



The Independence

Thalidomide Society Newsletter August 2016

Society News

Earlier this year we were delighted to welcome two Society Patrons who have both been involved with the thalidomide story since the 1960s. They said:



The dark shadow of thalidomide is still with us. The original catastrophe maimed 20,000 babies and killed 80,000: war apart, it remains the greatest manmade global disaster. I am honoured to be a patron of the historic Thalidomide Society.
Sir Harold Evans, Editor of the Sunday Times, 1967 to 1981



The Thalidomide story is scandal of world proportions that touched an estimated hundred thousand families in forty-six countries. They and their children will never forget what happened to so many innocents and neither must we. Attention must be paid.

Roger Arthur Graef (OBE) Theatre Director and Film-maker

Many of you will have seen Jacqui Morris's film about the work of Harold Evans, *Attacking the Devil*, at our AGM last year or at one of the other screenings around the country. Roger Graef's second film about Brett Nielson was previewed at the Wellcome Trust last October then screened on the BBC, *Brett: A Life With No Arms*. The Society received a big thank you in the closing credits.

Society website

We have been working hard to update our website and we would welcome your feedback, particularly with ideas for our **Members Only Area** which we are still developing. **Please visit:** www.thalidomidesociety.org to see how we have progressed and pass on any comments you may have through the comments form on the website or directly to Ruth at the usual email address: info@thalidomidesociety.org.

Contact us: info@thalidomidesociety.org
020 8464 9048

Thalidomide Society AGM 2016

At this year's AGM, the Board of Trustees welcomed Geoff Adams-Spink and Brian Payne as Trustees. Stephen Simmonds paid a moving tribute to the Society's former long-standing Treasurer, Stan Rickard.

In the afternoon Secretary Ruth Blue presented extracts from the Society's parents' oral history project.



We were joined by Heidi Thomas (Writer) and Stephen McGann (Dr Turner) from Call the Midwife. As well as giving a presentation on the show in general, they had also brought along the animatronic model baby, used as Susan Mullock in the last series.

Many of our members were quite moved to hold 'Baby Susan' and felt she was touchingly lifelike.



Thalidomide Memorial in Cardiff

After years of planning by Stephen Simmonds, Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds (OBE) and Ed Freeman, the Thalidomide Memorial was unveiled in Cardiff on 30 June.

The service was held in the presence of HM Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan Dr Peter Beck. After the introductory speech by Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds, Stephen Simmonds explained the significance of the Monument. This was followed with an address by Mr Vaughan Gething, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport. Harry Freeman, son of the Chair of the Thalidomide Society, Ed Freeman, read out Stephen Simmonds' moving poem, *To Remember is To Care*. Prayers of dedication for the memorial were read by the Reverend Canon Robin Morrison immediately after the unveiling of the Monument by Dr Peter Beck. The ceremony began and ended with powerful vocal performances from two students of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama – Catrin Raymond and Grace Wyatt.

The event was well attended by thalidomide survivors, their friends and families as well as other members of the public. Amongst the notable attendees were Lady Irene Morris, widow of Sir Alf Morris who did so much for the thalidomide cause, and Stephen McGann and Heidi Thomas from Call the Midwife.

For a full account of how the Memorial came about, please visit [Rosie's blog](#).



Photographs © James Moriarty-Simmonds

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Other news

As well as continuing to support the *Call the Midwife* team on their scripts, the Society is also advising the Science Museum on its new Medicine Galleries which will feature a section on three drugs that changed the world: Penicillin, Insulin and Thalidomide. Watch this space for more details!

Following Stan Rickard's death, his daughter kindly passed his archive to the Society. We hope to make some of the fascinating historical documents it contains available on our website in the coming months.

The Society's oral history project with parents is ongoing. The interviews are precious historical testimonies and already they have been incredibly helpful in assisting researchers in detail. If you know of anybody who you think would be interested in being interviewed, please do contact the secretary by telephone or email for more information.

Support the Society, play the Lottery!



The Society Lottery has been up and running for two years now and as the number of players increases, so do the chances of winning. Anyone can play – friends, family, other organisations and every time you play you are helping to raise money for the Society.

It is really easy to sign up to play – click on the log above, or go to www.unitylottery.co.uk and select Thalidomide Society from the list of charities. If you don't like computers then please contact Ruth for a form to sign up by post.

And last but definitely not least ...



The Society is now on Twitter – if you are too, please give us a follow and check our feed regularly!

@ThalSociety

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