Pratt was very apt when she spoke about the country's participation in the International French Tourism Market (IFTM) Top Resa 2018.

Organized in Port de Versailles, Paris from 25th -28th September, 2018, IFTM Top Resa is France's B2B international tourism exhibition.

The four day event saw the negotiation of business deals with top tourism business magnates like Thomas Cook Group and Tui, an international Press Conference and other meetings with delegations of Tourism Ministries in African and European countries.

The industry's leading event for networking, doing business, innovating and keeping abreast of market developments offers a 360° panorama of the travel industry, covering all sectors: leisure, business and events.

It is believed that Sierra Leone's participation in the 2018 Top Resa Exhibition would lead to the start of great business investments in the Tourism and Travelling sector.

Once a thriving destination for French tourists, the number of visitors to the West African nation plummeted following the outbreak of civil disobedience in 1991.

Few years down the line, that situation changed.

In 2016, the United Nations World Tourism Organization rated the West African coastal nation as the world's fastest growing tourism industry with

over 300 percent increase in tourist arrivals.

"We are delighted to be back at the French Tourism Expo, this time bigger and better than before." remarked Mohamed Jalloh, the Director of Tourism. MTCA.

President Julius Maada Bio promised to diversify the country's economy through tourism in his SLPP New Direction Manifesto.

Initiated by the Minister of Tourism, Miss Sierra Leone 2018, Sarah Laura Tucker attended this year's French Expo. The attention she brought to Sierra Leone was phenomenal.

"If you think I'm beautiful, wait until you see our islands and beaches and if you think I smile nicely, wait until you meet the citizens of Sierra Leone." She told international journalists.

Marketing and promoting a destination that was challenged could be very herculean but the National Tourist Board (NTB) is up to the task as assured by the Acting General Manager, Fatmata Abe-Osagie.

With over 1,600 exhibitors and 32,000 professionals, the exhibition presents an enviable opportunity for destinations to market their products.

"There can be no better gathering to market Sierra Leone's unique tourism potentials" according to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Raymond Tamba Gbetuwa.

Endowed with competitive heritage resources, the Administrative Officer of the Monuments and Relics Commission, Ann-Marie Kamara had this to say: "We believe that heritage tourism can transform our nation and attract more tourists to Sierra Leone. That is why we really want to do an unrivaled display of our culture and heritage next year."

Chairman of the Parliamentary

Oversight Committee on Tourism, Tom Issic Tucker pledged their commitment to legislate rules that would make the country the best tourist destination.

In her desire to promote tourism in France, the Minister also met with diasporans in that country.

The Marketing Manager, NTB, Lucinda Kargbo, Travel Director of Tourism is Life, Alieya A. Kargbo, Marketing Officer, NTB, Kai Bockarie Saquee interfaced with travel agents, coach operators, incentive travelers, leisure travelers and other tourism businesses.





“Preserving Monuments and Relics
for Present and Future Generations”