

Letter written by Tom Richards:

Mrs Joan Baines (Voluntary Blood Donor Organiser, Melksham) was presented with the Oliver Memorial Award in 1994. There were two recipients of the award that year, the other person being more familiar to many members of the BBTS, Dr Douglas Voak (Cambridge RTC). Mr Tom Richards wrote to the Editor of the St. Ives Times & Echo about the presentation – a copy of the letter is reproduced below – and produced an article about Percy Lane Oliver, with who he shares some family history as well as the town of their births, St. Ives, Cornwall.

23 July 1994

The Editor
St. Ives Times & Echo
High Street
St. Ives
Cornwall.

Dear Sir,

This week I was a guest of the Oliver Memorial Fund Committee at the presentation of this year's Memorial Award. Readers of the Times & Echo and those who attended the unveiling of the Percy Oliver plaque in the Stennack Surgery, will recall that the Fund was set up in 1944 after the death of Percy Oliver, to perpetuate the memory of this man, born in St. Ives, whose pioneering work with voluntary blood donors led to the present national and international organisations. This prestigious Award is made annually to a medical or lay person, year and year about, for their contribution to the service. Selection is made by the Committee from nominations submitted nationwide, and consists of a suitably inscribed plaque, a cheque, and, of course, a place in the record books.

This year's recipient is Mrs. Joan Baines who for the past 20 years has been the voluntary Local Organiser for the Melksham area of Wiltshire. Mrs. Baines was herself a donor, giving an exceptional 83 donations of blood until she retired from donating at the age of 65 some 8 years ago. During the 20 years the number of donor sessions has increased from four to 16, with around 2,000 donations a year being taken from these sessions. This has been achieved through her unwavering enthusiasm and the continuing support of her colleagues and the local community.

I was interested to find that although the 40 or so persons who attended all have connections with the blood donor service and the British Red Cross, they knew little or nothing of Percy Oliver and his work. It was an ideal opportunity to tell them, and it is hoped that publication of information in the local newspapers and the newsletter of the Wiltshire branch of the British Red Cross will add honour to the memory of the man and at the same time encourage new donors to come forward. This is important in view of the increasing demand for blood, not only for transfusions, but also for cancer treatment. It may not be generally known that techniques have now been perfected which extract from blood the platelets which are required for certain cancer treatments, enabling the red cells to be returned to the donor.

In the 50 years since the inception of the Award there has been no recipient west of Exeter. It is to be hoped that on a future occasion a Cornish nomination might win the selection, and even better if it were from St. Ives!

Yours truly,



Tom Richards