

One & Other Project

Hello my name is Kate Rowles and I'm interviewing you for the Wellcome Trust as you are taking part in Antony Gormley's One & Other. The date today is the 16th of September 2009 and the time is 11.20 am. If I can please ask you to say your full name, your age and where you come from.

My name is John Mawdsley, I'm 31 from Felixstowe.

And how are you today?

I'm okay, I'm enjoying the sun and just preparing to take part on the plinth.

Why did you decide to take part in One & Other, what was it?

Well I saw when it first started it was on the news, like I say I kind of ... I was just browsing on the internet a few weeks later and I came across the website and I thought I'll apply, I probably won't get on but I'll apply. And I applied and I didn't hear anything for a few weeks and then when I was on holiday I got an email and I thought crikey, I've got to decide what to do so I left it a couple of days, mullied it over and then I thought yes, I'll do it.

And why did you decide to do it do you think?

Look, at first I thought that I could do something fun a bit then I thought I could do something serious. I could perhaps send out a message for something that was close to me personally and this would be the perfect ideal opportunity to do so.

And so how have you decided what to do on the plinth today?

Well, I was in an accident, a car accident in August last year and since then I've been thinking of ways I could just give a little back to the ambulance service that saved my life on that day so I thought I could raise awareness of the services that they provide and this would be a perfect opportunity to do so.

What happened in the accident?

Me and my fiancée were travelling over to see my parents in Wales for a week on holiday and then on the M54 around Birmingham I had a brain haemorrhage on the motorway and the car flicked over and obviously we had the car crash and our ambulance service was needed at that moment. They arrived within a few minutes, that was enough time to save my life, so if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here to do this. I was admitted to hospital, I had a fractured back, various broken bones as well as a brain haemorrhage to deal with and my fiancée broke her neck so we are both fully healed now, we are a lot better. It was a painful process going through physically and psychologically as well.

And how did you overcome that experience do you think?

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Because we had each other, you know, we were able to talk to each other about it so I guess we could release a lot of the tension the ... you know, things that were on our minds to each other so we grew stronger through that process so I think we helped each other pull through.

And what is the name of the ambulance service that saved you?

It's the Midlands Ambulance Service. I mean since they started they have saved another thirty thousand people's lives and you think those thirty thousand people are somebody's parents, somebody's sons and you think how widespread it is that they've done it. They do it all without government funds, no lottery funding and it's because they are a charity at the end of the day. So I think they do a sterling job, a brilliant job.

Have you got any memories of the accident?

I remember bits beforehand, I don't remember passing out because obviously I was unconscious and I remember waking up with my face pressed against the windscreen in the car itself, the front of the car, in intense pain and I couldn't see anything, I could just hear. My sight must have gone, I don't know, and then I remember them pulling me out onto the motorway and feeling all the glass around me cutting into me and then I just remember them knocking me out at the scene and then waking up in intensive care so ... my fiancée remembers more than me because she was awake during the whole accident so I guess I got off a bit easier than she did but [?].

And have you spoken to the air ambulance about your desire to sort of promote them?

I have. As soon as I realised I had a place I realised I could do this. I emailed the Midland's Air Ambulance and got in touch with their offices and they sent me a flight suit I could wear on the day as well as a banner, a helmet and they've been really good, they've done press releases for me up in Shropshire and the Midlands and down in Suffolk and in Essex as well so they got quite a good coverage from this which is brilliant, it makes it all the more worthwhile.

And how are you going to promote them on the plinth? What are you going to actually do today?

I've got my own banner which I did. It shows a picture of the actual car crash and it just says that, you know, I'm here today because of them. I've also got one of their own banners. I've got a megaphone as well, it depends how confident I am when I'm up there, what I say, but I've got a script, just a history of the Midlands air ambulance and other ambulance services around the country as well so I don't know, see how it goes.

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And do you think it's had an impact on you as a person having this car crash experience?

Definitely, it's given me an insight into how fragile ... to treasure each moment, you know, when you've got them because they can be taken away at any point so it's made me realise that things are precious.

And what does it mean today to stand on the Fourth Plinth do you think?

Like when I was coming down I was saying to my family that if somebody asked me to say something in my local town, it feels quite small, I would say "No." But because this is in Trafalgar Square it's quite big, it can be daunting, I think it gives me the chance to experience something that I would never have the chance to do in my life. It's going to be important, I think the whole project will be important because it will give a snapshot of people's experiences, two thousand four hundred people's experiences, and I think it's important.

And can I ask you a bit about yourself?

Yes.

Maybe starting with where you come from?

Originally I was born in Wales because my dad was in the RAF and when he came out of the RAF we moved up to St. Helens in Lancashire and I spent most of my life there and after university I moved over to Sheffield and because I had friends there I could get a job easily there as well. And then after five or so years in Sheffield I met my fiancée online and she lived in Felixstowe so I was doing the journey backwards and forwards from Sheffield to Felixstowe and that was four hours, you know, each time. I got the opportunity to get employment in the area so I took up stick and moved down south and I've loved it ever since and that's it. We got engaged just before the accident as well, it was a month before the accident so we were recently engaged at the time and planning to get married next year.

Where are you getting married? Do you know?

It'll be somewhere local in Suffolk like a small church, nothing major, just something personal, small, we've spotted a couple of nice churches.

Lovely and what do you do for a living?

I'm an operational manager for a training provider, TBG Learning in Essex so we deal with sixteen to eighteen year old school leavers that have come out of school with low qualifications and we get them into work and we get them skilled up as well. We do a project getting disabled people into employment as well so it's quite good, the projects that we do offer, we change people's lives or we hope to and I've been

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there two years and it's brilliant. I'm enjoying it.

What do you like about the work that you do?

I've got a specific case, we had this lady come to us, she's not left the house for seven years and she had low confidence, low self esteem and she went through the new deal for disabled people project which we were on and we built up her confidence. She started to attend classes, IT classes, literacy classes and then after a few months she gained employment and now she's out and about and it seems the effect that, you know, you can have on somebody's life totally changing around from not being able to leave the door to integrated into society and, you know, to be the life and soul, you know, of the training room. It's amazing the change, you know, that you can have on somebody's life. So I get a lot of enjoyment from seeing the distance travelled with the learners.

And what's your route into this field of work?

I left uni ... I did I degree in psychology and I moved over to Sheffield because my friends were in employment in adult education and they said, you know, this would suit you, this would be an ideal job for you. So I went into adult education just through my friends really and I worked with disabled people up north and the BME community and gained a lot of experience working with [?] groups. So I think it's worthwhile seeing the changes you can help someone and...

Yes and what are your passions in life would you say?

I love walking in the countryside with my fiancée, I love going to the cinema, I've just taken up cycling as well, I'm trying to get fit. I like being in the countryside, I like going visiting my parents over in Wales and just relaxing, you know, yes.

And how about your sort of your life at the moment, what's important to you at the moment? What's happening to you?

Right in this moment?

Yes, in general.

In general?

Yes.

I think I'm developing my role at work. I'm taking more responsibility so my work life is growing and getting more responsibilities there and also, you know, we are getting married next year. I've got to start thinking of that side of it as well so I think, since the accident, I've got more mature and more settled and more calm but yes, I'm taking up more mature things at work and developing.

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Can I ask you a little bit about your upbringing?

Yes.

What was that like?

It was fine. I've got one sister. I spent most of my life obviously in St. Helens, I've a close groups of friends that I've known since I was five so twenty-five years plus I've known them. We've stuck together through all that and everything that we've been through high school, university, the rest of it so yes, wonderful parents. They were also supportive with everything that I've done and I think I've been blessed with family life.

How about your ... you said you went to study psychology.

Yes.

Why was it that you did psychology, do you think?

Well when I was ... I think when I was about eleven, when I just started high school, my dad said to me, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" And because my dad had been in the Air Force I wanted to be in the Air Force and my dad used to take me to work with him and I'd see all the planes and I'd sit in the cock pit and I wanted to be a pilot and I'd wanted to be a pilot since I was born. I found out that I was colour blind, that ruled that out, so I couldn't be a pilot so he said, "What sort of thing do you want to do?" And he ran through the different options with me and one day he said, "A psychologist" and I said "What's that, dad?" And he said, "It's the study of people, how they work with the mind in groups and how people interact" and I thought that's really interesting so I did that and I think studying psychology ... to be able to understand other people but also how I work myself and I just love how the mind ticks, why people behave the way they do and it's yes, interesting.

Does that have ... do you ever reflect on yourself in that way?

Yes, well, kind of. I took up meditation and I've got a growing interest in Buddhism as well and that, along with psychology, does help you look inside your own mind and try to, you know, analyse why you do things and also the meditation aspect helps me to deal with things. It's like today all my family was getting stressed and I'm not really that stressed because of what I've been through and also I know that, you know, it's something to enjoy.

Why did you get into Buddhism?

Again it was speaking to my dad. I had been to church and I'd worked with the BME community so I learnt about Islam and it's in the ... all the different religions I wanted something that was more personal to me, something that could explain certain things

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in life in terms of why people suffer and why people go through the troubles that they do and Buddhism fit into that perfectly and I started to read books and it all just clicked and it helps me to understand why people suffer and how to get over that as well.

How long have you been practising Buddhism?

Three years, three or four years so I'm still fairly new and I'm still trying to, you know, read as much as I can but I find it very interesting and I listen to the pod-casts online and try and listen to as much as I can on the radio but yes, it's interesting.

Have you noticed the change in yourself through the Buddhism do you think?

Well yes since obviously when we were in hospital I had quite a lot of time when I was in a hospital bed to just sit and meditate and relax and I think that helped me with my fiancée Nicola. I think that rubbed off on her because I was saying to her that, you know, things would be okay, it's not permanent, we'll get over it and I think that calmness calmed her as well so that's important to me.

And what experience do you think have really shaped you into the person you are today?

Obviously the car crash, leaving home for the first time, having to fend for yourself and then making the big jump, changing jobs, changing where I was living and I think that was a big jump as well. So I think those two: the car crash and changing jobs and changing location, you know, moving to Felixstowe, to Sheffield have really shaped me.

Is it quite different where you live now to where you lived?

A lot. Sheffield is a big city and it's ... I like Sheffield, I like living in Sheffield and the excitement there and all the shops and everything and the fast pace of life but Felixstowe was the opposite and it's quite calm. I live by the sea and I thought I wanted to live in the city, I got that out of my system and now I'm perfect in terms of where I am in terms of living in Suffolk near the seaside It's lovely, it's so calm because I work in Essex in Colchester and to come home after work and just totally relax with my fiancée it's the best thing, it's amazing.

You mentioned your dad quite a lot, do you think he's been an influence on you?

Yes, both my parents really. My mum was a nurse and we were very close growing up, my dad as well. Both my parents, you know, have really supported me but in terms of my career and choices in life my dad has always been there to give me options in terms of what, you know ... go on and if I ever need any advice they are both ... my dad tells it to me straight and says, "I think you should do this" and 99% of the time he's right so ... but yes, they are both wonderful for me.

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And what do they think about you taking part in One & Other?

At first they weren't sure of what it was and they thought it was a bit daft but then after reading up about it and seeing it on the news, they'd been on the website, they came to the conclusion that I did, it's given the opportunity for people to express themselves and to look at the variety of life in the UK at the minute and they are fully behind me and they are watching it when I'm up there in half an hour or whenever it is.

In what ways do you normally express yourself do you think?

I don't know really, I'm usually the measured self, I don't know how I express myself.

I suppose to have an outlet or sort of something like that?

I love music, I love listening to music. I took up playing the bass guitar. I'm rubbish at that but an outlet... I don't know, listen to music and be with my fiancée and just relax because I'm fairly calm anyway. I don't get too stressed.

Can I ask you to describe yourself in some way?

Like I just said, calm, measured, introspective ... I'm trying to think of some words really.

What are your interests?

Music, science fiction, cars, I like cars and me and my dad restored a classic car it was a few years back and I liked looking at how it was put together and me and my fiancée and her parents, we go to classic car rallies and air shows as well. We've just been to an air show. I love aircrafts.

Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

I just think this project is brilliant in terms of where else would you be able to have a captive audience in the centre of the capital of a country other than through this project? I think it's brilliant. I think when it's all done and dusted and people look back at it in years time they'll think I don't know whether the times would have or they'll be able to notice the change of the time, how people change, but to get a picture of people as they are now what better way to do this? It's good. Looking forward to it.

Thank you very much.

Okay.