Hi,

We are the Shropshire Alcohol and Drugs Service User Recovery Forum or SURF for short. Our group consists of individuals with personal experience of addiction, recovery and use of Shropshire drug and alcohol services. We aim to (mutually) support individuals in their recovery journey and to independently monitor, interact with and support service providers in the interests of service users in general, and the wider community. We also aim to raise awareness of recovery from drug and alcohol addiction in Shropshire and challenge the stereotypes and stigma associated with addiction.

Since December we have attended meetings in Shrewsbury with representatives from The Shropshire Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), Arch and Addaction aka the Shrewsbury Recovery Partnership (SRP) and TACT. We also attended the Drink and Drug Network National Service User Conference in Birmingham and the Joint Employability Group.

We now have a working website (http://surfshropshire.wix.com/surf) and a twitter account: Follow us @SurfShropshire

Our members also continue to attend/facilitate/support peer-led Mutual-Aid meetings (AA, NA and SMART) in the community on a regular basis. We are currently supporting new peer-led open Smart Recovery meetings in getting started in Ludlow and Whitchurch to complement the existing Smart groups in Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth and Oswestry.

Ludlow Smart Recovery meetings are now running on Fridays from 1pm – 2.30pm at Rockspring Community Centre, Ludlow. Please come along if you can. These meetings are open – just turn up.

Arrangements for the Whitchurch meetings should be finalised shortly and details will be included in the next newsletter and on our website.

SMART Recovery is a science-based programme to help people manage their recovery from any type of addictive behaviour. This includes addictive behaviour with substances such as alcohol, nicotine or drugs, or compulsive behaviours such as gambling, sex, eating, shopping, self-harming and so on. SMART stands for ‘Self Management And Recovery Training’.

We have also started planning various events and projects for recovery month in September. This will include several smaller events in different parts of Shropshire – including Whitchurch, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Ludlow and hopefully Market Drayton plus a main recovery event in Shrewsbury. One such project involves making a 3 minute film to enter in the Recovery Street Film Festival Competition. We will also be organizing a trip to take part in the UK Recovery Walk which this year takes place in Halton Merseyside on Saturday 10th September.

If you want to know more about what we do, have any queries or suggestions or you would like to get involved we can be contacted via the website http://surfshropshire.wix.com/surf or by email: sugsgroup@gmail.com.

~ SURF
"Don’t let anyone tell you that you don’t have valuable skills... ”

"Don’t kid yourself that you haven’t picked up enormous skills when you’ve been down that you can use on the way up.”

“All you need is a hand up, not a hand out.”

-- John Bird, Big Issue founder, at the 9th national service user conference in Birmingham 2016

| "We need more targeted action for the most vulnerable" |
| "I do not underestimate your vital role in peer support and motivating others in their recovery.' |
| ~ Karen Bradley, MP Staffordshire Moorlands - Home Office Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation |

| "We aren’t naïve enough to think that cuts in the general public sector aren’t going to affect drug services – of course they are. But we’re keen to see that they’re proportionate, and that the harms are minimised and contained." |
| "And as the pressure on other services hits, we’re going to see much higher presentation rates of people with complex needs. It’s not hard to see that the risk of stigma will increase as local authorities have to make tough decisions about the services they fund." |
| "How do we develop a service user voice that can impact national decision-making?" |
| "We want to create a model that gives the service user voice an input into policy influencing what goes into the drug strategy, not just how it’s implemented in local services." |
| ~ Karen Biggs, Chief Executive of Phoenix Futures and Chair of the Collective Voice – an umbrella group of eight of the sector’s largest providers. |

| "Why is there no service user involvement whatsoever in Collective Voice then?" |
| "A Service User Delegate |

| "The main concern of Collective Voice is keeping hold of the part of the sector they’ve got, because the NHS has been pushed out." |
| "Many services now have a one-size-fits-all agenda, or to be more accurate, a one-size-fits-nobody." |
| ~ Dr Chris Ford, Clinical Director, Substance Misuse Management in General Practice (SMMGP) |

| "As service users, your voice is essential...” |
| ~ Carole Sharma, Chief Executive, Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals (FDAP) |

| “It isn’t Karen and her colleagues that have pushed the NHS out – that has been a decision of commissioners and policy makers” |
| “They [the local authorities] are responsible for what happens in their own patch. The money transferred to them was a huge pot, but there are also huge pressures on local authorities, so it’s not surprising if that funding begins to shrink. That’s why making your voice heard is vital.” |
| “I think we collectively have to work at making sure that service users have a voice" |
| ~ Rosanna O’Connor of Public Health England (PHE) |

| “In the South West we’ve not had any consultation about cuts or the impact of cuts. If ever there was a time for service user consultation, it’s now. Consultation and representation is meaningful only if it’s genuinely listened to and acted upon.” |
| ~ Representative from Badsuf (Bournemouth Alcohol and Drug Service User Forum) |

| “Devolving public health to local government was a positive step, and councils have embraced these new responsibilities,’ However, the significant cuts to public health grants will have a major impact on the many prevention and early intervention services carried out by councils. These include combating the nation’s obesity problem, helping people to stop smoking and tackling alcohol and drug abuse. ‘Given that much of councils’ public health budget goes to pay for NHS services like sexual health, public health nursing, drug and alcohol treatment and health checks, these are cuts to the NHS in all but name. And it will put further pressure on other NHS services.” |
| ~ Izzi Seccombe, Councillor and Local Government Association’s (LGA) community wellbeing spokesperson |

| “Just a ‘tiny amount of the money that’s being wasted on everything else could have a huge impact if it went to the right place. It would change all your statistics.” |
| ‘We’ve moved past service user involvement now – we’re about recovery visibility. We’re part of the community, and we sit down with commissioners to shape services. The point is that we don’t need anyone’s permission. We just get up and make it happen.’ |
| ~ Coventry Service User Delegate |
Challenging Prejudice and Stigma.

Part of what SURF does is to challenge the prejudice and stigma associated with addiction. If you are a health-care professional this obviously doesn't occur within your particular practice or area of influence - although it does seem to be occurring down the road and on the other side of town where the less open-minded people work.

We at SURF support the following statements issued by the RCGP (Royal College of General Practitioners):

- The rates of drug misuse and its associated morbidity and mortality in the UK are among the highest in the western world. Drug-related deaths due to overdose in the UK are among the highest in Europe.
- Drug misuse is more common in areas of social deprivation.
- Drug treatment is effective, has an evidence base and is cost-effective:
- Between a quarter and a third of those entering treatment achieve long-term sustained abstinence.
- GPs have a responsibility to provide general medical services to drug misusers:
- Drug misusers have the same entitlement as other patients to the services provided by the National Health Service.
- Doctors must provide care for both general health needs and drug-related problems, whether or not the patient is ready to withdraw from drugs.
- Patients should also be advised about support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous (eg Smart Recovery).
- Doctors are well placed to champion recovery and play a leadership role in instilling hope and ambition, both in those they support and in the professionals with whom they collaborate across a range of services.

TUPE or Not TUPE

TUPE, usually pronounced 2 p, stands for the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) legislation.

SURF ran a straw poll of a small but representative group of Service Users regarding workers who were previously employed by the then service providers prior to 1st April and who have opted to transfer to the Shropshire Recovery Partnership under the TUPE regulations.

The group wholeheartedly and unanimously voted on behalf of Shropshire Service Users to offer their gratitude and appreciation for your ongoing commitment and support to recovery services in Shropshire. In particular they wished to acknowledge and state their appreciation for the sacrifice of those previously employed by the NHS.

We won't forget.

On a slightly less serious note, the group voted to award honorary working titles to all ex-NHS workers. For example: From now on Monique should be addressed as “Matron”. Other honorary titles are to be designated as agreed.
It is always hard to know where to start these kinds of things, especially when it’s a story about my relationship with drugs and alcohol, so I guess I will just jump straight in. I first started drinking and taking drugs when I was about 15 and still at school. It was exciting and new, I was only on cannabis and speed at that time. I wasn’t popular at school and got bullied a lot, even had my first thoughts of suicide at that age as well, but more on that later. I didn’t drink or take drugs to excess at that time and I got a new group of friends. We used to hang around town having a laugh and doing stupid stuff like you do when you’re that age. When I was old enough that’s when I started going out with them to clubs and discovered my drug of choice, ecstasy. I had never felt as happy as I did when I was on that drug. I could talk about anything and everything with no judgement with anyone, of course I could never remember what I had talked about but that didn’t matter, I finally felt that I had confidence and a group I belonged to.

At this point I had a full time job and the weekends off which I of course used to go out and get wasted. I was young and could see no problem with any of this, after all I was holding down a job and had friends and a girlfriend so no problem right? There was a problem though. Something I didn’t ever admit to myself. I may have been the crazy one in my group (I didn’t get the nickname Mad Rob for nothing) but it was only on drugs that I was like that. The rest of the time I was shy and unhappy with myself. I hated myself. Secretly inside I thought I was no good and had nothing of value to offer anyone. I had no social skills – except when I was high or drunk.

Eventually I fell on some hard times. I got made redundant from my job, my relationship ended and I got kicked out of my flat. All that happened in the same week. Fortunately I had a friend who let me stay at their place. That is when I started a new relationship. A destructive relationship. This friend I had known since I was 17 and was older than me and a drinking buddy. He gave me a lifeline of work and a place to stay. But little did I realise at that time that he was very manipulative and controlling. It was around this time when I was about 25 my drinking and drug taking had gotten out of control. I was no longer doing it to feel good but to keep from feeling bad. I wasn’t easy to live with and while I give my now ex friend credit for putting up with it, he exploited it too.

I was in and out of jobs at this time. I would get a job, earn money spend the money on getting wasted then lose the job due to not being in work. I did this for years until my friend suggested I follow him in his career doing security and dog handling. So I did exactly that and went through all the training and got all the certificates and eventually we started our own business. I was reliant on my friend for work and a place to stay and working 24/7. I didn’t see my friends, not that I had that many. My family my life just wasn’t my own anymore. So my using increased. I was doing anything I could get my hands on.

On the surface everything seemed fine and no-one knew how I really felt or what was going on. But I was on an ever decreasing spiral. The more depressed and anxious I got the more I used, which in turn made me worse until eventually I snapped and took an overdose.

My friend found me and I was taken to hospital and then onto psychiatric hospital for a brief stay. My doctor said you need to quit the job and get away from your friend. So I did exactly that. I went into a hostel then eventually onto getting my own place which I am still in today. This was back in 2011. In 2012 I first went into the recovery program run by NACRO. I went to meetings and even started peer mentoring. I wanted to become a counsellor and help people the way I had been helped. However I still had that problem I had when I was 15. I still hated myself deep down, I had not dealt with my issues honestly and I fell right back into using again. I dropped out of services and got myself a job, which I held down until 2014 when I got fired 2 days before Christmas.

At that point I realised I couldn’t keep doing this. I wasn’t bouncing back from using like I was when I was in my 20s and the personal cost was high. So I re – entered the program again and began to really work through my issues. But I still struggled with socialising and meeting new people. How do you meet new people in your 30s? So I took advantage of the courses that the service providers run including one called 5 steps to wellbeing. This one really did change my life. I made friends on this course. I found a proper community not just wasted people who you used with and used, but genuine kind people who liked me for me. Thus my confidence grew and I finally began like myself and the voice that told me you can only be who you are when you’re wasted, began to get quieter and quieter.

Now I am in the best place I have ever been in my life. At the time of writing, 15 months sober and I have friends who like me for me and I am starting a counselling course like I had planned to do all those years ago. I am trying new things all the time, pushing myself on to new experiences, I have also found a new love in my life to boot. I am even involved in SURF Shropshire the service user group that prints this newsletter, so I am finally giving back like I wanted to. Most importantly, I finally love who I am and I am comfortable being me. I still have thoughts of using, I did it for most of my life after all. But now it is nothing more than a fleeting thought and I don’t even seriously consider using anymore. Thanks to my support network of friends, the groups, and the tools I learned in SMART I have broken my habit. I will always be on my guard, but I am confident now that I can face whatever comes my way.
Changes to Service Provision in Shropshire
(or Be Like Bamboo)

On the 31st March this year our Drug and Alcohol Services in Shropshire changed and at the same time they didn't change. More precisely, the service providers have changed, but the service continues.

Since April 1st, the previous Shropshire drug and alcohol services - the likes of CSMT, Aquarius and NACRO - have been “amalgamated” into one service called “Shropshire Recovery Partnership” or SRP for short.

What does that actually mean for Service Users? What is going to be different?

Well, the name and the way the provision is structured has changed. But essentially, from the service-user perspective, the important aspects should stay much the same – at least for the time being. For the most part, service users should see the same workers, attend the same groups and enjoy the same regularity of appointments etc as before.

"Plus c'est chose. Plus c'est le meme chose"

Which, if you haven't happened upon it previously, means something like: "the more that things change, the more they stay the same. This saying featured in the chorus of a rather distinctive track called "Circumstances" by the band Rush.

Ear-worm Alert!! The singer from Rush has a rather unique voice and once heard, the song's chorus may repeat itself in your head more persistently than Kylie's “I should be so lucky - lucky, lucky, lucky...”

The chorus goes:

“All the same we take our chances
Laughed at by time
Tricked by circumstances
Plus ca change
Plus c'est la meme chose
The more that things change
The more they stay the same.”

I have to say here I have a slight issue with the notion of being “Tricked by circumstances”. More appropriate I suggest would be: “Tricked by what I chose to believe about circumstances”.

As it turns out “Plus c'est change” is an epigram by somebody called Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr. Literally translated it means:“The more it changes, the more it's the same thing.”

I've never heard of Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr before. Unsurprisingly, he was French – a writer. Apart from his famous quote about change and his novels (none of which I've read) the only thing he is noted for is having a species of bamboo named after him: "Bambusa multiplex Alphonse Karr". Seems he was keen on horticulture as well as being a writer from France.

As you likely know; bamboo is big in Asia. The crossing leaves of the bamboo appear as the Chinese character "An" (tranquillity). Sending a bamboo leaf means: "I am fine, I hope that everyone in the family is enjoying peace". Bamboo combines upright integrity with accommodating flexibility; it has the perfect balance of grace and strength, or Yin and Yang.

“When the storm comes, the bamboo bends with the wind. When the storm ceases, it resumes its upright position.”

For me, recovery involves the acceptance and ownership of vulnerability. Being flexible and open to change permits growth. The storm symbolizes the experience of feeling overwhelmed by changing “circumstances”. I've learned some useful tools in recovery. One is to remember that the storm will pass because storms are temporary. And like storms pass - so do urges to use. Every time we resist an urge to use, the urges become less frequent and weaker. Another is to accept a feeling, not to judge or condemn it - but to remember it too will pass and that if we've managed to survive a storm before we can do so again – one day at a time, and if necessary one hour at a time, or even one minute at a time...

I'm constantly reminded of the need to keep things simple. Simple enough so that in the confusion of the storm it doesn't get washed away. All I have to remember is bamboo.

We learn to surf the urge...to ride the waves – and like bamboo we keep open and flexible enough to accept the power of the wind until the storm abates. The technique is known as urge-surfing and that, in case you haven't guessed it already, it is one of the reasons we call ourselves SURF.

As for the changes (or non-changes) to service provision in Shropshire - the jury is still out...
Whoever would have thought all those years ago that such a successful Solicitor as I, with an idyllic lifestyle, a caring and beautiful Wife and two gorgeous Children (the archetypal nuclear family) and, seemingly the world as his oyster, would eventually end up living in Shropshire many miles away from his family, on his own, expelled from his profession, with no real savings, material possessions, few of his old friends and acquaintances, and dependent upon State Benefits and Welfare Organisations for his maintenance and housing? Certainly not me.

Why? Two simple words – addictive behaviour and alcohol.

What happened? Being raised without what was traditionally regarded as a ‘normal’ family unit of Dad, Mum and maybe a brother or sister, I had to learn to be self reliant and independent from my very early years and made important decisions and problem-solved without the embarrassment of having to ask for help elsewhere – in other words, I knew it all and didn’t need to ask for help. Very, very wrong.

In my professional years, my vanity did not allow me to seek help when I was asked to deal with matters of which I had no real experience or knowledge and my pride led me down various paths which I knew were both legally and morally bankrupt but which I was unable to resist. This behaviour, an addiction to being respected and admired, was completely out of kilter with the morals I held dear and contrary to everything I had learned or been taught and held dear and, ultimately led to such feelings of shame and disgust that when I was placed in a situation where my misdeeds would have come to light, I felt that I had no alternative but to go down the suicide route. I had always been a drinker, but had never thought of this as anything out of the ordinary – I had always been able to take it or leave it but the pressures that I inflicted on myself at work led to my drinking more often, more heavily, and eventually at work itself. Like every other drinker, I always thought that no-one would know but, in retrospect of course, this was absolute insanity. I can honestly say that the occasion when I drove away with my action would have on my Wife and Children that I could not go through with it.

Something of a turning point arrived when I was taken on by the owner of a Renault dealership in Dudley, primarily as a Service Department Admin Assistant and Driver but welcome as it was, with more security and a regular, reasonable wage, this post also introduced me to a new element in my life. I can well remember walking from work one evening on my way to catch a train at the local station when the colleague I was with stopped at an Off-Licence and recommended that I try what he recommended as ‘rocket-fuel’ – AKA Special Brew and it was at this point that I started my fated relationship with super-strength lager of any type available.

On days when I had not got the use of a car and had to travel by train, it became routine for me to pick up at least one can on the way to the station and my drinking became more regular and heavy. Ultimately, this resulted in me losing that Job when I refused (ironically quite correctly in the circumstances) to drive my employer’s 2 children down to Milton Keynes after he phoned me up. I knew that I’d already had too much to drink.

After a short period of being out of work (I had never, ever bothered to sign on when unemployed – arrogance or what) through my Brother-in-Law I was taken on as a driver for a local Leyland Daf HGV/Lorry/Van dealership where I spent my days driving vans and anything else required up to the 7.5 Tonne limit of my driving licence. This job lasted for a fair while until, having taken the first day off for a while at home and having been drinking all day, I was arrested by the Police for drink-driving going up to the local garage for some Coal for the woodburner – inevitably, this also involved a visit to the off-licence for some more lager supplies. I received a 3 year ban and because I knew that I would have to pass a medical to regain my licence, I never bothered to apply. Obviously, the loss of my licence resulted in another period of unemployment.

I well remember the period of 6 months or so we spent without natural gas for heating and cooking because ‘we’ could not afford to pay for the last load we’d had delivered and used up, let alone afford a refill order – yet, I never went short of my ‘essentials. I managed to drag myself into an employment agency which gave me a few jobs, all well below my capabilities and paying peanuts which I grudgingly took as a means of getting out and earning a bit of money to ‘keep us going’. By this time, my wife had started up a business on her own initiative, again ‘to keep us going’ but in this instance, it was the real ‘us’ not the selfish ‘us’ of my imagination. She combined this with everything else she did as a Wife and Mother, giving everything her all, even to her selfish husband who, despite all his protestations to the contrary, was quite simply existing for little more than himself.

In my next professional job, I had the chance to work for a large fleet management company, driving vans and anything else required up to the 7.5 Tonne limit of my driving licence. This job lasted for a fair while until, having taken the first day off for a while at home and having been drinking all day, I was arrested by the Police for drink-driving. This resulted in me losing my driving licence and because I knew that I would have to take it or leave it but the pressures that I inflicted on myself at work led to my drinking more often, more heavily, and eventually at work itself. Like every other drinker, I always thought that no-one would know but, in retrospect of course, this was absolute insanity. I can honestly say that the occasion when I drove away with my action would have on my Wife and Children that I could not go through with it.

Having come to my senses and returned to the welcoming arms of my family, I spent the next few years with little productivity. During this period, as a result of my criminal behaviour, I endured a little over 8 months on holiday at Her Majesty’s Pleasure but that is another lengthy story.

Looking back on it, I always had enough money for fags and, of course, booze (at that time wine and the occasional scotch or gin) but this was at the expense of my Family.
Someone must have been looking down kindly on me however as a reasonably short time later, I was approached by someone who knew pretty well all of my history but who was prepared to take me on nonetheless, primarily in an admin role in his Opticians Practice, but also dealing with his personal affairs. He and I soon formed a close working relationship to the degree that it is fair to say that I probably knew more about him than his Wife and Family and we were both gutted when he had no alternative but to make me redundant when an extremely ambitious business venture with which I had been closely involved was put into administration.

This gentleman (in all senses of the word) had continued to employ me notwithstanding the fact that he very often questioned me about drinking at work, with the equally inevitable denial on my part.

After a couple of months of inactivity, I went down the job agency route again as, over all the years, I had lost any motivation to give myself a proper kick up the backside to get employment more suited to my qualifications, and I took the easy option, something that those of us in active addiction know only too well. I worked in a call centre for nearly 9 months, not exactly mind-blowingly demanding but certainly mind-blowingly numbing – the only thing that kept me going back was the companionship of the relative youngsters I was working alongside and the fact that there was a pub nearby where we could always go for a lunchtime or an early evening tipple.

I was then approached again out of the blue by my former Optician employer who had sufficient confidence in me to ask whether I would be prepared to go back to work for him in another capacity, as the Glazing Technician coupled with doing a lot of the other business and personal stuff that I had previously done for him. This was something I was happy to do, again it was something well within my capabilities and I suppose that I was chuffed that he, at least, had some confidence in me, which is more than I can say was probably true of my Wife and children at the time, as they had had to endure the intervening years of my drinking, my complete and utter lack of motivation and drive, and the sight of the degeneration of the man who was established that I had broken my right humerus – and no it wasn’t at all funny.

The pain was excruciating and, of course, being right handed, I could not use my arm at all. Even taking all of this into account, I was not sacked, as my Employer had every right to do, but I was given time off on sick-leave at home. This time at home was of course a godsend to me. Having very little else I could do, let alone have any motivation and with a local shop selling Special Brew, Tennents Super or anything else alcoholic literally next door but one (absence of money wasn’t a problem as they would let me have whatever I wanted ‘on the slate’) I could do as little, or drink as much, as I liked, particularly with my Wife’s business keeping her away from home during 3 days and one evening in the week – my computer and the television became my sole points of interest.

In an effort to keep people off my back, I ‘worked’ with the SMT and other agencies, attended AA and other meetings, and made every effort to make it appear that I was really working towards ‘it’, i.e. giving up alcohol. I think that deep down inside myself, there was a real desire to stop but I was in the grip of something far more powerful, and something that permeated far more deeply than anyone, let alone me, realised and, quite simply, I could not let go on my own.

Once my arm had healed sufficiently, I started back at work on a part time basis, but it quickly became obvious to everyone that I was in a far worse state than ever and on the 18th September 2014 (I know the date because it was my birthday), I was taken aside by my employer who said that he had no longer any alternative but to ‘let me go’. It is perhaps an indication of the respect that we had for each other that we embraced and shook hands before I departed.

So, back to square one again. No job, precious few interests apart from alcohol, the computer and the TV and with no married life to speak of, only an exasperated and very angry Wife and children (my eldest, my daughter, had moved away to London probably 10 years previously so never really saw the effects of my addiction, leaving it to my Wife and Son to witness). On top of this was an occasion a few weeks later when I took the dog out for a walk in a less than sober state, fell over and found out 2 weeks later when I eventually was persuaded to see the Doctor that I had a broken Tibia. Well and truly plastered for a few weeks but I could still manage to hobble round to the Shop.
My relationship with my Wife has been shattered probably beyond repair (and that is after nearly 41 years of marriage), and although my relationship with my children is improving, it will be undoubtedly years before they regain any real respect for me. I am now approaching 9 months of sobriety – I live in a comfortable property which I am lucky enough to have had offered to me as part of my recovery programme, have a number of good friends who truly understand and can empathise with me, and I continue to live on a daily basis, taking each day as it comes.

I attend regular fellowship and other meetings and try to occupy myself with other, useful, things. Boredom and loneliness can be our worst enemies. I have resurrected my interest in hobbies that I used to enjoy years ago before my addictive behaviour really became apparent.

I very rarely suffer from urges, but if these do occur, I have been equipped with more than enough tools to deal with them not only by Rehab but also by my recovery programme.

I now have a real, and exciting, future to look forward to and recognise that I may also have a part to play in helping others who have undergone the same issues as me. Now, that is real incentive and motivation.

All this time, I was still actively involved with but still manipulating the SMT. I was put in for another residential detox and this time managed all of 20 minutes at home alone before I succumbed to the temptations of the shop.

2015 was at last to be the year in which something positive happened but it was entirely not of my making. Throughout my ‘struggle’, I never made any decisions myself – it was far easier to go with the flow and do what others suggested. Following months of continued alcohol abuse (not to mention the mental abuse which I inflicted on those around me), regular professional consultations, fellowship meetings and two occasions when Paramedics had to be called to the house, it was eventually decided (for me, not by me) that I should go into Rehab.

I had my last drink on the 1st August (my Wife caught me with the flask of Scotch I had bought which ended up being poured all over me in bed) and went into Rehab on the 4th – for 3 months, or so I thought as this was the only period of time that had ever been mentioned to me.

Rehab is perhaps the hardest thing I have ever endured but, at the same time, the most valuable. As time goes by and with an open mind, the true results of an addict’s actions become evident not only on that addict but also those around him or her (the ripple effect) and one is able to appreciate and absorb everything that the rehab programme has to offer. It also becomes clearer that just as Rome was not built in one day, then our relationships and all the damage we have caused cannot be put right as quickly as we thought might be possible.