

MINUTES OF VTT ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY 13th May, 2017

The meeting was held at St. Paul's Church Centre, Rossmore Road, London, NW1 6NJ

Trustees Present:

Bertie Woolnough (Chairman), Stuart Jeffreys (Treasurer), Ben Clackson (Secretary),
Margaret Hakim, Mokhtar Hossain, Dr Bryan Whitty, Janet Ivin, Dr Sanawar Choudhury

Valerie Taylor, Brian Woodgate (Administrator) and 32 members and supporters were also present.

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present and thanked Helen Mortimer (now in New York) for all her work on the excellent Spring Newsletter. He also thanked Kokhon (Mokhtar Hossain) and all who were helping him prepare lunch despite the challenges posed by many road closures that day in London. He welcomed Valerie and explained to supporters that following a meeting with her and Shafiq ul-Islam last year, the Trustees had agreed to widen the scope of our grants to CRP to include not just the poorest Spinal Cord Injury patients (as before) but also the mother and child unit, the inclusive school, and Prosthetics and Orthotics.

He explained that he and Margaret Hakim had come to the end of their 3-year terms as Trustees but were willing to stand for re-election. However he appealed for others to come forward to assist with the running of the Trust, including volunteers for the posts of Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman.

Reports

Ben Clackson introduced the Draft Annual Report to the Charity Commission and Stewart Jeffreys summarized the Draft Accounts for 2016-17. There had been a considerable reduction in income to VTT from Commercial organisations and other charities, for which VTT has acted as a conduit to CRP particularly in the years following the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013. But income from supporters and fund-raising had held up reasonably well, and enabled us to transfer £88,000 to CRP during the year.

Essential Gift Scheme

Bryan Whitty spoke of the appalling waste that occurs every year when unwanted gifts are given, and urged supporters to remember VTT's Essential Gift Scheme. This enables a gift-maker to fill in a form available on our website at:

<http://www.valerietaylortrust.org/index.php/donate-2/other-ways-of-giving/essential-gift/>

and send it with a cheque to Elizabeth Arthur to buy a gift that will be very precious to the person who benefits from it at CRP and also heart-warming for you yourself or a friend or family member on a special occasion.

Two Volunteers at CRP

Charlotte Walker and Hannah Carruthers had gone out to CRP together last August for 7 weeks.

Charlotte had studied Prosthetics and Orthotics at University and had just graduated before she went out. She described the challenge of helping patients who, having had limbs amputated some time ago had a lot of muscle wastage. She also found that amputations performed in Bangladesh

had often not been made in a way that facilitated the fitting of prosthetic devices. But she had clearly enjoyed the work and made the most of the opportunity to interact with staff and patients despite the language barrier. Back in the UK she is hoping to go out to CRP again some time, and is accumulating for CRP a box of prosthetic devices, which cannot be reused in the UK according to NHS rules, and asked anyone going to CRP to take some of them.

Hannah was a trainee Rehabilitation Engineer in the NHS in the middle of a 3 year Graduate programme in Clinical Engineering and had chosen to go to CRP to satisfy the course's requirement for a month's experience of this work in another environment. She had divided her time between Savar and Gonokhbari, where the manufacture of wheelchairs is now located. She had been impressed by the enthusiasm of Firoz and his team at the workshop, and had welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the whole process from clinical assessment to specification of device (e.g. wheelchair) to manufacture of the device, since in the NHS she had no involvement in the manufacturing. At CRP she had been involved in assistive devices for children with cerebral palsy.

They both said they had enjoyed the food there, and put on weight, but the main point for them had been the friendships they made with staff and patients.

Valerie Taylor

Valerie thanked us all for coming to the Annual meeting, and said how precious our grants are to CRP. She spoke of a recent case of a young man who had multiple fractures after a tree fell on him. The community responded by going round the village to raise money to take him to Dhaka, and this type of self-help happens surprisingly often in Bangladesh, but someone in this position may also need a helping hand as regards treatment costs and this is where our grants to cover the costs of the poorest Spinal Cord Injury patients come in.

She was grateful for the fund-raising done by VTT volunteers, like the beautiful cards made by Carol Bennett, and the events in Glasgow organized by Bryan Whitty. She also said CRP greatly welcomed volunteers like Charlotte and Hannah who go out to help. And she thanked us particularly for the support of our prayers, noting that like all organizations CRP sometimes goes through difficult patches.

She had recently spent time with her elder sister in Melbourne, and while there had been able to meet up with three members of staff at CRP studying for PhD's at Australian Universities, fully funded, and doing research which will benefit CRP. There are also plans afoot to start an Australian organization analogous to VTT.

She reminded us that the Diploma in Prosthetics and Orthotics has now start at CRP with the support of ICRC. She also explained that she had arrived from South Africa the day before from a very helpful 4-day World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO), where she had led a team of 5 from Bangladesh, being herself the Chairman of ISPO Bangladesh.

Referring to the plan to establish Service Centres in each Division, she explained that land is now available for a Centre in Sylhet. Also work is now under way on a Centre in Mymensingh temporarily located in buildings of Mymensingh University, and progress is being made towards centres in Pabna and Rangpur. As well as providing treatment, these Divisional Centres will facilitate the follow-up of patients who have been discharged to their homes from CRP and also support the establishment of units in Divisional Government Hospitals to improve the care of patients with Spinal Cord Injuries.

Recently in response to an enquiry from Stephanie in the Kadoorie Foundation in Hong Kong about services for people with Mental Health problems in Bangladesh, Valerie had explained that Occupational Therapists trained at CRP are potentially an important resource for Mental Health patients and as part of their training they are given 6 weeks of Practical Placement with the National Institute of Mental Health in Dhaka. However neither of the 2 posts that have been created for OT's that have been created, one in the National Institute for Mental Health, one in the Pabna Psychiatric Hospital, are occupied by OT's. And when Valerie visited both places with Stephanie, they found the conditions desperately sad. The Kadoorie Foundation is now considering whether it could support a day-clinic at CRP for mental health patients.

She also explained that the suspension of Bangladesh from the Paralympic Games / Commonwealth Games had now finally been lifted. The Ministry of Sport has re-formed the National Paralympic Committee with Valerie and Mohua as members, and the way is now clear for paraplegic sportsmen from Bangladesh to participate in the Commonwealth Games in Ghana in 2018. Also cricket for people with disabilities is becoming more popular, with a recent T20 competition in Delhi including teams from India and Afghanistan.

Valerie had been delighted by the offer of help by the Rotary Club of St Austell for the refurbishment of the Operating Theatre. She also paid tribute to Primark for the way they have continued to support CRP in the years following Rana Plaza: they have now agreed fund three International Consultants for an extra 3 years for the School of Orthotics and Prosthetics. Another surprise has been a gift of £100,000 from a lady in Bangladesh to pay for an extra floor to be built on top of the new Rotary International building for Rehabilitation followed a stroke. There was also an unexpected gift of £25,000 from a company in Bangladesh which will be used to pay for a retaining wall on the pond at Savar to prevent it from bringing down the nearby boundary wall.

The Operating Theatre at CRP

Roger Varney explained to us, in the absence of his wife Jan (doing a walk for charity later in the day) that their aim is to complete the rehabilitation of the Theatre within 2 years at a cost of £500,000. In February 2015 the Varneys inspected the Operating Theatre and had to recommend that it should be closed because of the risk of infection from spores on the walls. That particular problem was remedied, but the floor needs to be replaced, hopefully with a grant from NATO. The theatre table needs to be replaced, as does the anaesthetic machine, and these and other critical items of equipment will be paid for with an \$85,000 grant from Rotary International. Improvements are also needed in the Scrub room (where the surgeon washes prior to an operation). Also the air supply system needs to be completely rebuilt, to the design of a firm of consultants in Cornwall with international experience and recognition, at a cost of £200,000, and this is expected to take 2 years to complete. Dr Sahid, the resident neurosurgeon, is an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme, and Shafiq has set up a team to oversee it.

In response to a question about maintenance, Roger indicated that the contractual onus for maintenance would be with companies in Bangladesh, whom he has found to be competent to do it, rather than CRP staff. CRP could not be relied on for maintenance because of staff turnover. Also he was satisfied that Dr Sahid will stay at CRP as the surgeon.

And Then ..

The afternoon ended with further refreshments for members and supporters.
The next Annual meeting will be on Saturday 12th May 2018.

Ben Clackson