From the Negative to the Positive
8 January – 2 February
Gallery Oldham has been working with “The Ragamuffins” a group of local people with dementia. From workshops led by the artists Ian Beesley, Tony Husband and Ian McMillan they have created an exhibition of photography, cartoons, and poems that express their thoughts, hopes and experiences. Image below by Ian Beesley.

BBC Civilisations
2 March – 31 March
A special display linking Gallery Oldham’s collections to the new BBC TV series.

From the negative to the positive
Exhibition
Gallery Oldham 8 January to 2 February 2018
From the negative to the positive

As part of the Improving Dementia Experience And Living research project led by the University of Exeter. Gallery Oldham has been working with “The ragamuffins” a group of local people with dementia. From workshops led by the artists
Ian Beesley - photographer
Tony Husband - cartoonist
Ian McMillan - poet
they have created this exhibition of photography, cartoons, and poems that express their thoughts, hopes and experiences.
MEMORIES
Oldham tight
Or they blow away
Like smoke from a mill chimney.
THAT RINGS A BELL

That rings a bell.
That takes me back
Before last week
Fell down a crack,
Before last year
Just walked away
I’m who I am
So let me say
Don’t fade to black
In this deep well
That takes me back
That rings a bell.

_That rings a bell._

That rings a bell.
That takes me back
Before last week
Fell down a crack,
Before last year
Just walked away
I’m who I am
So let me say
Don’t fade to black
In this deep well
That takes me back
That rings a bell.

_That takes me back._

_That rings a bell._
SEEING CLEARLY

It’s a line of sight
That helps you see clearly;
Same time every night
Or almost, or nearly

You walk your old faithful
Across to the park;
She barks and you’re grateful
She’s here in the dark

And time is a pattern
Of songs on repeat
Till your walking is over
The routine’s complete.
One of the highlights of my monthly cycle of life is the meeting of the 'Ragamuffins' group.

The group comprises of those of us with 'memory problems' (which of course covers a wide variety of issues) and our nearest and dearest who carry the coveted title of 'carers'.

The group meets at the Central Library in Oldham and the first thing to strike one is the light hearted yet positive atmosphere which prevails.

In no time at all we are treated to friendly, humorous and often thought provoking chats on subjects such as local history and customs, all ably led by the skilful guidance of Ian McMillan, Ian Beesley and Tony Husband.

These chats in themselves stimulate participation throughout the group with members often feeling delighted that their medium or long term memory is being given a boost! It must also be said that such a 'boost' is both encouraged and managed by the aforementioned three gentlemen!

There is also the collective benefit to the group as a whole of memories being rejuvenated on times and issues perhaps long forgotten! Such recollections are both therapeutic and stimulating and it is interesting to see the frequent change in demeanour that often manifests itself among so many of those attending within a short period of time.

As is the case with many forms of group activity, the acid test lies in a blind assessment as to value and benefit and in the case of the 'Ragamuffins' there can be absolutely no doubt that the benefit factor may be summed up as OSMM (organised stimulation of mind and mood).

Terry
Founder member of the Ragamuffins
FROM THE NEGATIVE TO THE POSITIVE

From the diagnosis to the changing
From the losing to the finding

From the denying to the accepting
From the crying to the laughing

From the caterpillar
To the butterfly.

From the pinching shoes to the comfy slippers
From the bony fish to the filleted kippers

From the dirty washing to the flapping line
From a wheelbarrow to a limousine

From the horse-drawn wagon
To the Jaguar.

From drowning to swimming
From frowning to grinning
From a steep fall to a gentle glide
From the outside
To the inside.
THE QUESTIONS, THE ANSWERS

How does Memory walk?
Like this:
*Holds on to the handrail*
*Appears to move*
*Both ways at once*
*Ending up somewhere*
*And nowhere*

What does Memory say?
It says:
*Each word is shaped like yesterday*
*Or the day before.*
*Each sentence is shorter*
*Than you thought it would be*
*When you started it today.*
The Answers, the Questions

How does memory dance
Like this
Across a sunny morning
Where everything is waltzing
To vibrant welcome music
That teaches you to fly

How does memory sing
It sings
Of all the happy times
I’ve had along the way
These echoes of my past
They’re with me everyday
This is not a reminiscence project. Re-membering practices, within narrative therapy, are not about reminiscing but about relationships and witnessing the effects of those relationships and connections. It is a special form of re-collecting.

Here, each month, Ian, Tony and Ian have collected an amazing aural and visual smorgasbord. They have provided a safe fun context for people labelled with a dementia and their carers to come together. They have gathered to re-collect their memories, to laugh and to create and in doing so relationships and connections have been built. Profound issues and themes have been addressed with a lightness of touch.

In creating and witnessing each other all are members and re-membered into the fabric of the community. When we hear and see this work we too cannot help but be changed. It has been a journey from negative stereotypes to the positive relationships. I am honoured, along with DEEP (Dementia Engagement Empowerment Project) to have helped this to happen and get brief glimpses of its evolution.

Community psychology at its best

Polly Kaiser – Consultant Clinical psychologist
Pennine Care Oldham
Here, in this room,
With flipcharts and coffee
And tea and chocolate cake
And cameras and cheese tart
We sat around the tables
And made room for our memories
To sit down beside us.

MONDAY MEMORIES
GET INTO A ROUTINE

Get into a routine, slowly,
Like you might get into a new suit.
A route through your life,
A beaten path

From morning to evening.
From first cuppa
To last kettle on,
From 8 o’clock news

To late-night weather,
From kids off to school
To last bus passing
Off to the depot

Like it does every night
In its own routine
That’s just like yours.
To remember my mobile phone number

I rise and shine each morning
I think of good times that have been.
I don't need to rise at 06

But can sleep till 814.

And 24 hours make up the day.

38 is the house next door

And 14 is where I used to live
But I don't live there no more
PHOTOGRAPHS
In this hand,
A black and white past

To help you remember

A colourful life

And how it developed
THE HOUSE OF MEMORY

Remembering is a window:
You have to clean it, then you can see.

Remembering is a front door:
You have to knock hard before you enter.

Remembering is a freezer:
You can take things out to defrost them.

Remembering is a settee:
You can sink in and you can doze off.

Remembering is a cupboard:
Full of things you haven’t used yet.

Remembering is a bedroom:
The dreams are sweet and fragrant.
Feathers this close:
You could touch them.

Owl, low
Over Oldham’s Streets.
Wings sing
Across Oldham’s Air.
Low owl
By wash day
Sheets.
Eyes bright
In memory’s Glare.

A life this close;
Let me touch it.
THE FRAMEWORK

Each day has its meaning
Monday is for washing
Tuesday is for ironing
Wednesday half-day closing
And each day has its meaning
And Thursday is for payday
Friday is for dancing
Saturday’s for football
And Sunday is for praying
That each day keeps its meaning
And each day stops me thinking
Of my own half-day closing.
Go see #fromthenegativetothepositive exhibition @GalleryOldham @IMcMillan @tonyhusband1 @lanBeesleyphoto #livingwithdementia #dementia #dementiasupport #realpeople #engagingwiththearts #artsengagement #loveoldham
Fabulous fun creative work from @IMcMillan @IanBeesley @tonyhusband1 @GalleryOldham #loveOldham @PennineCareNHS @DementiaVoices @ReinhardGuss helping to reduce the stigma of dementia. Proud to have been a small part and at launch. Great stuff!
New exhibition @GalleryOldham officially opened by @IanBeesleyphoto @IMcMillan @tonyhusband1 part of #ALifeMoreOrdinary project