

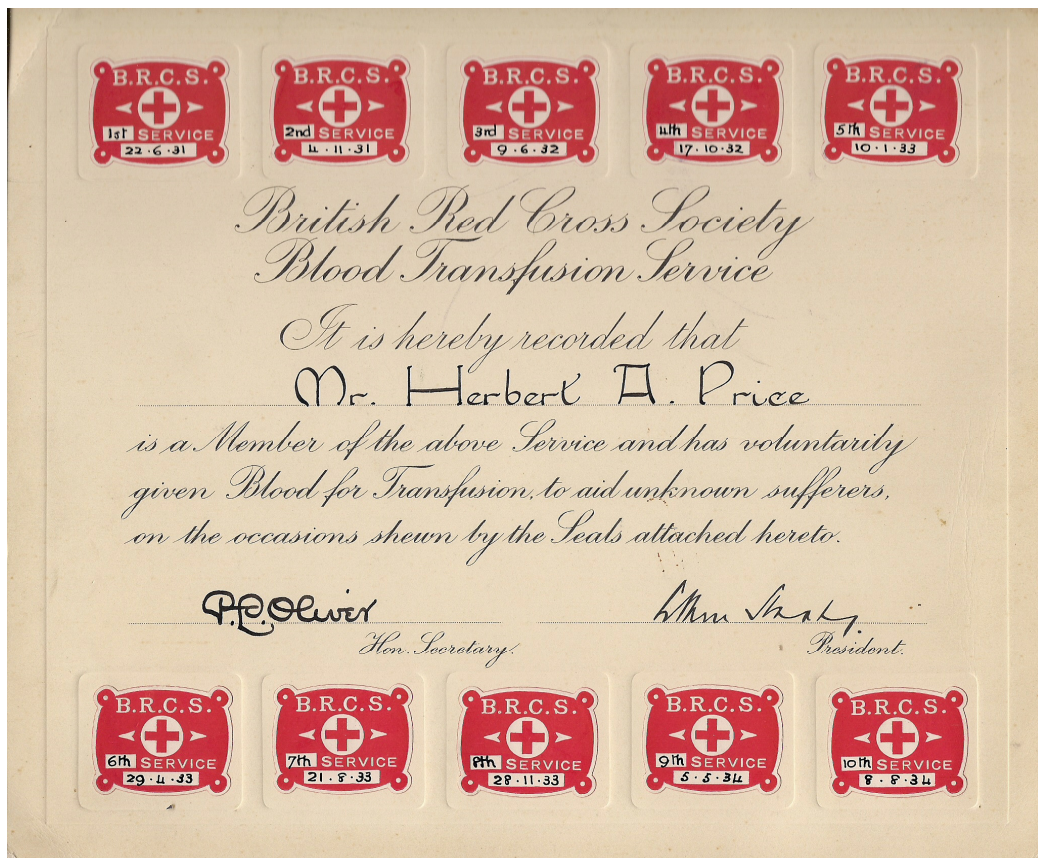
## DONATING BLOOD IN ENGLAND IN THE 1930s

A version of this document, written by Phil Learoyd, was originally provided as a hand-out at the British Blood Transfusion Society Annual Meeting of 2012






Letters and blood donation certificates for Mr Herbert Price were originally donated by members of Mr Price's family to Mr Peter Holt, who at that time was the Laboratory Manager of the Bristol Blood Transfusion Centre. Mr Holt subsequently donated them to the British Blood Transfusion Society for archiving. The donated material consisted of three blood donation certificates, a letter, a typed note regarding the use of his 20<sup>th</sup> donation, and his blood donor card, used during the period 1947 to 1953.



The blood donation certificates were issued to blood donors by the British Red Cross Society and each one allowed for ten separate 'stickers' to be attached that provided the space to manually document the number and date of each donation given. Three such certificates (listed below) identify that Mr Herbert Price first donated blood on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1931 and gave his twenty-second donation on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 1939 (the 'sticker' for his thirteenth donation has been lost over time).

The first ten donations were given between 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1931 and 8<sup>th</sup> August 1934, the second ten between 20<sup>th</sup> November 1934 and 28<sup>th</sup> September 1937. Each certificate is signed by the Honorary Secretary whose signature can be clearly identified to be 'P.L. Oliver', i.e. Percy Lane Oliver, and by the President of the London branch of the Red Cross, who was at the time Sir Arthur Stanley.





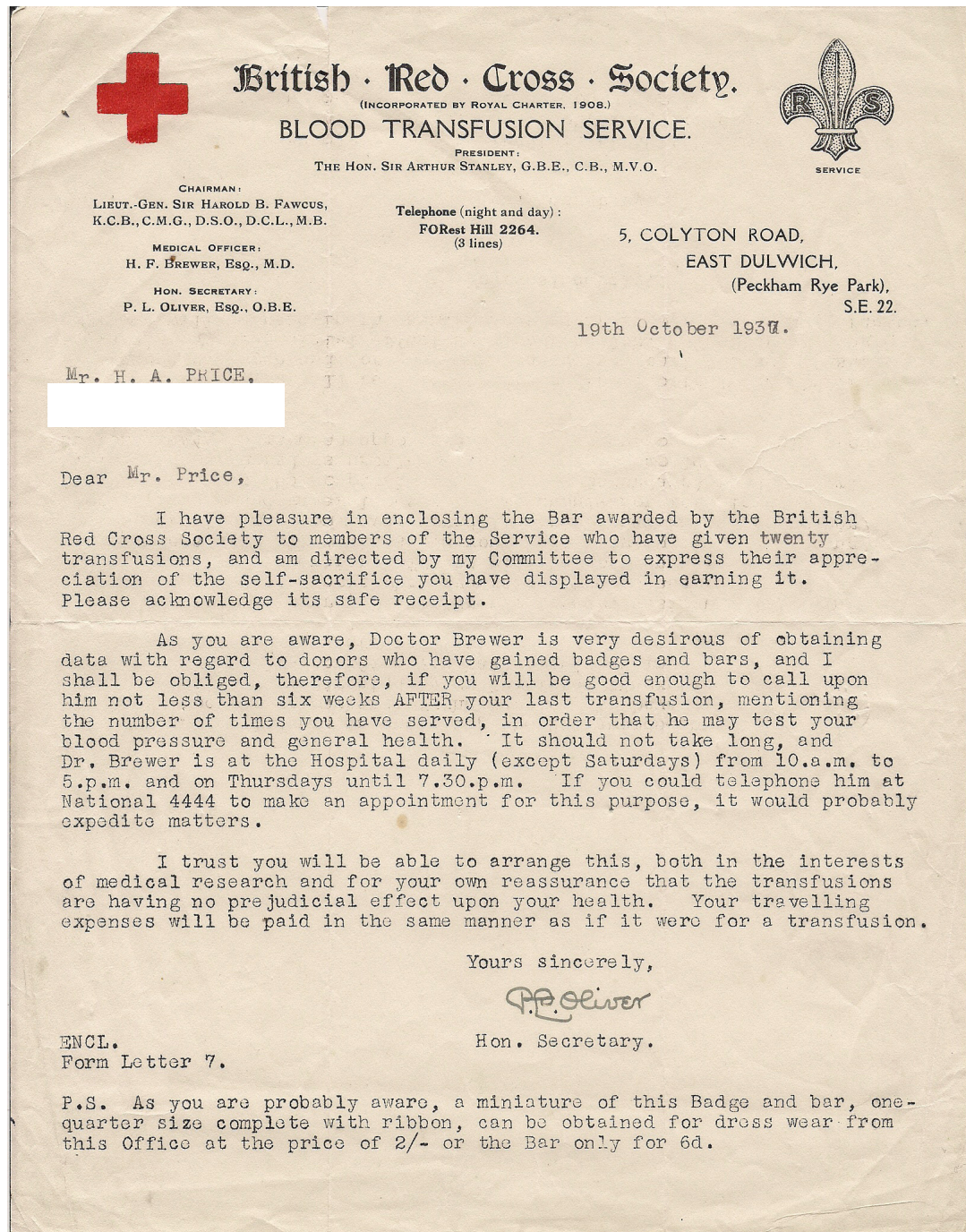
			
<p><i>British Red Cross Society</i>  <i>Blood Transfusion Service</i></p> <p><i>It is hereby recorded that</i>  <u>Mr. Herbert A. Price</u>  <i>is a Member of the above Service and has voluntarily</i>  <i>given Blood for Transfusion, to aid unknown sufferers,</i>  <i>on the occasions shewn by the Seals attached hereto.</i></p> <p><u>P. P. Oliver</u> <i>Hon. Secretary.</i>      <u>Wm. Smith</u> <i>President.</i></p>			
			

				
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British Red Cross blood donation certificates for Mr Herbert A Price documenting the twenty-two blood donations given by him between 1931 and 1939



The certificate 'stickers' show that Mr Price donated blood on four occasions in 1933 (i.e. 10<sup>th</sup> January, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 21<sup>st</sup> August and 28<sup>th</sup> November), on three occasions in 1934 and 1935 and on four occasions in 1936 (i.e. 7<sup>th</sup> February, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 21<sup>st</sup> September and 30<sup>th</sup> December). Presumably as a result of the large number of donations given over a four year period, Mr Price received a letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1937 from Percy Lane Oliver (reproduced below) requesting that he arranges to see a Dr Brewer to check his 'blood pressure and general health in the interests of medical research and to reassure him that the transfusions [donations] are having no prejudicial effect on his health'. At the time, Mr Price was living in the Tottenham area of North London.



Original letter from Percy Lane Oliver to Mr Herbert A Price dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1937



Percy Lane Oliver, identified in the documents listed above was born in St Ives, Cornwall in 1878 and became assistant librarian for Camberwell Borough Council in 1893, transferring to the Town Hall staff in 1901. He subsequently became a founder member of the Camberwell Division of the British Red Cross, becoming its Honorary Secretary in 1910. He is credited with establishing the first voluntary blood donor system in October 1921 (following an urgent request for a blood donor by King's College Hospital), which became the 'British Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service' in 1926. Percy Oliver realised that it would be more convenient to have potential blood donors available on request rather than having to find them when needed by a surgeon. The system involved recruiting people to act as blood donors whose details were kept in on file (i.e. a 'donor panel') and who were then asked to donate blood at specific times for specific patients. The voluntary donor scheme rapidly expanded to provide blood for a number of hospitals in London and the scheme was subsequently used in other areas of England.

It was common practice in the 1930s to tell the donor about how their blood donation was used and Mr Price received a form from Mr Oliver regarding the use of his 20<sup>th</sup> donation, given on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1937. The form (see below) states that the blood donation was used for the treatment of a 27 year old man in the Middlesex Hospital who was suffering from 'secondary haemorrhage following operation for removal of stones from kidney'. The form also interestingly identifies that 'the patient had just returned from fighting in Spain and as a consequence it was impossible to trace relatives as donors in time as his condition was urgent' – in other words it appears to have been common practice to use relatives as 'directed' blood donors at that time in London. The form also states that Mr Price is 'blood group 2', i.e. the Moss or Jansky nomenclature indicating blood group A, and that he donated '600 ccs.' of blood. The bottom right-hand corner of the form also identifies that one pint of blood is equivalent to '568 ccs or 20 ozs' (i.e. 568 mL or 20 fluid ounces).

**British Red Cross Society—Blood Transfusion Service.**

Telephone (night and day):  
Forest Hill 2264 (3 lines). CASE 1937/4070 5, COLYTON ROAD, S.E.22

The Hon. Secretary has pleasure in forwarding the following report of your 20th transfusion  
with the sincere acknowledgments of the Society for the service rendered.

Date of transfusion.....28.9.37..... Hospital.....Middlesex.....  
Ward.....Webb Johnson..... Donor.....Mr. H. A. Price..... Surgeon.....Mr. Cubitt.....  
Sex.....Male..... Age.....27..... Blood Group.....2..... Blood drawn.....600 ccs.\*  
Nature of disease or injury.....Secondary haemorrhage following operation for.....  
Result of transfusion, so far as can be ascertained.....removal of stones from kidney. This patient had just.....  
returned from fighting in Spain and as a consequence it was impossible.....  
to trace relatives as donors in time as his condition was urgent. As a.....  
result of your generosity in providing four donors his condition was.....  
improved sufficiently to allow him to be submitted to a further.....  
operation which was successful in checking the haemorrhage......

Form 10.—4,000/6/1937 \*Note.—1 pint blood = 568 ccs. or 20 ozs.

Original note from the British Red Cross Society – Blood Transfusion Service to Mr H.A. Price indicating the use made of his 20<sup>th</sup> blood donation given on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1937



The collection of documents relating to Mr Price also includes a 'Blood Transfusion Service Membership Card', which identifies that he gave a further twelve blood donations between February 1947 and November 1953. At this time, Mr Price was living in Nottingham. The card confirms his blood group to be 'A II' (i.e. using two nomenclatures) and that he was 'Rh +ve', handwritten onto the card – he was grouped at the 'Regional laboratory' on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1947. The volume of each donation is identified to be '420 cc'.



BLOOD DONATIONS			
Date	PLACE TAKEN	Amount	Entd. by
4.2.47	Chilwell O.D.	420cc	H.H.G.
27.11.47	"	"	H.H.G.
20.5.48	"	"	H.H.G.
23.11.48	"	"	H.H.G.
25.5.49	"	"	H.H.G.
22.11.49	"	"	H.H.G.
23.5.50	"	"	H.H.G.
21.11.50	"	"	H.H.G.
22.5.51	"	"	H.H.G.
13.11.51	"	"	H.H.G.
20.5.53	"	"	H.H.G.
10.11.53	"	"	H.H.G.

Number.....

Mr. Herbert Price,

[Redacted Address]

Nottingham.

is enrolled as a

GROUP A II Rh+ve

Voluntary BLOOD DONOR

Date Grouped 5. 2. 47.

at Regional Lab:ty R.G. & B.S.

Donor's Signature H. Price

The blood donor card of Mr Herbert Price documenting 12 donations between 4<sup>th</sup> February 1947 and 10<sup>th</sup> November 1953



The letter sent to Mr Price on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1937 (see above) identifies that enclosed 'Bar awarded by the British Red Cross Society to members of the Service who have given twenty transfusions'. These medals were provided by the British Red Cross Society – Blood Transfusion Service and incorporated a white ribbon with red strips together with a round bronze medal, the front of which has the Red Cross emblem and states BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE - BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY. The reverse of the medal was engraved with the blood donor's name. These medals were therefore a forerunner of the blood donation badges issued subsequently by the National Blood Transfusion Service in the UK. Interestingly, a post-script in the letter states that 'a miniature of this badge and bar, one quarter size complete with ribbon can be obtained for dress wear'.



An example of the British Red Cross Society Blood Transfusion Service blood donor medal together with 20<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> service donation bars