

Like I'm an alcoholic recovering, you know that kind of way, and how, how, like, eh, I turned me life around, you know what I mean. I had a very bad marriage you know that kind of way, you know what I mean.

Come out here, now in '63 with me mother when I was just married first. So, my, my mother was a widow for years and years and years. She was a stall holder in Moore Street you know what I mean. Me and me sister like, used to help out at the stall and that, so, we had no kind of childhood, you know that kind of way, we were just running one from running from one, running for to get turf and coal like that in the mornings and then the thing was I was eight years of age when me Mammy had, eh, Paul so I had, I had a hard upbringing you know what I mean. The tenement house in Wellington Street was knocked down, when, where I was born but then she got a house in Finglas but, sure, she was never used to a big house, and she had no money so we used to have to queue up at the Poor House up in there in Finglas for hard bread and, it wasn't only us now, there was a good queue there and you'd queue up and you'd have the tin can and they'd give you soup in it and the bread that was left over from the patients and that, because we were starving, you know what I mean, we had nothing to eat.

So the Vincent de Paul was sent to her then. So then they got her the little place in town, it was in Dorset Street. It was kind of, eh, tenement houses in the front, and you walked through into the rear where the yard was and there was all little cottages there, you know what I mean? And then you came out the back way then, the front way was the tenement houses and they helped her out then with getting, starting out back out in Moore Street.

Me Mammy, then, like she was always kind of packing in this thing, the stall and going to the pub you know that kind of way. She didn't come home until it was closed, you know that way. So we fended for ourselves, you know that kind of way, well it was ten and me sister is two years older than me. It was, it was a hard, I used to have to go out and take out the stall and that before I went to school. I used to have to come down and help her to sell the stuff you know what I mean? We were living there in the cottages and everyone around us was getting places in town. In the end then we got a flat out in Ballymun and in the meantime I was going with Georgie and we were engaged, sixteen, and, eh, one Friday I just went, got on the boat and went to England to me Mammy's sister but she came over and took me home. Georgie in the meantime was after coming over after me, for I left him over there, and came home with my mother, you know that way.

Then I met me husband me ex-husband. From the frying-pan into the fire. But he would not leave me alone, you know, so one night we were in the cottage and we had sex, and discovered two months later I was pregnant, I said, how am I going to get out of this, do you know what I mean. So, one night I told me mother after I was five months, said I'm expecting a baby, I said, but I don't want to marry him. She said oh well Jesus, you'll have to she said, you can't make a show of me and that was it. And my God, Jesus Christ, it was awful, so, you know but back then in the sixties, when your mother, when you were expecting, you had to get married do you know what I mean. Six weeks then it took to get married and even walking down that aisle, you know what I mean, I didn't want to get married I just wanted, I had to get a lend of a wedding dress, I had no money I had to buy shoes for 3and6 in Connolly's down near Amiens Street station. So in the meantime Mammy was getting the flat in Ballymun so I went to live with her. And that was the first of I felt of his violence, but it started then, and, em, he was just so violent and everyone thought he was quiet. No matter what I did I couldn't please him you know that kind of way and I'll tell you now, I, I never loved him, I was in a loveless marriage and a violent marriage. The dinner was never right but still it had to be on the table the minute he walked in do you know what I mean, I had to time it.

There was one time now, I went over to a friend of mine from Sillogue Road to Coultrey and I had a big high, them big high prams, you know what I mean, and I didn't know her clock was slow but when I used to go

out like that to visit somebody I'd do a stew that I'd only have to heat it up, you know what I mean. I used to have planned everything, you know what I mean? So, I was saying when I seen her husband walking in I said "Sammy does come in at this time?" She says "Aw, me clock" she said, so it was slow. So there I was running from Coultrey all the way over, right. And it was in the Winter, so when I got to me flat I didn't see any lights on. Oh that's grand I said he must be working late. So, I gets in, gets into, panting, panting to get the gas lighting underneath the stew. And I comes in and I remember taking Lisa down off the front of it and I wheeling, the, the other pram in to the bedroom and, eh, I come in to the sitting room and there he was behind the door waiting for me, in the dark.

Yeah, and why wasn't I there, for to give him his dinner. Such a fright I got and I was thrown from one side of the wall to the other, do you know what I mean, poor little kids screaming, do you know that way. And eh, like that, that sticks out in me mind. How, I mean, I had the stew ready and all he had to do was wait for me to, do you know what I mean, heat it up, you know?

So the beatings went on. And, em, so I'd take the blows and I'd have to keep quiet, you know in the bedroom. I never drank back then, I never drank cause I seen to much of me, me Mammy drinking, you know what I mean. But anyway, I had Lisa in the March. And, eh, I was overjoyed now when I had Lisa, you know what I mean. That was the greatest happiness in me life, that was greatest happiness that Saturday morning, she was the greatest joy of me life, you know what I mean. But I went on then and I got me own little place, a one-bedroom and, eh, then I had Karen a year and a half later.

With the two girls now, I idolised them, I loved them. They were me life. So the beatings went on. I had enough one time and I just got the boat over to England to me Mammy's sister with the two kids. But me Mammy came over now and brought me home, you know, after about two months, yeah. I went back and he promised never to do it again. He did, he did. And it wasn't only the mental abuse, when, when, he came home from work. It was also at night-time in bed. It was rape, you know what I mean, a lot of times, you know what I mean. But, eh, back then you couldn't go anywhere about that, you know what I mean. The kids were terrified of him and all. So, I couldn't stick it any more and I took an overdose of tablets, you know what I mean. So, I was brought in and I was in a, a mental home, you know what I mean. And that was the start of that, I was in and out and in and out and in and out over the years. That was the one that I didn't, I wanted to die. But that time I left letters and all and that, I was determined to do it, you know what I mean. But I, I couldn't go on, you know that way. But the drinking kind of started then. We went in a one bedroom, then we moved to a three-bedroom over in the four storeys, you know what I mean. Ten years later after leaving Georgie, he came home and that was the first I saw of him after ten years. And then we started to, eh, ring each other, you know what I mean. And then maybe five years he'd come home again. The it was going on, the beatings and everything else and, eh, I was, had the stall of me own out in Moore Street and eh, I, eh, was drinking you know after like, like, just like what me mother did. Went into the pub. But I was working in the evening time now, I had to work to get money to put towards his money. I, me sister, she sold down in Moore Street as well. She had her own stall. I really started to eh, to drink, you know. I was so unhappy. There used to be the cabbage man and he'd leave me cabbage, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, potatoes and all and it'd come Saturday to pay him and I wouldn't have it. Oh, I used to have to run and, and wait 'til he was gone, do you know what I mean, he was a farmer. I owed everyone money through the drink. I was after getting meself into an awful lot of debt through drinking, you know what I mean. So I had to give up the stall in Moore Street, I missed it now, you know what I mean. So, I eventually paid off people that I owed money to. So that I could walk down Moore Street again and not run by it, you know what I mean being ashamed that I owed people money.

I kept on drinking, so, and I was drinking in the house. I often went up to bed at night and I'd pray, I'd say "God, please don't let me walk down these stairs in the morning" It was just pure Hell, I think now into me forties, I, eh, got very bad on the drink. I was still working, now, oh, I had to get a job and work, you know what I mean, and I, I, I got the dinner and everything else. I was a, a functioning alcoholic, you know that kind of a

way, because I had to. It got so bad, I was so unhappy and I said to meself, I really am very unhappy, you know. Then I started to slice meself with blades. The kids used to have to send for the ambulance and then I'd be patched up. I remember one time I took, I took an overdose in the house. So there was a person out here she's dead now, Kathleen Marsh, did great things for Ballymun and eh, she seen me and she got me an ambulance, I needed help.

So anyway, when it was coming up to me fiftieth birthday and, eh, so I started to go very bad on the drink. So, he said to me "you'll never get rid of me, never ever get rid of me, I'll kill you first" you know what I mean. Something went off in me head and I, I just couldn't take it anymore. For me fiftieth birthday I was up about seven O' clock in the morning and I opened the windows and I put the, the record player, you know the little thing and put it at the window and blared it up and for all the neighbours to hear. And I was drunk, and I kept screaming "I'm taking me life back" He just came down the stairs and said " you mad bitch" he says and I swore from that day I was taking me life back.

I told him that he'd have to go, and he said he wasn't going. So, I, I, I, just couldn't take it anymore and I said. So, I went up to him and I said, I had a sharp knife, and I said, "I'm going to take you with me", I said "I'm not leaving you here on this Earth to torment my daughters like you tormented me. I said, says I "one night I'll kill you and I'm killing meself" But he still didn't go. I went up another night and I told him that I was going to, eh, scald him, you know what I mean. I told him I was going to burn the bed. Ah, I was on the verge of insanity, you know what I mean, from the drink. And eh, I, I, he still didn't go. So, I was just in a pub one night. I pulled the stool from underneath him and I broke the point. This was all out of my character. I was just going off me head, now, I really was and I broke the point, eh, thing and I was just going to put it to his throat when the bouncers came, you know what I mean. So I think he got afraid then, you know what I mean. He said to the kids "Your mother is mad".

I said, "I am, I am mad" I said. "I'm going insane from you" The, the daughter brought me to the psychiatrist and she told me to get the hell out of the marriage, you know what I mean, that he was never going to change. I, he, he left, you know what I mean, he left. But he kept tormenting me coming back, he was coming home and that. I ended up in the Mater again. Eh, I slit me wrists and in Vincents they, they, they said to me that I could go to, eh, substance abuse for six weeks at out-patients, you know what I mean. They kind of, em, try to get your life back together, you know what I mean. In the meantime, I was after ringing Georgie and got back and he came home. So, we were together, you, he was going back, coming back, and about eighteen months. 1999 I, in October, I said I was an alcoholic and I went into AA after being many times in Vincent's and that. And, that was 1999 when I went in there. I was after being, stopped drinking and, back again, back, and this was when I was in Vincent's, you know what I mean. I was after going to AA in Vincents and that and I was after being, say it took me about I'd say two years, like slipping and stopping and slipping and stopping. But I, I, finally now after that I had one or two but I start getting sober. So, eventually I got sober and I know, oh, oh, I think I was, em, a year sober when I got in touch with Georgie again, and he came home again. So, we were happy, you know what I mean and eventually I stuck it out in AA, you know like, and, eh, I know Georgie went back again. It was very hard on me, do you know what I mean, very hard, yeah.

I found like I, I made friends in AA and, em, I think it was about now, five years ah, eh,eh, of eh, sobriety that I, eh, I started to accept then that this is, you know, me life now. As I said I was getting sober and I know six years ago was the last time I saw Georgie. I went to work one morning and Georgie just got up and went back and I never rang him, you know, to see why he left. So, about four weeks ago I rang him. I rang him, eh, I found him on the Internet. So he rang me, he has a phone now.

So, eh three weeks later he was home. I always thought about him, but ringing him, thinking about ringing him again. So I rang him so he came home and eh, you know what I mean, this is my part of happiness now, this is my little bit of happiness now, and, em, it was a long, long road, a long road to get sober. An awful lot of unhappiness, you know, in me life, you know what I mean. Ah, and now for the first time I'm very happy,

everything is turned around for me. I'm starting to get this, kind of, happiness inside me, that, I'm smiling a lot again, you know what I mean. I'm happy now after that horrible, miserable life that I had. It's thirty-two years of, eh, eh an awful marriage.

The next thing now, is I'm going to put in for a divorce So, this was never on the cards before. This is my life, I took it back, I took me life back when I was fifty. It was a hard road, I'm sixty now in September and it was a hard road, it was for me. Now I'm not the only person in this world, that, eh, had a bad marriage and not the only alcoholic, but this is me telling my story. The only good thing that came out of me marriage was me four daughters, they were the only good thing, I absolutely adore them, I love them So, to come out of all that, you know in 2007 and to sit here telling you, I'm so happy today. I really am, I, I survived, I survived. I didn't get away with the drinking part because I have heart disease.

Since Georgie came back into me life and the happiness I'm feeling, I'm feeling on top of the world. And now, I, I'm feeling on top of the world. I tell you, eh, my story, you know what I mean, but how, an alcoholic I never thought I'd come out of it to be sober today, you know what I mean. Change, so I hope now for the future as he, he's sixty three now, as Georgie said that there'd be no more saying goodbyes. We're getting on now, forty four years we know each other, you know what I mean, and forty four years he's been coming home to see me and he said " Josie, this has to be it" he said "We have to be together now" he says because we're getting old, you know what I mean and he says, eh, "One of these days, says he, I'm going to ask you to marry me" 'cause I was engaged to him all them years ago, you know, and he says "In the future", he says," I'm going to ask you to be me wife" and I said to him "That would make me very happy" For me and Georgie to live happily ever after. I was robbed of that happiness, you know, all them years ago, back in 1963. We would have been happy. For to love somebody for so long, like that, I never forgot Georgie, you know what I mean. And now we're after getting this chance now of, being happy together, you know. I'm very happy now, with Georgie now after all this time, you know that way. But, he says, eh, you know that he, he won't be happy until I, I'm his wife like I should have been all those years. Because, eh, forty four years is a long time to wait for to be with somebody, you know what I mean, you know, so. So, he's back in my life now and I'm happy, I'm very happy, you know what I mean. That's, that'll be my little bit of happiness now.

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Commissioned by Breaking Ground, the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd per cent for art programme.  
The project focusing on people living in Ballymun, a small village on the outskirts of Dublin city.  
Five people with different lives and experiences tell their stories.

Their interesting and fascinating life stories cover a wide range of issues, including alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse, homelessness and self-harm, but perhaps most importantly, the interviews demonstrated each individuals capacity to love and to survive hardship. Each interview could be listened to in private on Audiophones which were available in the exhibition space.

A photograph of the person interviewed or an image suggested by what they said in their interview was specially made for the project by Cecily Brennan.

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