

THE CREATION OF THE BLOOD CENTRES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

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Note: The 'Additional information regarding some Centres' at the end of this article was initially provided as a display item by Mr Peter Howell at the British Blood Transfusion Society Annual Meeting held in Nottingham in 2000.

In 1921, Percy Lane Oliver was instrumental in creating the London Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, which was later to become the Greater London Blood Transfusion Service. The British Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service was created in 1926 and inspired only slow growth in provincial services. In a circular in 1939, with war imminent, Percy Oliver predicted the likely closure of the London Service. Following the pioneering work of Dr (later Dame) Janet Vaughan, four Blood Depots were created in 1939 in London by the Medical Research Council, each of which were run by a Medical Director. These were located in:

- SUTTON – This depot served South West London and was originally located in an adult education school in Sutton. The first Medical Director was Dr J.O. Oliver, who was succeeded by Dr O.M. Solandt and subsequently Dr J.F. Loutit.
- MAIDSTONE – This depot served South East London and was originally located in two converted houses in Maidstone. The first Medical Director was Dr M. Maizels. This centre was initially a sub-depot of the Sutton Centre and was amalgamated with Sutton when it moved to Benhill Avenue, Sutton in 1946 and became known as the 'South London Blood Depot'.
- LUTON – This depot served North East London and was originally located in a hospital in Luton. The first Medical Director was Dr H.F. Brewer.
- SLOUGH – This depot served North West London and was originally located in a social centre in Slough Trading Estate. The first Medical Director was Dr Janet Vaughan, followed by Dr J. Shone in 1944. The two depots at Luton and Slough were amalgamated to become one centre at Shaftesbury Avenue, East Barnet which was to become known as the 'North London Blood Depot'.

In addition, on the 3rd September 1939, the Army Blood Supply Depot was created within Southmeads Hospital, Bristol, under the leadership of Colonel L.E.H. Whitby (later Professor Sir Lionel Whitby).

The four London Blood Depots were supplied with equipment by August 1939 and on the 3rd September 1939 (when war was declared) the Medical Directors for each of these depots received a telegram instructing them to 'start bleeding donors'. Due to the fact that there were no air raids on London for the first nine months of the war allowed these four depots time to devise arrangements for the large-scale bleeding of donors, the refining/consolidation of equipment and provide staff education/training. In fact, the first time that blood was required in quantity was between the 20th May and the 4th June 1940 for the troops evacuated from the Dunkirk beaches. Blood for these casualties being sent to the south coast ports from the Maidstone Depot.

By June 1940 Dr A.N. Drury, who was by that time in charge of the London Depots, and Sir Philip Panton, Consultant Advisor in Pathology to the Ministry of Health, had produced a plan for establishing a 'regional transfusion service' that would provide blood outside London. This resulted later that year in nine additional Blood Depots

being created by the Emergency Medical Services around the country, each managed by a Medical Director. These were located at:

CENTRE LOCATION	FIRST MEDICAL DIRECTOR
Newcastle	Dr T.A. Boon
Leeds	Dr W.S. Stanbury
Nottingham*	Dr P. Kidd
Cambridge	Dr G.A. Harrison
Oxford	Dr A.G. Saunders
Cardiff	Dr R.J. Drummond
Birmingham	Dr W. Carr
Liverpool	Professor T.B. Davie
Manchester	Dr J.F. Wilkinson

* This depot was later re-located to Sheffield

[On the 11th January 1940 the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS) was created as an independently funded service. The Belfast Blood Depot / Centre was created in November 1946 – the first Director being Professor J.H. Biggart.]

Although towards the end of WW2 it had been suggested that the Blood Depots be disbanded as they were created primarily to meet the needs of air-raid casualties, at a meeting on the 3rd June 1943 it was identified that this was in fact not the case as the majority of blood donations had been used for the medical care of civilians. This led to the realisation that the blood depots would need to remain in place after the war and the logical solution was to create a nationwide transfusion service, controlled centrally by the Ministry of Health, whose primary role would be the supply of blood to hospitals.

On the 11th May 1945 the Treasury accepted in principle that the Ministry of Health should take over the provision of the 'National Blood Transfusion Service' to cover England and Wales, with the final transfer of responsibilities occurring on the 26th September 1946. By this time there were ten 'Regional Blood Transfusion Centres' outside the London area to serve the 'regions' (i.e. England was divided into regions at the beginning of the war, numbers running clockwise from Newcastle through to Lancashire and Westmoreland), i.e. located in Newcastle (Region 1), Leeds (Region 2), Sheffield (Region 3), Cambridge (Region 4), Oxford (Region 6), Bristol (Region 7), Cardiff (Region 8), Birmingham (Region 9), Liverpool (Region 10a) and Manchester (Region 10b). The two centres at Luton and Sutton (i.e. situated north and south of the Thames) were considered sufficient to serve London.

CENTRE	LOCATION	MEDICAL DIRECTOR
Newcastle	Medical School, Queen Victoria Road	Dr T.H. Boon
Leeds	Meanwood Park Hospital	Dr R.H. Trinick
Sheffield	Northfield Road	Dr E.F. Aubert
Cambridge	Brooklands Avenue	Dr L.A. Willmott
Oxford	Radcliffe Infirmary	Dr A.H.T. Robb-Smith
Bristol	Southmead Hospital	Dr G.H. Tovey
Cardiff	Newport Road	Dr R.J. Drummond
Birmingham	Highfield Road	Dr D.S. Dick
Liverpool	University Pathology Department	Dr D. Lehane
Manchester	Clinical Research Dept, Royal Infirmary	Dr J.F. Wilkinson
N. London	Shaftesbury Avenue, East Barnet	Dr J. Shone
S. London	Benhill Avenue, Sutton	Dr J. Loutit

The final transfer of responsibility for transfusion services from the Medical Research Council and the Emergency Medical Services to the Ministry of Health took place on the 26th September 1946. It was at this time that the name National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) was adopted with Regional Blood Transfusion Officers in charge of each of the ten Regional Blood Transfusion Centres and the two London Blood Supply Depots. As a result of the implementation of the National Health Service (1946) Act, the Ministry of Health devolved the management of each of the individual Regional Blood Transfusion Centres to their respective Regional Health Authority, with a re-alignment of boundaries comparable to those proposed for the Regional Hospital Boards' areas. As a result, whilst perceived as a national service, this inevitably led to variations as to how the different centres were managed.

The London Blood Supply Depots were finally re-named as Regional Transfusion Centres in 1952 when the North London Depot became responsible for regions 5 and 6 and the South London Depot for regions 7 and 8. The Brentwood Regional Transfusion Centre was opened on the 17th November 1955 and although this was initially envisaged as being a sub-centre to North London (that by this time was located at Edgware) it was instead given responsibility for region 6 and its first Director, Dr John Jenkins was appointed that same year.

Blood for hospitals in North Lancashire was provided by means of a depot located in the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. In 1964 two wards in the Lancaster Moor Psychiatric Hospital were converted to form the Lancaster Blood Transfusion Centre, which was officially opened on the 22nd September 1965, its first Director being Dr Harold H. Gunson. In addition, a new Blood Transfusion Centre was created in Southampton to serve the Wessex Region, which had been previously served by the South London Centre. The Centre was officially opened on the 28th April 1971, its first Director being Dr D.S. Smith.

Therefore, by the early 1970s there were 14 'Regional Blood Transfusion Centres' within different Regional Health Authorities, based at Newcastle (Northern), Leeds (Yorkshire), Sheffield (Trent), Cambridge (East Anglia), Edgware (NW Thames), Brentwood (NE Thames), Tooting (SE/SW Thames), Southampton (Wessex), Oxford (Oxford), Bristol (South Western), Birmingham (West Midlands), Liverpool (Mersey) and Manchester (North Western).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING SOME CENTRES

NEWCASTLE RTC (NORTHERN)

Locations:

- 1940: Emergency Blood Transfusion Service located in two rooms within the Medical School, Queen Victoria Road'
- 1946: Re-sited at 78 Jesmond Road'
- 1951: Further expansion in a move to 16 Archbold Terrace'
- 1956: A new Centre was developed as part of the Institute of Pathology at the Newcastle General Hospital – officially opened on the 28th July 1956 by Sir Harold Himsworth, Secretary of the MRC.
- 1985: A new Centre was built in Holland Road and officially opened on the 17th October 1985 by HRH the Duchess of Gloucester.

Medical Directors:

- 1946: Dr Thomas H. Boon
- 1951: Dr Sheila Murray
- 1979: Dr Anne K. Collins
- 1990: Dr Hugh L. Lloyd

LEEDS RTC (YORKSHIRE)

Locations:

- 1940: Emergency Blood Transfusion Service located within the Leeds General Infirmary.
- 1946: Blood Service created at Meanwood Park Hospital
- 1948: Moved to a (converted isolation ward) site within the grounds of Seacroft Hospital.
- 1968: New extension added to existing site.
- 1986: A new laboratory complex completed – still within the grounds of Seacroft Hospital, Bridle Path, Leeds – officially opened on the 6th November 1986 by HRH the Duchess of Kent.
- 1988: New donor suite, the Clinical Transfusion Unit – officially opened on the 8th June 1988 by Sir Bryan Askew, then Chairman of the Yorkshire RHA.

Medical Directors:

- 1940: Dr W.S. Stanbury
- 1946: Dr R.H. Trinick
- 1948: Dr T.S. Marshall
- 1951: Dr J. Shone
- 1966: Dr L.A. Derrick Tovey
- 1989: Dr Angela E.A. Robinson

SHEFFIELD RTC (TRENT)

Locations:

- 1940: Emergency Blood Transfusion Service located in two small rooms in the Department of Bacteriology, Nottingham University.
- 1945: Moved to accommodation in Sheffield City General Hospital (later to become the PHLS Laboratory). Note: Prior to this date the Sheffield City area had been the responsibility of the Leeds (EBTS) Centre.
- 1946: May – re-located to a modified Civil Defence Gas Decontamination Centre at Crookes, Northfield Road – officially opened by HRH The Princess Royal.
- 1971: November – new Centre opened at Longley Lane.

Medical Directors:

- 1946: Dr E.F. Aubert
- 1948: Dr R.H. Malone
- 1953: Dr Christopher C. Bowley
- 1974: Dr William Wagstaff

BRISTOL RTC (SOUTH WESTERN)

Locations:

- 1939: Army Blood Supply Depot (A.B.S.D.), Southmeads, Bristol
- 1946: Took over a supply depot within Southmeads Hospital
- 1967: New building on the Southmeads site – officially opened by HRH The Duchess of Kent on the 8th December 1967.
- 1972: Building extended
- 1982: Second building extension
- 1987: Two storey extension built (over the bottle washing and serum stores unit)

Medical Directors:

- 1946: Dr Geoffrey H. Tovey
- 1979: Dr I.D. Fraser

BIRMINGHAM RTC (REGION 12 – WEST MIDLANDS)

Locations:

- 1946: Emergency Blood Transfusion Service located within a house in Highfield Road, Edgbaston, with a donor panel office in Edmund Street.
- 1950: Re-sited at 15 Ampton Road in a house adapted for the purpose.
- 1965: New centre located at Vincent Drive – officially opened by The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Robinson, M.P. on the 24th September 1965

Medical Directors:

- 1946: Dr D.S. Dick
- 1948: Dr W. Weiner
- 1967: Dr George W.G. Bird
- 1981: Dr F.A. Ala

LIVERPOOL RTC (REGION 13 – MERSEY)

Locations:

- 1940: Emergency Blood Transfusion Service located within the Pathology Department - Johnston Laboratories, University of Liverpool
- 1946: Centre re-sited at 102/4 Whitechapel, Liverpool
- 1968: New centre sited at West Derby Street, incorporating all facilities.

Medical Directors:

- 1946: Dr D. Lehane
- 1978: Dr Freda M. Roberts
- 1986: Dr A.J.N. Shepherd (Acting Director)
- 1988: Dr Vanessa J. Martlew