

# 23,000 miles to thank a life-saving hospital

## Epic adventure for man who was within a day of dying

Report by **Dave Comeau**

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A COUPLE flew a tiny plane 23,000 miles on an epic adventure after the husband came within a day of losing his life.

When Corrine McLaughlin was told her husband had just two weeks to find a liver donor, she feared she may never speak to him again.

Retired British Airways pilot Chris McLaughlin had been in a coma for two months and all seemed lost.

But just one day before doctors planned to turn off his life support machine a donor was found.

Corrine, 46, a BA purser who grew up in Crawley, said: "It happened so quickly. We had been out the night before and he was fine, then within 24 hours he was on a life support machine."

### Failing

"After a while his kidneys were working over-hard to compensate for his liver and they were failing too."

"They took me aside and said he wouldn't survive and that it would be kinder to turn off the machine. It was a miracle when a donor was found."

That was in 2010 and as he recovered Chris, 48, began hatching an elaborate plan to thank doctors at King's College Hospital, in south London, where he was treated - while embarking on the adventure of a lifetime.

And in January he and Corrine set off from the US on an incredible trip around the Caribbean and South America in their own single engine Cessna Skyhawk.

Now back home, the couple have raised £2,000 for the hospital.

Chris said: "People were embarrassed



**TRIP OF A LIFETIME:** Corrine and Chris McLaughlin with their plane which they flew 23,000 miles in

when I brought up what I wanted to do because I was still recovering. They thought I was crazy.

"We did it in a tiny little plane. We had some problems but it came off like a dream."

Corrine did the majority of the flying as the couple flew over glaciers, took in the

Rio skyline and marvelled at some of the most stunning scenery on Earth.

Of all the places they visited, The Falkland Islands were among the highlights.

However, the couple inadvertently stoked tensions with Argentina when they took part in a training exercise with Typhoon fighter jets on the islands.

### In brief

#### Woman accused of racial abuse

**SOUTHGATE:** A woman appeared in court accused of assaulting two men and racially abusing a woman at Gatwick Airport on June 6.

Emma Donabie, from West Street, appeared at Mid Sussex Magistrates' Court last Tuesday.

She is also accused of trespassing on the railway line at Gatwick, and will appear again at the same court on July 31.

#### Held in custody

**BEWBUSH:** A man has been remanded in custody on suspicion of assaulting a female.

Matthew Khan, 26, from Booth Road, appeared at Mid Sussex Magistrates' Court last Tuesday.

He was arrested after the alleged assault the day before and will reappear at the court on July 31.

#### Cocaine case

**COPTHORNE:** A man has been remanded in custody on suspicion of intending to supply cocaine.

Nathan Harland-Smith, 22, from Bridgellands, is accused of possessing 173.5 grams of the Class A drug.

He was arrested on July 11 and appeared at Mid Sussex Magistrates' Court last Tuesday. He will appear there again on July 26.

#### Assault charge

**CRAWLEY DOWN:** A man has been charged with sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl.

Barry Kemp, 58, from Woodlands Close, appeared at Mid Sussex Magistrates' Court last Tuesday.

The offence is alleged to have taken place in August 2011.

He was bailed until August 28 to appear back at the same court.



**CHALLENGE:** A picture taken by the couple of Saba airport's runway

They were asked if the jets could escort them in on their arrival but when the Argentinean media heard about it their intentions were misinterpreted.

Corrine, who still has family living in Crawley, explained: "They printed a story about how we had to be escorted by the jets after we tried to infiltrate their airspace and that we nearly got shot down."

### Laughed

"Friends and family were phoning us and asking us what had happened but we just laughed about it."

The couple hope the adventure will help show the importance of people signing up as organ donors.

Chris said: "Whenever you hear about organ donation it is quite sad and gloomy. It is much more fun to get the message across with penguins and glaciers."

■ To see more photos of the couple's trip visit [www.flight4lives.com](http://www.flight4lives.com)

## Council to look at Barclays deal

**CRAWLEY** Borough Council will rethink its £10 million investment with Barclays in light of the rate-fixing scandal.

At last Wednesday's full council meeting, Labour called on the cabinet to withdraw it.

Geraint Thomas, Labour councillor for Northgate, said: "I am aware there are financial penalties. But will Crawley take its investment out of Barclays?"

Former Labour leader Brenda Smith added:

"My administration decided to take our investment away from Barclays when they backed apartheid."

"I would urge this council to do the same this time."

Leader Bob Lanzer said: "We are not talking about five or ten per cent (penalties) but huge sums of money."

"We will look at it, though."

## Helping children bear up



**CUDDLY:** Dave Atkins with Olwyn Lynes (left) and Cath Davies

AMBULANCES should never be without the bear necessities, and thanks to the Crawley Lions they won't.

The charity has donated 100 teddy bears to Crawley Ambulance Station so they can be given to children who have to go to hospital.

Lions members Olwyn Lynes and Cath Davies presented the teds to Dave Atkins, clinical operations manager at the station in Ifield Avenue, last Wednesday.

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