



Sheffield Dementia Involvement Group

'Let us Shine'

October 5th 2023

Background

October SHINDIG was attended by 7 people living with a diagnosis and 7 carers/supporters. The theme was inspired by an earlier planning event where attendees shared of a wealth of information while introducing themselves. The idea of using significant objects/imagery to learn more about individuals and place focus on their strengths and achievements was tried out our Tea and Talk meeting in August. What resulted was unique. The images on the following pages and their accompanying stories and comments will be used in 2024 to create a roving exhibition.

Words of advice from October attendees

“Step back and be thankful for what you have got”.

“Be kinder. Enjoy what’s around you”.

“Life is for the taking”.

“Look forward not back”.

“Love yourself and love life”.

“You only live once so do what you can do while you can”.

“Make the most of it”.

“Love yourself and love life, stand up for yourself”.

“Live your life like the song Que Cera, whatever will be will be”.



These are David's favourite walking boots; they are over twenty years old. he would not give them up. They are in a bag in his bedroom. They remind me of all the walks we did together.

David worked in health and safety, he became an adviser and worked his way up in the industry.

I'm having the house renovated so that I can have him home.



I used to take a mug to a school I worked at in Ireland. One of my colleagues accidentally broke it. When he went on holiday to Peru he bought this, it's a little treasure. I was so touched by this gesture.

I was a stay at home mum for five years and then became a teaching assistant working with children with special educational needs in secondary schools. I worked at Tapton, Norfolk Park and High Storrs.



This, this is an important object.

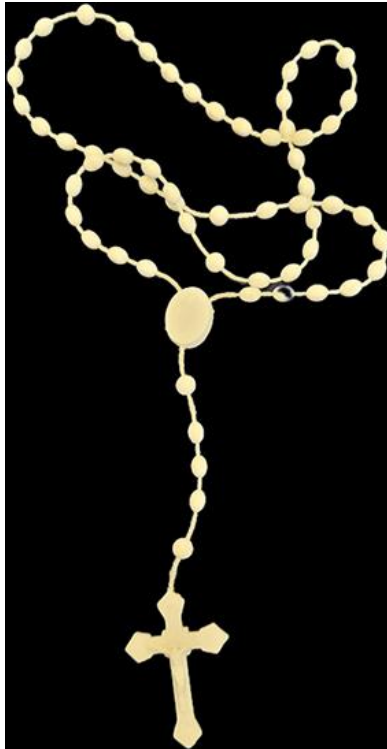
I met Tracey when I was 17 and she was 16. We got chatting on the bus. I was taking my driving test that day. I said to her if I pass I will pick you up later. I passed and kept my promise. The rest is history.

What am I good at?... Negotiating, working things out quickly, seeing the good qualities in a person. Being loyal, committed.

I was an entrepreneur I worked in the motor trade and property development. I was a landlord, it was interesting.

I tried to be fair, I would never ask anyone to do something I couldn't do myself. I am thankful it was rewarding.

One new skill I have developed is being able to take things a bit easier. Not being a hundred miles an hour. Just sitting on a bench and people watching. The crucial thing in my life is adapting, changing with this and making the best of the time I've got.



My wife and daughter were putting flowers on my sons grave. A man came up to them, he looked homeless. He asked my daughter to hold his hand and they prayed together by the graveside. He then placed something into her hand. These rosary beads. When she looked up the man was nowhere to be seen. She looks back on this and believes he was an angel.

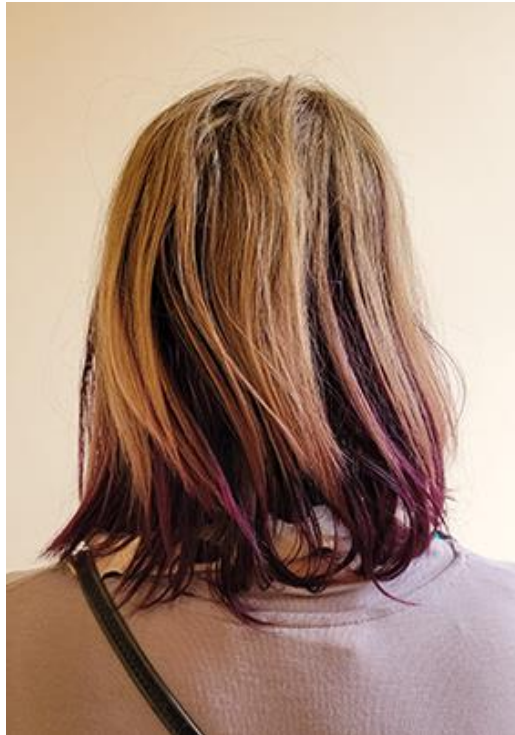
When I was really ill in hospital during the pandemic and not allowed visitors my daughter managed to get these beads to me.

I sent her a photo of myself wearing them to reassure her that I was ok.



Towards the end of his life. Graham became attached to a sloth we bought for him. A few days before he died I found him rolling something around his fingers. When I asked what it was he replied it's my furkle snurkle. It was the sloths leg, I keep it in a tin with other items that remind me of Graham.

Graham was a good listener who would often give you advice, he was also good at hugging. We met when I was 18 and were married at 20. This year would have been our 50th wedding anniversary.



I was a nurse. I worked at the Childrens Hospital until I got married and had children. I then worked at the Home Office as a web designer when my children grew up.

Yes, I have dyed my hair purple, I'm nearly seventy and have decided to grow old disgracefully. I'll take whatever life throws at me. My daughters wanted me to go to a knit and natter group, I'm not ready for that. I want to re-discover the girl I was at 18.

I'm a good communicator both written and verbal and I am good at taking criticism. I listen, everyone has a life story.



My iPhone is my back up brain, it provides me with reminders and alarms. I've always been tech savvy. I learned the required knowledge from working around computers from the age of fifteen. I rely on this phone as my back up to everything. During the pandemic I took the memory cafes online and ran 280 of them. We even arranged for afternoon teas to be delivered to people who were isolated from loved ones. I feel it was an achievement to keep people connected.

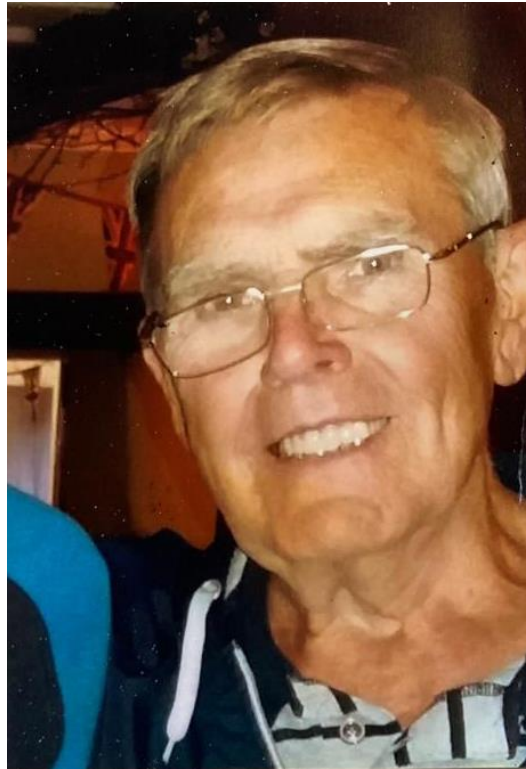
At the age of thirteen I wrote a string quartet for a young composer's competition, and it was performed in 1977 at the silver jubilee.

At fifteen I worked in a bank, I used to commute to London Victoria.

I used to drink in a pub behind the palace, I met Jenny Agutter, Led Zepplin and the Sex Pistols.

I later worked as a care assistant at Netheredge Hospital.

I'm good at communicating., problem solving and speaking up for people who are unable too. I used to challenge consultants when they were making decisions about patients. I've recently learnt how to run a radio programme.



Ken always made me laugh; he would ask if the kettle was broken if he wanted a cup of tea, or if we'd broken off diplomatic relations with Cuba if I didn't put enough sugar in.

When we got home, and I was getting out of the car he would say, In your own time.

He always made us laugh.

This photo, I have it in a frame at the side of me.

I've got a photo of him in every room, one on the fridge, one in each bedroom. I love this photo it was taken two or three years before he was diagnosed, I think.

He was a beautiful writer, people used to ask him to write things.

We found a jar full of farthings under the stairs that had been there for forty two years. They go back to eighteen something. I collect silver sixpences. Ken got them in his pay. I was given two silver sixpences on my wedding day. They told me, put them in your stocking and you'll never be poor. I've never been rich, but I've always been comfortable.



Ken always had a runny nose, he would always use a tissue, but he would never use these because they were special.

I was a telephonist for GPO. I started in 1956, you got a dowry after you worked there for six years. Then I worked on the NHS switchboard at Middlewood, Northern General and Netheredge. I always worked in psychiatric settings. I'm good at talking. I talked to the patients on nights, listened and advised. They would say "I feel a lot better now". They talked about sending me for counselling training, but it never happened.

I like knitting, sewing, embroidery and dancing. I still do. I don't go dancing but we always have a dance at Parsons Cross. Ken had never danced before but there; you couldn't sit him down. Even people in their 90s they love it. If I'm peeling potatoes and music comes on, I am dancing in the kitchen. If I hear music, it sets me off. If your knees and hips stop you, you can do dancing in a chair.



This is my tree of life pendant it has some of Trevor's ashes inside it. I wear it in his memory. I got one for each of my daughters.

I have written my life story and had it published it is called 'The life of Lily'. I am from a family of ten. I went to night school to learn shorthand. I spent a large part of my life dedicated to raising my two daughters. I now have five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. I knit to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Society. I am a regular research participant I go to the gym and play tennis. I am currently learning how to play the keyboard and ukulele.



Pat was a seamstress for two years from the age of 15 to 17 years old at the company Fred Entwistle's, she mainly worked on trousers which she delivered to customers in person on the tram in and around Sheffield.

Pat taught flower arranging at college. She did many arrangements for weddings and christening and parties. We had a lot of custom for traveller weddings in Doncaster. Pat entered her students into the Rotherham show and won medals for the flower arrangements. When we moved house Pat invited her whole class to come to her garden and take plants and cuttings. As a group, they also went to Chelsea Flower Show.



Carol did a law degree and went on to do social work in Sheffield for the Childrens and family's team. Carol and her sister had a fantastic childhood with their mum and dad on the family farm. They had a donkey and Carol's dad grazed organic Aberdeen Angus cattle on their land because it was registered organic land. I met Carol back in 1996 through a dating agency it was virtually love at first site and we got on so well together. We got married on the 12th July 1997 it was a lovely day we walked it up to Stannington Church and walked it back again. The vicar was modern he wore trainers. We lived in a cul-de-sac, so we had a buffet style reception and invited all the neighbours to join in, we had a fire eater/juggler to entertain everyone. One of the highlights was Wilf our cat weeing on the watermelons nobody told us until after.



My mother died of skin cancer seven months after this photograph was taken. I'm the baby and she is the woman looking at me rather than the camera. I think she knew at this point that she only had months to live.

When I grew up I went on a lot of activity holidays for example canoeing in France. On one occasion the guide took us through a nudist camp, and we had to strip everything off apart from our life jackets.

At one point I was a Park Ranger in the Peak District.

I feel blessed that I can turn my hand to most things. I trained as a toolmaker but was made redundant in 2006. I then bought a van and began making furniture while my wife did the upholstery.

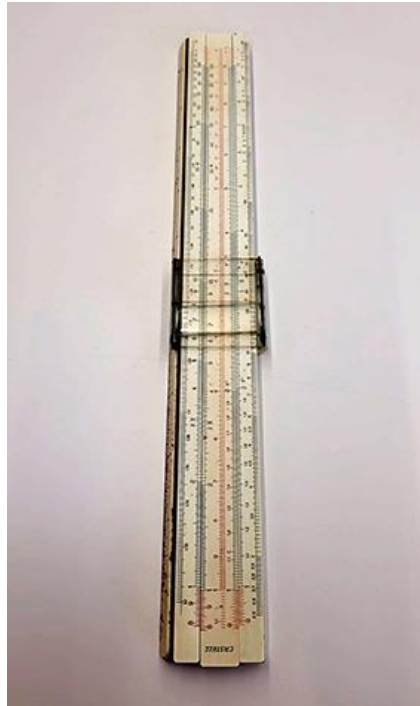
I met a man who had a clock shop and wanted me to make a grandfather clock. I joined the shop for 12 months and later set up my own business KP Clocks. I have a garage full of clock parts. I would have loved to have had to children to pass on my skills.

I was born in Barbados and came over to the UK in my twenties. It was 1956 and I worked as a maid a waitress a jack of all trades. I worked in a hotel in Stirling in Scotland for a year. I regret leaving Scotland to come to Sheffield. Sheffield allowed me to mix with different people and have different experiences. Things felt very different and there was a lot I didn't understand as a young girl in a new country.

I have nine grandchildren and five great grandchildren. I feel strongly that children should read and write before going to school. Slow learners get left behind. The headmaster indicated my son would be better off in a factory rather than pursuing an academic career.

I have always loved sewing and used to make all my own clothes. In recent years my hands have let me down.

My job...I was an Auxiliary at the northern General Hospital for thirty years.

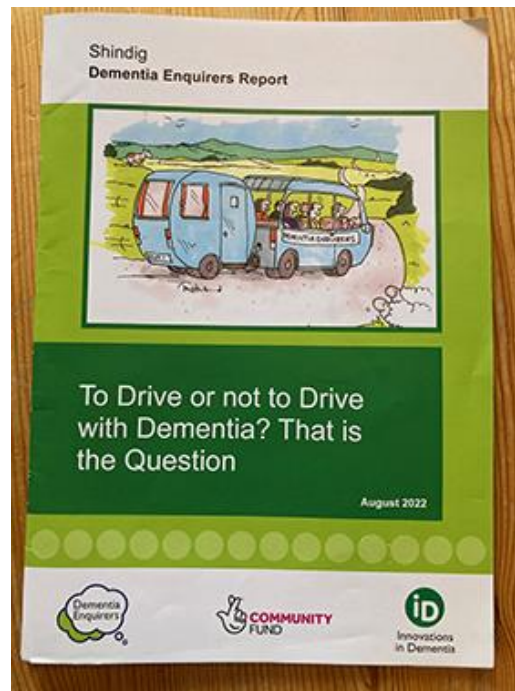


This is a blast from the past, my slide rule. I won it in a competition in the Sheffield Star in 1966. I was the first person from Tapton Secondary Modern to go to university at Leicester to study Physics after being told as a child that he had an IQ of less than 70 and wouldn't be able to learn to read.

I am dyslexic and dyspraxic I was the lowest at school, so I took up cross country at school. I was at Myers Grove Comprehensive.

I'm good at problem solving. Able to solve problems I have not seen before. All computer systems are bespoke, they never come with any documentation. I was good at putting my head into the system to understand what it was doing.

I worked at British Steel developing computer systems in the early days. I spent two years on the decimal payroll system at the River Don Works. Then I worked in Rotherham Town Hall and spent 25 years doing a bit of everything until they didn't want people over 50. I wasn't ready to retire. I got work on a steel contract on a system that I had developed 25 years before.



This is an interim report, five people living with dementia started the research and the summary includes everyone who contributed. COVID stopped our plans, so we changed the way we did it.

I keep it on a pouf in the lounge.

I have presented on this project, and it went well. One advantage of dementia is you lose your reserve, you're not able to get nervous.

I enjoy learning new tricks, helping my girlfriends with practical things that need sorting out. One had a 1930s telephone system a radio phone around the house. Another lady needed a fridge freezer replacing. To make it fit I removed shelving, replastered, redecorated. I had to replace some oven filters. I had to take it to bits and replace them. I use YouTube and pretend I know what I am doing.



This photo is my wedding photo taken seven years ago.

I have it in a frame usually

I have a good marriage, one of the best things, I do remember.

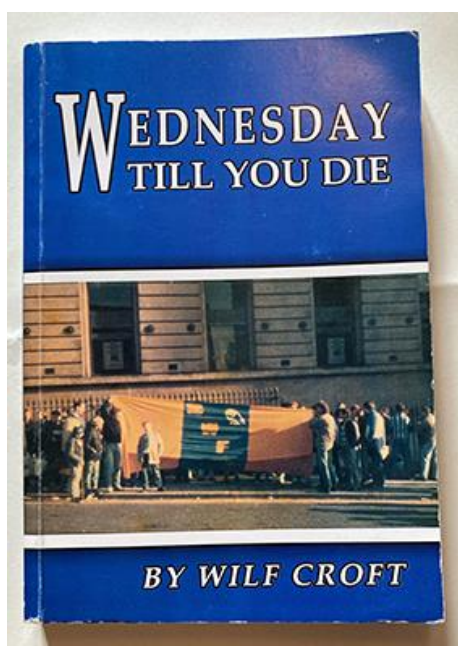
Now I just concentrate on the things that matter.

My dad was in the cutlery business. Me and my brother were adopted at fourteen and fifteen, he wanted us to go into the family business. I never took to it. I finished up in a Steel firm then in construction. My brother did stick to it. I was in construction; we did the air conditioning system at Ponds Forge. We did all that. It was high up (and at the time there was no water in it) It was good money, we had a good lifestyle, good holidays.

I've always played team games: cricket, basketball, Rugby, and football after school. My older brother taught me a lot of what I did, like swimming. I enjoyed team sports it's a good way of making friends (and enemies!).

I was sportsman of year at school I played football until I was forty odd.

I had the first every trial from Myers Grove city grammar played with a set of council kids.



I scribble a lot. All sorts of scribbles, about kids, work, school, people. What I was thinking when I wasn't playing any sports I was writing.

This book 'Wednesday Till You Die' is by Will Croft . We grew up as kids at Crookesmoor. I didn't see him for a long time. I found out that he'd written this book. He lives in Tenerife now. The proceeds from the book go to Western Park Children's Hospital. He used to support Sheffield Wednesday and was hired as a coach. I do visit him as often as I can. We keep in touch. Friends like that, you make for life, you can have a get together, and enjoy that kind of humour, keeps people smiling, we have a good laugh.

I've always supported Wednesday, home and away. I started playing semi-professional and used to get a bit of a back hander. We did well, we all had good jobs.

For further information please do not hesitate to make contact.

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For past reports go to www.shsc.nhs.uk/shindig

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