

Account from a patient in Astley Ainslie Hospital in 2001

In July 2001 I was playing bagpipe in Princes street to attract folk to a ceilidh. I felt something go wrong in my head. Someone put a coin in my hand so I thought I must be playing OK & continued. Then I went in to the then Overseas League, sat down & told the ceilidh organiser that I could not stand up again. He sent for an Ambulance. I was taken to the Royal Infirmary then transferred to Liberton Hospital. I had had a stroke [brain bleed in this case]. I had another bleed in Liberton Hospital and became conscious again, ? about two weeks later, in the Western General. A Greek Registrar [junior doctor] had drilled a hole in my head to let pressure out. When the Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon saw me still alive he turned and bowed to the Greek doctor [who may have given me another 19 years of life!]. After a time I was transferred to the Astley Ainslie for care and rehabilitation.

Fortunately for me I still had speech and memory [except for the time in the Western General before I "woke"] I was in a large old-fashioned ward with lots of other folk. I was bored - visitors were welcome and many came. A ceilidh band, which I had played with, occasionally came and played in the day room . Initially I was in a wheel chair and my wife would visit and wheel me round the grounds. There was a cafeteria where we could have coffee and cake. Later I was able to stand and re-learn to walk. I was a bit jealous of [about] one year old grandson Alexander who was also learning to walk. When he had had enough he could sit down on his nappy. I had to find a bed or chair to collapse onto. Physiotherapists and Occupational therapists helped in rehabilitation. I would catch rings or balls thrown by them and practice ways of getting up from the floor [such as crawling to a bit of furniture then climbing up it - my idea, not the official way]. I also had some cookery lessons. I was taken to a house, containing a stair built for the purpose, and made to learn how to go up and down carrying walking sticks, occasionally a "clap dog" visited and was popular. While there I saw, on the ward TV, the "9/11" [11 September 2001] attacks on the "twin towers". Food was generally OK [? brought from a distance and re-heated]. I got my wife to bring in tin whistles and practised tunes for bagpipe [which I play for dancing at ceilidhs] on the veranda - out of earshot of others. I noticed wild black rabbits in the grounds [hope they still have a home there].

After I had left some occupational therapists attended a ceilidh where was playing bagpipe [bellows blown version - I got back to "normal" Highland Bagpipe later] and were pleased to see a result of rehabilitation.