

DR A ANTHONY GILBERTSON

Born 1932. Qualified Liverpool 1956. Died 1st September 2022.

Director of the Intensive Care Unit, Royal Liverpool University Hospital (RLUH), 1979 to 1987.

President, Section of Anaesthesia of RSM, 1993-4.

Tony Gilbertson was born in Liverpool on 24th June 1932. He was educated at St Edward's College and studied medicine at the University of Liverpool.

After house appointments in Liverpool Royal Infirmary and St Helens TB hospital, he became senior house officer at Walton Hospital, at Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital, and at the Liverpool ENT Hospital.

After 'call-up' to the Royal Air Force in October 1959, he served for five years, working initially as a Station Medical Officer, and then in 1961, as a junior specialist in anaesthesia at RAF Hospital Wroughton, Wiltshire, where he passed the FFARCS exam (1962).

Eighteen months of his time in the RAF was spent in Ghana, where he first encountered sickle cell disease and other haemoglobinopathies, and he published a paper describing his experience. He published an update ten years later and continued to take an interest in the subject.

After a brief period as Senior Registrar in Liverpool in the cardio-thoracic and obstetric units, he was appointed Consultant Anaesthetist at Sefton General Hospital in 1966. He started to treat patients, mostly with asthma, barbiturate poisoning or chest injury, by artificial pulmonary ventilation.

Sefton General Hospital also contained the Regional Dialysis Unit, and he was asked to treat some dialysis dependent patients who had developed respiratory failure. Results were poor. He and his colleagues decided it was more logical to bring such patients to the new Intensive Therapy Unit, which triggered an immediate and sustained improvement in outcomes in patients with combined respiratory and renal failure; patients were treated from the region and beyond.

In 1979 the Royal Liverpool University Hospital opened, and he was appointed Director of the Intensive Care Unit. He continued to specialise in the management of combined respiratory and renal failure, and in 1985 and 1991 with nephrologist colleagues in Liverpool, Sunderland and London, he organised conferences in Oxford on what was termed "SCARRF" (Severe Combined Acute Respiratory and Renal Failure).

From 1980-1981, he worked at McGill University in Montreal as visiting Professor, sharing

anaesthetic expertise with the intensive care team there.

On return to Liverpool, he resumed his work in research and hospital administration and continued on the Council of the Section of Anaesthesia of the Royal Society of Medicine, becoming President of the Section from 1993-4. He was an examiner for the Fellowship examination from 1984-1992. He remained Director of the Intensive Care Unit at the RLUH until 1st May 1987, and continued to work there as a consultant until his retirement in 1997.

He was elected distinguished member of the Intensive Care Society in 1998. He was appointed Chairman of the Liverpool Health Authority's Local Research Ethics Committee, from 1996 to 1998. In 1998, he became Honorary Academic Sub-Dean of the Royal Society of Medicine and then in 2000, he was elected Honorary Vice President of the Society.

From 2008-2012, he was a Postgraduate Research Student in the School of Medicine in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at the University of Liverpool researching the development of intensive care of adults in England and Wales. The Degree of MD was conferred in 2012. He was subsequently elected as an Honorary Research Fellow in the Institute of Translational medicine in the University of Liverpool.

He had many lifelong interests, He learned to fly whilst in the RAF, and continued to fly, funded by doing private pilots' medicals. He was in the RAF mountain rescue team and climbed with family and friends in Snowdonia and the Lake District throughout his life. He relaxed by playing piano and enjoying many concerts at the Liverpool Philharmonic. He loved languages and travel and spoke French well enough to work in Montreal. He thoroughly enjoyed working visits to Hungary, Sweden, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, and the Far East.

Tony believed that he had had a very full and largely happy life, aside from the sad loss of his first wife Jeanette, his son Julian, and his daughter Nicola. He died peacefully at home, after a period of treatment for leukaemia. He leaves his wife, Aderonke, and children Myles, Virginia, and Caroline.

Virginia Prout
Daughter