



# Addenbrooke's Liver Transplant Association

Honorary President - Prof. Sir Roy Calne FRS

Honorary Vice President - Prof. Graeme Alexander

NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2023



## A message from the Interim Chair

I'd like to wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year. As you can see, I have been busy festive baking and crocheting a snowman for my local post box to bring a smile to faces when walking past.



A lot has been going on behind the scenes since our last newsletter. We have had several new members join, so I would like to warmly welcome you. One of our long-term members, Sheila Freeman and her husband, have kindly bequeathed ALTA a substantial amount of money, which we received unexpectedly in October. Trying to use this money to benefit as many of you as possible, is proving very difficult. We have been looking into purchasing some more



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comfortable reclining bedside chairs for Ward G5 but are still waiting approval from the Medical Devices department within Addenbrooke's before we can make the purchase.

Psychological help for our members both pre and post-transplant has been identified as an important need and I have been in talks with a Mental Health Nurse with experience on the Transplant Ward at Addenbrooke's to see if we could fund this provision. I hope to be able to give an update in our next newsletter as to how this will work.

Some positive good news I have to share is that the very specialised chair purchased with the funds in memory of Claire Sage, has finally been found within Addenbrooke's and returned to Ward G5/HDU.

If anyone has further ideas on how we can spend the extremely generous donation we have received, then do please get in touch.

**Gill Kitchener**

### **My Story to Date – by ALTA Member Glyn Biggs**

*"At last I have the chance to tell my story so far. I was always getting ill when young but it was put down to living in a cold damp farmhouse. After many years of fighting back from all the lung diseases, at least twice I was taken in with hepatitis A.*

*I was taken in on December 22nd and when I awoke I asked the masked nurse if I could go home for Christmas. She answered it was 2nd of January.... we thought we had lost you!*

*After 3 months in Broomfield hospital and 2 months in a rehab unit I returned to make a new life. I moved up to this area and my new GP had me diagnosed as having Alpha 1 Anti-Deficiency Disease. After*



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*being checked at Addenbrookes every 6 months I was told regularly my liver had lumps but there was “no change” for 10 years.*

*Until one time there was a change, tumours growing and that is when I met the super group of people that we have all come to know.*

*The worst part was having to go home and tell my second wife that I had liver cancer... her first husband had died of cancer that spread from kidneys.*

*When I was told I could go on the Transplant List it was a revelation, they kept me alive using RFA (radio-frequency ablation) to burn out tumours, until after 12 months I got the call at 1:30 am on a Sunday.*

*So at the age of 67 in the middle of Covid-19 lockdown, I received a donor liver and another chance to live. Big shout out to all concerned you are the tops!!*

*3 years post op and 2 years alone, I decided I needed some company. So I got a cat or rather two cats, which I rehomed from the Cats Protection League and they have transformed my lifestyle all for the better.*



*I also run a classic American muscle car, which gets me*



*out in the summer. Every year I race it at Santa Pod. Huge fun.*

*I am now 70 and am one of the luckiest men around thanks to those splendid folks at Addenbrooke's along with my donor. Good fortune to you all. **Glyn***



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## Professor Sir Roy Calne FRS 1930 – 2024



It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the death of Professor Sir Roy Calne aged 93. He was a pioneer of liver transplant surgery, and we all have a great deal to be grateful for. As well as being an extremely skilled Transplant Surgeon, he worked very hard researching and developing the first immunosuppressant therapies, greatly reducing the failure of previous transplants by preventing rejection of the donor organ.

He was also a talented artist and was author of a number of books, *The Gift of Life*, *Too Many People*, *Art Surgery and Transplantation* and *The Ultimate Gift*.





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Professor Sir Roy Calne has been President of the Addenbrooke's Liver Transplant Association (ALTA) since it started over 32 years ago and up until very recently, when his own health deteriorated, regularly attended our Celebration Days.

He enjoyed nothing more than meeting liver transplant recipients and their families, especially those who had gone on to have their children post-transplant.” Our sincere sympathies go out to Lady Patsy Calne, their children, family and friends.



*Professor Sir Roy Calne  
Addressing ALTA 2016 AGM*

*Professor Sir Roy Calne  
and Dr Alexander Planting the  
ALTA 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tree*







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### The thoughts of Renate Zeigermann – 12months Post Transplant



*“The second of November 2023 Is the day that I celebrated my first birthday after transplant. I just wanted to share my thoughts on the journey that I started a year...*

*At first, I want you to know that you all are very special to me. How could I ever forget your kindness, your friendship and the help we gave each other. I love you all, my wonderful friends. I know a lot about how you feel and what you dream about. I feel and dream the same. We've been through something so amazing, it changes everything.*

*I have been in difficult situations during my long years with German Television and sometimes it was not far from a catastrophe. My profession can be dangerous at times, but I could always trust my instincts, my knowledge, and my ability to survive. This time it was completely different, I needed help and only the best could help me. Luckily, I found the best. Each and everyone was just an expert and also driven by the wish to do everything that was possible or even impossible for us patients.*

*Unfortunately, I don't remember my Surgeon's name. All I remember is that he is very tall, dark hair with a bit of grey and the most beautiful eyes. I remember that I loved him from the moment he told me that he would operate on me even when they're still hurdles to take. I would give everything to shake his hands again. My hero.*



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*And now I really have to talk about my three musketeers...*

*First, my Lion, Dr Bill Griffith. He will always be my number one. He fought for me, he saw my strength under a pile of rubbish and he made a miracle. He is also a great human being. He did hold my hand when we realised that there was nothing to do anymore other than a liver transplant and he again was there holding my hand when he told me that I had made it, after the operation.*

*He was the only person I believed when he said it and finally, I started the long way to recovery.*

*The next one is Dr Gelson, my lovely shark. Why I call him that is a different story, but it was a joke between us and I hope we still can smile about it in years to come. He is absolutely friendly but strict, warm and always brings me back to reality. Trying to keep me away from being over-excited but helping me keep hope.*



*And the last of the musketeers, my Teddy bear, Professor Gibbs, he is, and will be for the rest of my life, always the one I keep closest to my heart. He guided me through a horrible dark time with strength, knowledge and humour. He did put my head straight when I lost direction and all that he did was absolutely right. I hope that he will guide me further, because the rocky road is still long.*



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*And there are all the others, all the wonderful doctors, nurses, transplant coordinators, consultants and everyone else in the transplant wards. As well as the patients. There was an enormous feeling of camaraderie between us.*

*Never forget the lovely Sue Gray from the ALTA Support Team. I can't thank her enough. So many hours listening to my fears, my hopes, my doubts, my defeat and my victory. Always interested, friendly and always giving helpful advice. It feels like I've known her my whole life.*

*The people who deserve our upmost respect and love are the ones who made all this possible. The donor family who gave me the gift of life so that I can celebrate this special day. I wrote a letter to them even though they are not known to me, I feel very connected and I want to keep it there and private. I owe them so much. These people have all my love, respect and I can't thank them enough.*

*Things are getting back to normal. There are days I forget that not long ago I had no hope. When I take my horse for a ride I feel young and strong. I still hope that a reduced amount of medication gets me back in the pilot seat of my little microlight and Professor Gibbs will be the one who finds a solution. Something to work on va attaquer ce mur".*

*Renate Zeigermann*