



Made in Cornwall

A LITTLE BIT OF CORNWALL

Words by **Brian Osborne**



LEFT: BRIAN OSBORNE WITH HIS CHILDREN



At 27, I woke to find my left side was not doing what I told it to; my doctor sent me straight to hospital, where the neurologist confirmed I'd had a stroke. I remember my girlfriend, Rosie, telling me the tablets I was given turned me into 'a potato on speed'! She married me nonetheless, and we are still together some 15 years and two strokes later.

By 2015, I was ridiculously tired. My wife put this down to my running a gardening business, trying to finish an Open University degree and the birth of our son. I was having migraines almost daily, and sleeping in my car just to get through the day. I kept forgetting simple words, and my personality had changed from easy-going chap to a man my wife was actually scared of. My GP sent me straight to A&E, where I was diagnosed with another stroke. One is pretty rare amongst under 50s; two by the age of 40 is pretty long odds.

I carried on working but was seriously struggling. Every single bit of me was tested, and specialists - stroke nurse, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational health - visited my house and installed shower chairs and stair rails. I gave away my business to concentrate on getting better, but working with only one side of my body functioning properly resulted in my back being damaged, leaving me largely immobile, requiring a wheelchair for any distance walking.

I was an angry individual. I'd gone being a man in charge of his future, running a successful business and sailing my own yacht from Mylor, to one who couldn't look after his children. I opened the front door because I was warm, allowing my three-year-old to escape down the road. I put pasties in the oven to warm and forgot, nearly setting fire to the kitchen. My wife became my carer, making sure I took my tablets

- which had to be locked away so I couldn't take an overdose during periods of depression.

I worried constantly that I would have another stroke, that my wife would leave me, that I was useless. I wanted the old me back. My psychiatrist "taught" me how to embrace the new me, to look at the things I could do, to practise breathing exercises and relaxation techniques, and to understand and take care of my body.

I loved being near the sea, and found the vastness grounding, the waves calming. My wife would drive us to the sea - we live in Roche, so we'd go to Pentewan, Mevagissey or Fowey. We'd walk together, play with the kids and enjoy the simple pleasure of being together. I took shells home, and when I couldn't get to the sea, I made them into necklaces for the kids. That was the inspiration for opening an Etsy shop to sell sea glass jewellery.

My wife was supportive - while she doubted I would sell anything, she could see I was living again, and back in control of my destiny in a tiny way. With the help of YouTube, Google and Pinterest, I began to make things that sold and to believe in myself. Today, my jewellery is certified as Made in Cornwall by Cornwall Council. The peak so far was having a stand at the Royal Cornwall Show; people said how much they loved my work, and I sold lots.

Today, Rosie runs my business. My workshop is a converted garden shed, insulated to be safe and comfortable. I work around my stroke fatigue, go where I'm told and make new pieces every week. Every sale helps my recovery. I need help to cover my stands when I'm ill, but my morphine intake has halved, I am no longer suicidal and I see many positives in my life.

My jewellery, quite literally, saved my life. I still use a wheelchair, have a terrible memory and walk into things when my body forgets the left, but the stroke no longer defines me or controls me, even on my worst days. I'm alive! And I rather like this new me now.

www.alittlebitofcornwall.co.uk