VIETNAM
LAOS
CAMBODIA

MEDICAL &
SCIENTIFIC AID
NEWS BULLETIN

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SIR GEORGE HOWARTH R.I.P.

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of veteran MP and former Labour minister Sir George Howarth, MSAVLC's Vice-President.

Sir George represented the Merseyside constituency of Knowsley in Parliament for almost 38 years after first being elected in a by-election in 1986.

He stood down at the 2024 general election, having served as a minister under Tony Blair, and for some years, as chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Vietnam.

Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle led tributes in Parliament, describing Sir George as a "great politician" and he said that his death was "another sad loss" to the House of Commons.

Sir George served in the Labour government, first in the Home Office between 1997 and 1999, and then in the Northern Ireland Office until 2001. He was knighted in 2019.

Sir George was an ardent supporter of MSAVLC, and as chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Vietnam he visited South-East Asia of a number of occasions. He was renowned for his work to improve Vietnam-UK relations, and he addressed a number of the charity's Annual General Meetings at the Vietnamese Embassy. He was appointed as a Vice-President of the charity in 2014, and he was instrumental in holding the charity's Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations at the Palace of Westminster in 2015.

He was born in 1949 in Prescot, Lancashire and served as a councillor, and deputy leader of Knowsley Council before he entered parliament. He was a vocal supporter of justice for the victims of Hillsborough and their families, as he represented a constituency deeply affected by the 1989 disaster. He supported the Hillsborough Law Now campaign, and signed the Early Day Motion backing the Real Truth Legacy Project.

A father of three, Sir George also championed healthcare causes close to his heart. After losing his daughter Sián to complications from Type 1 diabetes in 2011, he became a tireless advocate for improved diabetes care, raising awareness in Parliament and serving on the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Diabetes.

He was appointed to the Privy Council in recognition of his ministerial service in 2005, and was knighted in Queen Elizabeth's 2019 Birthday Honours for his parliamentary and political service.

The Trustees send their condolences to his wife, Julie, and to all his friends and family.

Above: In 2015 Sir George Howarth was given the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisation's commemorative medal of 'Peace and Friendship Among Nations'. It was presented by Mr Don Tuan Phong of Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at MSAVLC's 50th Anniversary Celebration.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year, the charity's Annual General Meeting was held at Charlton Kings Social Club in Cheltenham, on Saturday 30th May. The Trustees had hoped to hold the meeting in London, but unfortunately the Vietnamese Embassy, where AGM's have been held in the past, was unavailable because it was being refurbished. Fortunately, a room was available at Charlton Kings Social Club, free of charge, and so the meeting was held there instead.

The main business of the meeting was the two reports, given by the Honorary Secretary and by the Honorary Treasurer, on the business and activities of the charity during 2025.

Mary Lidgard, Honorary Secretary, presented her report for the year, pointing out that for a number of reasons, 2025 had been a fairly quiet year for the charity. She said that MSAVLC had financially supported five projects during the year:

Continuation of the **First Aid Project** (April 2024 - March 2027) at New Hope Children's Home and in nearby villages in Cambodia. This project provides first aid to vulnerable children where no other care is available (see photo below).

Continuation of the two-year **Paraplegic and Quadriplegic Rehabilitation Project** run by the Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) in Pursat Province, Cambodia. The project has improved the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families, through access to health, rehabilitation and livelihood support, and social inclusion. It also enabled disabled victims to become economically self-sufficient, thus enhancing their health and wellbeing.

Funding a qualified **Medical Doctor** to work at the All Ears Cambodia (AEC) clinic in Phnom Penh. The doctor was employed to enhance and promote AEC clinical services in Phnom Penh and at outreach level. He combined clinical and teaching skills with direct patient care.

A **Hearing Screening Project** for babies and school children in eastern Cambodia, run by All Ears Cambodia. The project combined screening of school children for chronic otitis media, the leading cause of hearing loss globally, with a neonatal hearing screening service to detect congenital hearing loss.

The continuation of a **Health and Wellness Project** at Daughters of Cambodia, until its completion at the end of September 2025, and a new programme started to run until September 2026. The project helped young women and men in Cambodia escape the horrors of sex trafficking and start sustainable new lives for themselves. It provided skills and training, paired with vital health and support services needed to aid their physical, psychological, and social recovery.

In her review of the year Mary stated that, as well as conducting their respective executive roles:

Peter Lidgard compiled and edited the Bulletin.

Mary Lidgard liaised regularly with all project directors overseas, and managed all emails sent to the website contact address.

John Firth maintained the charity's mailing list.

Lynn Firth was responsible for the distribution of the Bulletin by post and email each quarter, and for compliance with General Data Protection Regulations. She also compiled the charity's new statuary policies.

Susmita Ghosh managed the MSAVLC Facebook page.

Jenny Gold liaised with New Hope Children's Home and managed our Instagram page.

The Trustees held meetings three times during 2025, and were in touch regularly by telephone and email, when necessary.

Regular contact was maintained with all our project leaders, and detailed reports were received from them all, throughout the year.

Funding was discussed and agreed, when requested, for our present projects in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The Bulletin was published in February, May, August, and November, and circulated to all our supporters by post or email.

The Annual General Meeting and 60-year Celebration had taken place in June at Charlton Kings Social Club, Cheltenham. The high point had been an address by the charity's Vice-President, Lord Balfe.

The MSAVLC Data Protection Policy, Social Media Policy and Safeguarding Policy were all reviewed and approved.

In conclusion, Mary thanked all the Trustees for their support and hard work during the year. She also thanked Nic Hewlett, who examines our financial accounts free of charge, and Peter Ryan who manages our website for us, again free of charge.

Honorary Treasurer, John Firth reported that throughout 2025 the charity remained in a financially healthy position. He explained that our income was composed of three elements, investment income, fundraising donations, and legacies.

Investments. John stated that our investments are held in the 'COIF Ethical Fund' managed by CCLA Investment Management Ltd, leaders in the field of managing investments on behalf of charities. We rely on their proven expertise in both growing capital and generating income. Our £26,364 investment income (£25,921 in 2024) accounted for 41% of our total income, excluding legacies.

Fundraising. John pointed out that our primary method of fundraising is through the publication of quarterly news Bulletins. 2025 showed a 3.4% increase in the level of donations received to £30,395, compared with £29,383 in 2024. He noted that this slender increase was only achieved due to one large donation from a generous supporter.

Legacies. Over the years the charity has been fortunate to receive legacies from supporters who wanted to give a portion of their estate to our charity. We are most appreciative of the gifts left to MSAVLC in 2025 by John Pilger (a former Vice-President), David Smart (a former Trustee) and Alan Dennison.

Expenditure. John explained that our project expenditure continues to fluctuate. In 2025 it was £60,688, down by 63% year-on-year. But as always, the level of our project spending is entirely dependent on the applications received. Non-project expenditure remains very low indeed at £1,908 (£2,649 in 2024) which includes fundraising costs of £1,175 (£1,171 in 2024). He felt that the Trustees remain justifiably proud of the extremely low level of our charity's running costs.

The Trustees and officers were then elected:

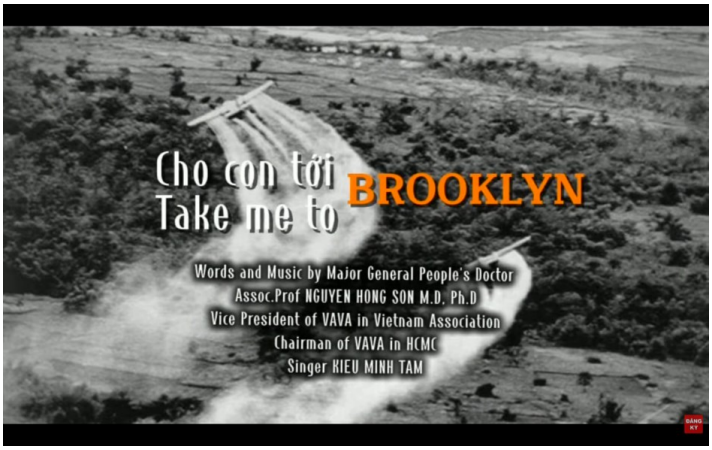
Peter Lidgard was re-elected as chair of the Trustees,
Mary Lidgard was re-elected as Honorary Secretary,
John Firth was re-elected as Honorary Treasurer,
Lynn Firth,
Jenny Gold and
Susmita Ghosh were all re-elected as Trustees for a further year.

At the 2025 Annual General Meeting.
Left to right: Susmita Ghosh, Judith Lovett, John Firth, Lynn Firth, Mary Lidgard, Peter Lidgard, Jenny Gold.

Following the closure of the business meeting the attendees watched a short video which accompanied the song 'Take me to Brooklyn'. It was written by Major-General Prof. Nguyen Hong Son, National Vice-President of the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/ Dioxin (VAVA).

The song laments the spraying of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese countryside and its long-lasting effects on the Vietnamese people, especially the children.

It is well worth a listen, and is available to watch and listen to, on You Tube.



HOA BINH PEACE VILLAGE

At their last meeting, the Trustees discussed providing further aid to the children and young people who live in Hoa Binh Peace Village, in Ho Chi Minh City. Readers may remember the picture of them, all of whom are living with the deformities caused by Agent Orange, on the front page of our last Bulletin, No. 223.

The Trustees were unanimous in their desire to help make the lives of these unfortunate youngsters a little more bearable, and they agreed to fund a number of customised wheelchairs, bathing aids and specialised equipment for the Peace Village residents.

In a forthcoming Bulletin we hope to provide photographs of the equipment that has been purchased by the Peace Village, thanks to your donations.

DATA PROTECTION

MSAVLC is committed to making sure that our communications with you are secure, considered and welcomed. We promise to respect any personal data that you share with us, we will keep it safe, and we will not share it with third parties.

If you no longer want to receive the Bulletin and want to be removed from our mailing list, please contact:

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Or email:
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CASE STUDY

During our recent Monitoring and Evaluation visit to Vietnam and Cambodia we were taken by our project leaders to meet just a few of the many recipients of the aid given by you - our donors.

Over the next few editions of the Bulletin, we hope to share with you some of the life stories of these people.

Below, Trustee Jenny Gold RGN recounts the story of meeting Sum Boron, a client of Disability Development Services Program (DDSP) in Pursat Province, Cambodia.

"We were taken by Pheng Samnang, DDSP's Director, to meet **Sum Boron.** As we travelled deeper into the countryside, the air grew thick with smoke from burning stubble in the surrounding fields, a stark reminder of the harsh environment so many families here must endure every day.

Under the shade of a tree, we met a man whose life has been dramatically changed. Once a construction worker, he was the provider for his family. But a simple, tragic accident, when the string of his hammock snapped, led to a devastating back injury. Following treatment to his back at hospital, he became paralysed, after being given an injection into his spine. For the past three years, his world has been reshaped by immobility.

Through DDSP, the family have received essential support, health and hygiene provision, groceries, counselling, and a wheelchair. But perhaps most importantly, they were given the opportunity to rebuild their independence through a small start-up loan. Today, that loan has been transformed into a humble but thriving grocery shop and this small space is not just a shop; it is their home with a small kitchen tucked behind.

Sum Boron's wife now travels to the market to purchase stock, while he, with remarkable determination, serves customers from a table where he can lie comfortably and reach out to those who come to buy. Whilst we were there a neighbour arrived to buy a bottle of water.

Their shop is well-stocked, busy, and earning a modest but vital income of about $5 USD a day: enough to sustain their family in a country where this is often the average daily wage. They told us that during New Year celebrations, business improves, bringing a welcome boost.

They have one son, a daughter aged twenty-five, and a young niece of six years old who proudly helps to look after the shop.

Looking ahead, their dreams are growing. They hope one day to develop a volleyball space on their land, with lights for evening games when the heat subsides, a place that will bring people together, generate more income, and build community spirit.

This visit is a powerful reminder that your support does not simply provide aid, it restores dignity, creates opportunity, and rebuilds lives. Without your continued funding for DDSP, this would not be possible."

Jenny Gold RGN
(Trustee)

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