



AMBULANCE CREW



JUNIOR DOCTOR



CLEANER



ICU DOCTOR



NURSE

TODAY, the Daily Mail proudly launches our 2020 Health Hero Awards, in partnership with eBay and NHS Charities Together. We introduced these awards in 2013 to honour the unsung heroes of the health service, whatever their role – doctors, hospital porters, nurses, care assistants – who work tirelessly for patients, going the extra mile. But never has there been a time when this campaign is so important. Over the next four weeks, we're asking you to nominate NHS workers who've gone out of their way to care. This year we're launching two extra awards: the Mental Health Hero award, and the eBay 'Smile' award in recognition of the NHS volunteers who bring cheer to both patients and staff. Seven finalists will be honoured with an all-expenses-paid trip to London to attend our awards ceremony. The winner will also receive a £5,000 holiday. Here, explorer and Covid survivor Robin Hanbury-Tenison talks movingly to LOUISE ATKINSON about his own health heroes...

They're the most prestigious newspaper health awards of all, and in this tumultuous year for the NHS, Good Health's hunt for Britain's Health Heroes couldn't be more important. Here, one of our leading explorers salutes the team who saved his life. Read their remarkable stories, be inspired ... and nominate your own hero

**T**HERE is a catch in Robin Hanbury-Tenison's voice as he recalls the moment he left hospital after 49 days and many close brushes with death.

Describing the sight of the long corridor to the front door lined with doctors, nurses and support staff who'd played a part in his recovery, all applauding and cheering, he struggles to hold back the sobs.

'To be clapped by that huge team of dedicated, kind, hugely skilled and determined doctors and nurses, many of them in tears with relief that I had beaten the virus, was quite overwhelming,' he says.

Just as Robin, who was in a wheelchair, was about to be pushed up the ramp into the ambulance to go home, someone shouted: 'Look to your right!' And there, behind a glass wall, he spotted the team from the intensive care unit (ICU), who'd helped him cling on to life. Dressed head to toe in personal protective equipment (PPE), they, too, were waving him off.

'I was completely euphoric, furiously waving back at them,' recalls Robin. 'I weep now when I watch the video footage. I'm just so grateful for the care I received.'

Robin was one of the first Covid patients admitted to Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, in mid-March. At the age of 83, he wasn't expected to survive.

In the UK, the Covid mortality rate is thankfully now dropping, and every week between five and ten ICU Covid patients are now able to go home. But the team who treated Robin consider his recovery nothing short of miraculous because of his age, the seriousness of his condition and the length of time he spent in ICU.

Robin probably picked up the virus on a skiing holiday in France in early March. He remembers feeling unusually weary as he boarded the plane home to Cornwall.

He'd skied all his life, but now, just two months short of his 84th birthday, he assumed he'd pushed himself a little too hard.

The newspapers were full of stories about Covid cases cropping up, but Robin, a celebrated adventurer, explorer and conservationist and author of 27 books (his latest, ironically enough, is called *Taming The Four Horsemen: Radical Solutions To Defeat Pandemics, War, Famine And The Death Of The Planet*), didn't make the connection. It was only two



Tenacious and grateful: Robin Hanbury-Tenison and wife Louella

# NHS



days later, when as well as the enduring fatigue he developed a fever and breathlessness, that he and his wife, Louella, 68, became concerned. And on Monday,

March 16, they called 111. They were advised to call 999, and an ambulance arrived to take Robin to hospital.

Within 24 hours he was in ICU in an induced coma, connected to a ventilator — with his family warned that he had just a 20 per cent chance of pulling through.

For the next five weeks Robin's life hung in the balance and on three occasions Louella — who, as with all loved ones with relatives fighting Covid in hospital, was not allowed to visit — was called with news that Robin might not make it.

But after three weeks on a ventilator and ten days on kidney dialysis, followed by a tracheostomy (where a breathing tube is inserted through a hole in the throat), Robin was well enough to be wheeled out into the ICU

garden. When he felt sunshine on his face, he opened his eyes. 'That was the moment when I thought: "I'm going to live!"' he says.

But his recovery was a rollercoaster, as Louella remembers: 'One moment he'd be on a video call with a wink and a smile, then we'd hear reports of a high temperature and infection.'

On May 4, after seven weeks in hospital (five in ICU, two in the Covid recovery ward) and against all the odds, Robin was discharged.

Now back home on Bodmin Moor, surrounded by his beloved garden, dogs and horses, and under the guidance of Louella, he is recovering well and is determined to get fit enough to climb Cornwall's highest hill, Brown Willy, in October, to raise funds for ICU gardens. He cannot thank enough

the NHS team which saved him. 'Throughout my entire stay in hospital I never saw anyone's face — just their eyes through all the protective equipment — but everyone was so loving and went above and beyond the call of duty. Health heroes, all of them.'

Here, some of the army of NHS staff (probably hundreds in total) who saved Robin's life describe the part they played.

## AMBULANCE CREW



**DARREN PLATTS**, who's in his 40s, is a paramedic with the South Western Ambulance Service.

ON THE night Robin's call came, it was early days in the Covid crisis. We were



REHAB SPECIALIST



HOUSEKEEPER



SPEECH THERAPIST



LAB SPECIALIST



PHYSIOTHERAPIST

# Help us CROWN YOUR HERO

beginning to hear stories of infections in European ski resorts, so when we were told the patient had just got back from a ski holiday, alarm bells rang.

We'd all been wearing level 2 PPE [mask, goggles, apron and gloves], but were advised to don level 3 [a zip-up suit with hood] if we were concerned Covid might be likely. So my colleague Bryony Behan and I pulled on the full gear to go into Robin's house.

To our surprise, he was walking about. But when we checked his blood oxygen levels, they were in the 70s — a healthy level is over 96. We hooked him up to an oxygen supply and his levels started to rise, so we assumed he'd be back home after a few checks; there was no blue light dash to hospital. In the ambulance, Robin chatted

about his latest book and pulled a copy out of his bag. He was such an interesting chap that after handing him over to the team at the hospital, we kept an eye on his progress. We were shocked when we heard he'd been taken to ICU.

We meet all sorts of people, but Robin stands out because he was our first known Covid patient. When you look at the statistics for patients his age, it's a miracle he survived.

## JUNIOR DOCTOR



DR AHMED ABDELHADI, 28, is an anaesthetics trainee in ICU.

ROBIN was one of the first patients with Covid in ICU. It was a

very strange time for everyone. The ICU became a 'red zone', where everyone had to wear full PPE, which was very daunting at first — you can't eat, drink or go to the bathroom while wearing it, and everything has to be meticulously planned to avoid compromising and wasting the PPE.

Communication is so much more difficult, too; your visor can easily fog up and the extra layers make patient care more challenging.

Robin was sedated and intubated within half an hour of being admitted. Back then, we knew very little about the disease, but we did know that his age and need for mechanical ventilation made his prognosis poor.

Over the next couple of days Robin's oxygen levels improved, and we were able to tell his family

## Our NHS carers are best of the best

WE ALL have our stories about the heroism of our nation's carers. Like so many other people, NHS heroes have saved the lives of those I love, and the health service has been there for me and my family in some of our toughest times.

I found it so uplifting to see how even during the darkest moments of the coronavirus pandemic, this country came together to show its admiration for our brilliant carers.

I know from speaking to all our heroes on the frontline how much this meant to them. It has kept them going when things got tough, as they saw rainbows in windows and heard applause from balconies and doorsteps across the UK.

This acclaim has been fully deserved. Throughout this pandemic, our healthcare heroes have been performing miracles, displaying the tenderness and dedication we all treasure so much.

Now is the time for the nation to come together once more to recognise the brilliant



By MATT HANCOCK

HEALTH SECRETARY

colleagues who've been working so tirelessly for those in their care, as well as the selfless volunteers who contribute so much to the health and happiness of patients.

I'm thrilled the Daily Mail created the Health Hero Awards, and I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who works so hard to make them a reality. I hope everyone will take the time to say a little thank you to the heroes who have gone above and beyond at this critical time for our nation.

Our carers are the best of us; so let us all take this opportunity to recognise the best of the best.

he was stable. But I always dread this period because it's difficult for loved ones to understand that although the patient is not deteriorating, the fact that they are in ICU, sedated and paralysed, on strong medication and with a machine breathing for them, means they are still very unwell.

Then, on one of my night shifts, Robin went into multi-organ failure. This carries an even worse prognosis.

At that time, we were receiving reports from Italy and China that patients with multi-organ failure and requiring kidney filtration were very unlikely to make it out of ICU.

I thought at this point that it was only a matter of time before Robin deteriorated further and that palliative care was looming. There were moments when we even considered stopping his treatment.

An additional fear was that even if we did manage to keep Robin alive, the inevitable weakness and muscle loss associated with a prolonged stay in ICU at his age might mean he'd have no quality of life.

I made a habit of calling the patients' families after our ward rounds and it was always tough — I had to first sit and really think about what I would say to them.

Robin's journey in ICU fluctuated,

with mini-improvements and deteriorations right up to the point of his discharge. But his was a remarkable journey. If it hadn't been for the team effort, and ultimately Robin and his family's resilience, he wouldn't be alive today.

I was incredibly proud when I heard he was going home. Hundreds of people worked together, non-stop, for weeks to make this possible.

## CLEANER



LEANNE THOMSEN, 31, is a patient services assistant.

I MET Robin on the first day he was admitted into ICU. I always say hello to the patients, so even though he was sedated, I told Robin my name and chatted about what I was doing as I cleaned every morning.

It's tough that during the pandemic relatives are not allowed to visit. Normally it is through talking to relatives that the staff get to know a little about a patient. While Robin was here we only had the copy of his book by his bed as an indicator of the man he was.

When Covid arrived, I was asked to work in ICU as part of a

TURN TO NOMINATE YOUR HERO

# GOOD HEALTH

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

specialist deep-cleaning team, which means I have to wear full PPE for two hours at a time to clean.

We use bleach and disposable mops and cloths to thoroughly clean everything around the patient's bed — that means radiators and vents, too.

I love cleaning and I'm proud of the role I play in keeping the patients and other staff safe.

As Robin came out of sedation, we were able to chat a little, although at first he didn't know where he was or what had happened to him. He is a true gentleman — I became quite emotional when he left.

**ICU DOCTOR**

**DR RUTH CREAMER, 36, is an intensive care and emergency medicine registrar.**

A LARGE part of my role is keeping the patient's family updated, which would normally involve a face-to-face conversation. But in Covid cases such as Robin's, I've had to have very serious telephone conversations with families whom I'd never met.

At times this has meant discussing really important decisions and imparting difficult news while shouting through a face mask and visor into a speakerphone (to avoid touching a handset). It's vital to make sure the relatives fully understand what's happening with their loved one, and you normally rely heavily on watching their reactions.

I remember conversations like this with Louella when I was updating her on Robin's care. He was our oldest Covid patient and I had to continually reiterate how very unwell he was.

However, when his health did begin to stabilise, we started to reduce the sedation so he could begin physiotherapy. But it was clear he was suffering from severe delirium (which is very common in Covid patients in ICU).

It was decided a tracheostomy would allow us to lighten Robin's sedation gradually and safely. I had to explain over the phone to Louella this complex procedure and our rationale for doing it. It must have been so difficult for her.

The procedure was a big turning point in Robin's recovery as it enabled the rehabilitation team to start to make progress with him.

**REHABILITATION SPECIALIST**

**KATE TANTAM, 39, is a specialist sister on the ICU rehabilitation team.**

I WILL never forget that hot April day when ten of us wheeled Robin and two other Covid patients out of ICU in their beds or wheelchairs into the fresh spring air in our 'secret' hospital garden.

Robin had been in ICU for just over a month, most of it in an induced coma or in an extreme state of delirium, but when he felt the sun on his skin you could see him visibly relax. Fresh air can be incredibly helpful for patients who are delirious.

My role is to coordinate rehabilitation for patients in intensive care, and I have become particularly interested in the restorative powers of green spaces and fresh air to boost the psychological health of patients and staff — I led the team that raised funds to create our garden in a light well.

After that first outing with Robin, we took many of our other Covid patients outside and this often marked a turning point in their recovery.

I was also part of the specialist team that assesses every Covid patient in the hospital, every day. It's a challenging full-time job which has meant sacrifices as my husband has had to take on all the care for our children (aged ten and nine) while himself working full-time from home.

Throughout all of this I have worked to one fundamental rule, which I call 'the grandma rule': to treat everyone you care for and

It was such a proud day when we clapped Robin out of the hospital. The emotion was as much for him and his family as for the team



**NURSE**

**BECKY STUCKEY, 38, is a nurse.**

I WORK in the part of the 'red zone' where Covid patients are moved when they no longer need the one-on-one care of the intensive care unit (ICU).

Like many of our patients, Robin struggled to adapt as his delirium and the fact that we were all wearing scary-looking PPE made everything confusing for him.

I tried to speak to his wife, Louella, daily with progress updates. With no visitors allowed, we had to develop new ways to communicate. She and their son Merlin did a great job using video calls to help reorientate Robin to his home, horses and garden, and I tried to reinforce those memories on our visits to the ICU garden.

It was an incredibly proud day when we clapped Robin out of the hospital. The surge of emotion was as much for him and his family as for the team who gathered to see him off.

a special safety cabinet to keep all the specially-trained staff safe from infection.

We've all had to put in extra hours to keep our service running seven days a week, doing night shifts and working all weekend.

**PHYSIOTHERAPIST**

**PAUL MINTY, 26, is a physiotherapist.**

FOR THE 18 months before Covid arrived, I'd been in Outpatients, specialising in musculoskeletal physiotherapy and pain management. But in early April I was redeployed to the Covid rehab team.

I got to work with Robin when he left ICU. He was a physio's dream: always motivated, very focused on getting home and he would never say no to exercise.

We try to make rehab more fun by playing basketball and bowling. That's where Robin's competitive nature became apparent — he would not stop until he got the ball in the hoop or bowled a strike.

As we spend so much time with the patients, we form really great relationships. So it's sad, but also brilliant, to see them finally become strong enough to get home. Our job is done!

work with as if they are your very own loved one.

**HOUSEKEEPER**

**JESSICA WATSON, 28, is a housekeeper in ICU.**

MY JOB is to coordinate all the non-clinical services for the patients in ICU, which includes cleaning, laundry and catering. I work closely with the nursing staff and dietitians to ensure each patient gets the correct nutrition — so important for their recovery.

Although many of those under sedation are fed via a feeding tube, they progress to proper food as they recover, starting with snack foods such as yoghurt and ice cream. We use disposable cutlery and crockery to minimise any risk of transferring infections.

I'm on the wards every day and try to get to know patients and find out more about their lives outside of hospital. I thought it was more important than ever during Covid, as the patients couldn't have visitors.

Robin's bed was surrounded by

photos of his family and old pictures of him as an explorer — it was all very captivating. His recovery was nothing short of inspirational.

**SPEECH THERAPIST**

**CHLOE JARVIS, 30, is a speech therapist.**

DURING the peak of the virus, the number of patients needing speech therapy rocketed because being on a ventilator and fed through a tube means the various muscles you need to cough and swallow become very weak.

For the past two years I've specialised in helping patients with head and neck cancers. But when Covid hit, I volunteered to work with the rehab team in ICU. It's a big change from my normal work life and it has been a steep learning curve.

I helped Robin use the speaking valve on his breathing tube after his tracheostomy. Although he had quite a gravelly voice to begin with, it improved over time. And

once he got going after a few days there was no stopping him. Once he could speak again he kept reminding us all how remarkable he is for his age (which is true).

Like other Covid patients, Robin struggled with fatigue and we had to start slowly with small sips of water — he told us it was something he'd never normally drink unless with whisky!

It took him 13 days to go from sipping water to eating full meals, an important step towards regaining independence and enjoyment of life.

**LAB SPECIALIST**

**ALAN SPEIRS, 45, is a microbiology laboratory manager.**

ROBIN will have been swabbed for Covid on admission to the hospital, and then we processed numerous tests for him during his stay, such as samples to check for secondary respiratory infections, full blood counts and tests for kidney problems, inflammation and infection markers.

We process all Covid samples in

## NOMINATE YOUR HEALTH HERO...

FILL in this form and tell us in no more than 400 words — on a separate sheet — why you've nominated your candidate for the 2020 Health Hero Awards, launched today by the Daily Mail in association with eBay and NHS Charities Together. Send your nomination and form to: Health Hero Awards, c/o Good Health, Daily Mail, Northcliffe House, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT. The closing date for nominations is midnight on Friday, August 7, 2020. The Editor's decision is final.

■ THERE will be seven finalists selected by judges for the outstanding difference they've made to people's lives. Each of the finalists will be honoured with a paid-for one-night stay in a five-star London hotel, selected by the organisers, and travel to and from London for them and one guest, in order to attend the Health Hero Awards ceremony at the end of the year, where they will receive their award. (Unless circumstances beyond our control prevent a ceremony taking place, in which case the trip to London and overnight stay for the finalist and one guest will not take place. Nor shall there be any payment in lieu.) The prize for the Health Hero of the Year is a luxury break up to the value of £5,000. You must obtain the consent of your Health Hero to submit the entry before entering and submitting the details, right. We require the information you submit in order to administer the Health Hero Awards and we rely on the consent of your nominee and our legitimate interests in order to carry out awards and events. The information provided will be processed in accordance with our privacy policy. Usual promotion rules apply.

YOUR NAME .....

YOUR PHONE NO .....

YOUR ADDRESS .....

YOUR NOMINATION .....

THEIR PHONE NO .....

You can also make your nomination online at [dailymail.co.uk/healthheroes](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/healthheroes) or email it to: [healthheroes@dailymail.co.uk](mailto:healthheroes@dailymail.co.uk)