



# Saving lives in Sussex

HAVING STARTED my year in office deciding not to have a theme I have concluded it so immersed in one that it will continue long into the future: raising awareness and extending the availability of defibrillators.

It all began when I was introduced to a remarkable gentleman about whom I knew nothing but who lived in the same city as me. Yet talk to paramedics and they will state how much they are in awe of him, as shown recently when he received a standing ovation from a large international medical gathering. As long ago as 1970 Douglas Chamberlain took up the post of consultant cardiologist at the Royal Sussex County Hospital and it was the death of a patient early in his career at Brighton that inspired him to revolutionise pre-hospital care in Britain.



Photographer: Peter Cripps

Above: Shaw Harley-Davidson acquiring their defibrillator

He was called to the home of a patient suffering a cardiac arrest. He immediately called for an ambulance, which arrived without a defibrillator. At that time the devices were cumbersome machines and approval had to be sought from the medical director before they could leave the hospital. The incident spurred Douglas Chamberlain into action and he began training ambulance crews to deal with cardiac arrests and other emergencies. It was the birth of the first paramedic service in the UK and the idea soon spread across Europe and, indeed, the world.

Now aged 84, Professor Chamberlain remains a tour de force in the world of emergency medicine. Yet for some years he had been frustrated by the slow take-up of defibrillators on his own doorstep. Paul Sutton, the chief executive of the South East Coast Ambulance Service, and his operating unit manager, Tim Fellows, arranged a meeting late in the summer. From then on shrewd networking skills came to the fore and in the autumn the Sussex newspaper, the *Argus*, agreed to launch the 'Save a Life' campaign, calling on all sectors of the community to install these devices.

Since then Professor Chamberlain, Tim Fellows and I have travelled far and

wide visiting schools, Rotary and Lions clubs, church halls and hotels, promoting the cause to great effect. We have heard many moving stories of lives being saved in post offices and town centres, on golf courses and in schools. In Bexhill the Lions and Community First Responders have joined forces and now the town has 14 defibrillators. Our most recent supporter is the Bishop of Chichester, who wants to see defibrillators in every church across the diocese; I have started the ball rolling by installing one at St Margaret's in Ditchling, the church of my phenomenal chaplain, the Reverend David Wallis. Once these devices are in situ members of the public need to know where they are located: church spires are highly visible, so follow the spire...

Now, at the conclusion of my year in office, I have been able to acknowledge at a High Sheriff's Awards ceremony not just many of the amazing unsung heroes from across the county in all walks of life, but also Professor Chamberlain himself, who once again, at the conclusion of his citation being read out, received a standing ovation.

♦ Juliet Smith JP  
*High Sheriff of East Sussex 2015-16*



Above: Recipients of High Sheriff's Awards and Professor Douglas Chamberlain CBE receiving a standing ovation supported by Tim Fellows, Juliet Smith and the Reverend David Wallis

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