

ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

'Fighting for our Rights' project

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Extract 1: Cause of condition

During the early days of the pregnancy I suffered severe sickness and in between my daughter and son I also had a pregnancy which was a twin one and I lost that one, and it took me I think seven, eight years before I fell for my son. But as soon as I became pregnant I suffered the extreme sickness, couldn't eat, drink, water or anything, you know, was hospitalised and went into what is termed through my legal case as semi-coma, where I became unconscious and they fed me nutrition through intravenous. And they didn't give the right quantity, so fortunately my son was fine but it left me brain and bone damaged. So I woke up--, and actually by that time I was at home, woke up but didn't recognise where I was, didn't recognise the person who came in when I screamed, which was my husband. Didn't recognise my daughter at that time and didn't know me, didn't realise that I was pregnant until obviously the bump was there and didn't know any of my family, friends or situation I was in. It was a complete blank. Wernickes Encapalopathy is the name they put on my condition, 'cause the brain was starved during the lack of nutrition. It's usually referred to alcoholics, which I wish I had the drink to celebrate it with, but because it was a similar vein of result that's the term they put on me. It affected the memory and balance in my brain, so that affect my walking and so on. And the impact as I previously mentioned is that annihilation of my previous life, so what I'm saying now is more an interpretation of what people have told me rather than my own perception of my life, and that's the impact through with most things in life that's happened and happens still. I seemingly have rebuilt it, always got a pad near me and refer to that. But you learn ways of catching catchments of what to keep if you know what I mean. Like I shall remember you visited me today but won't remember names and probably some of the, you know, the analysis, the questioning and so on, I won't remember. Which again, I keep paper references of what's happened.

Extract 2: Meeting community at Crescent Resource Centre

Initially frightened, nervous, because knowing your own condition you know what is weaker or stronger and what hurts and what doesn't, you know, mentally as well as physically. So you are tentative initially of conversations, and you sort of say oh hello, I'm Sheila, who are you sort of thing. And then you develop it from there and you start talking either about conditions or about what they used to do or what they're hoping to do. And you learn different ways of dealing or doing it, you know. There were some there that--, I don't know if the names Tessa and Graham Pole ring a bell? The famed couple of the Crescent! Wonderful, wonderful couple, both disabled from childhood, used to run riot in the High Street in New Malden with their wheelchairs demolishing shop fixtures, fittings and displays everywhere they went. But they just went and did it and you sort of looked on them and thought well crikey, you know. And you laughed with them and they laughed at themselves and that passes on, you know, with it all. And again, being--, I was one of the younger ones there with young children and bringing the children in at times was nice because Tessa and Graham were older but didn't have children and, you know, Julia didn't have children either, that mixture was good, you know, with it all, and for them and the children. So yeah, it's that mixing and you break down those barriers, but I think initially having that group ethic with it in a safe environment to build up to doing it elsewhere. Initially I felt I'm never going to be able to do things again, but gradually I, yeah I can, and if someone's not going to let me they're going to hear the argument why I am going to do it, you know, that--, it built up like that. Whereas, you know, still today I want to go out

with a sight impaired friend, going into certain cafés or bars or restaurants, the amount of checking you still have to do. Can you fit a wheelchair, is there visibly impaired aspects that help, you know, and all of that, it amazes me that it's still needed in a lot of areas and where businesses still shuts doors to that way of thinking, you know, it's dreadful that it's still occurring.

Extract 3: Closing of Crescent and campaigning

Most of us went into severe upset and depression, it was like tearing limbs off of us. Where it was sited, Crescent and I know there have been many others, but the Crescent was within a main high street location, we had the shops, post office, banks, anything up there, coffee bars, pubs, you know, everything in that high street. If we couldn't manage to walk up or wheel ourselves up there ourselves, we had staff that could assist us, we had within it, so as I say, the retraining on cooking, computers, everything within the environment and it was ripped out. It was like taking the heart out of our group totally. And still people I know that used to go there, we talk about it all the time, what we used to do and we don't do now. Petition upon petition upon thousands and thousands of signatures to Guildhall. My view on councillors--, councillors isn't good anyway. Meetings within Guildhall as well as within the Centre site, even writing to Number Ten and the Parliamentary basis, having meetings with hierarchy of that realm, never the top ones but, you know, hierarchy of it. Going to the Guildhall, there were protests as well there but protests within the Centre as well. Trying to get each of the parties of the political vein borough base to come in and talk to us about it, and in the--, prior to this election's election I had one candidate knock on my door, he didn't come back. In fact by email 'cause, you know, I brought up the issues and so on, and he stood there I think fairly aghast at what I was saying--, oh well that wasn't us. And I said no one admits to who it was and until I know who's pushed the button I don't want to know what you're planning on saying to me, you know. So we had a couple of emails through it but, you know, that--, and again, it's that falsehood from people of that vein that I hate, where yeah, I mean like in the local and general ones now, they're bringing up about we're going to provide this, do that and make it all seventh heaven. They're not, they are restricted by the budgets and my business bit comes in with that, I know we've all got limits but when they promise facilities and things that they've ripped apart and ruined again and reinvesting that money into what could've been used prior to to just improve what was there, give away, they're not going to do it.