

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.





## 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.



Ian McMillan  
@IMcMillan

Following



@GalleryOldham with @IanBeesleyphoto and @tonyhusband1 ready to make positives from negatives with the memory gang!



2:23 AM - 18 Sep 2017

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*

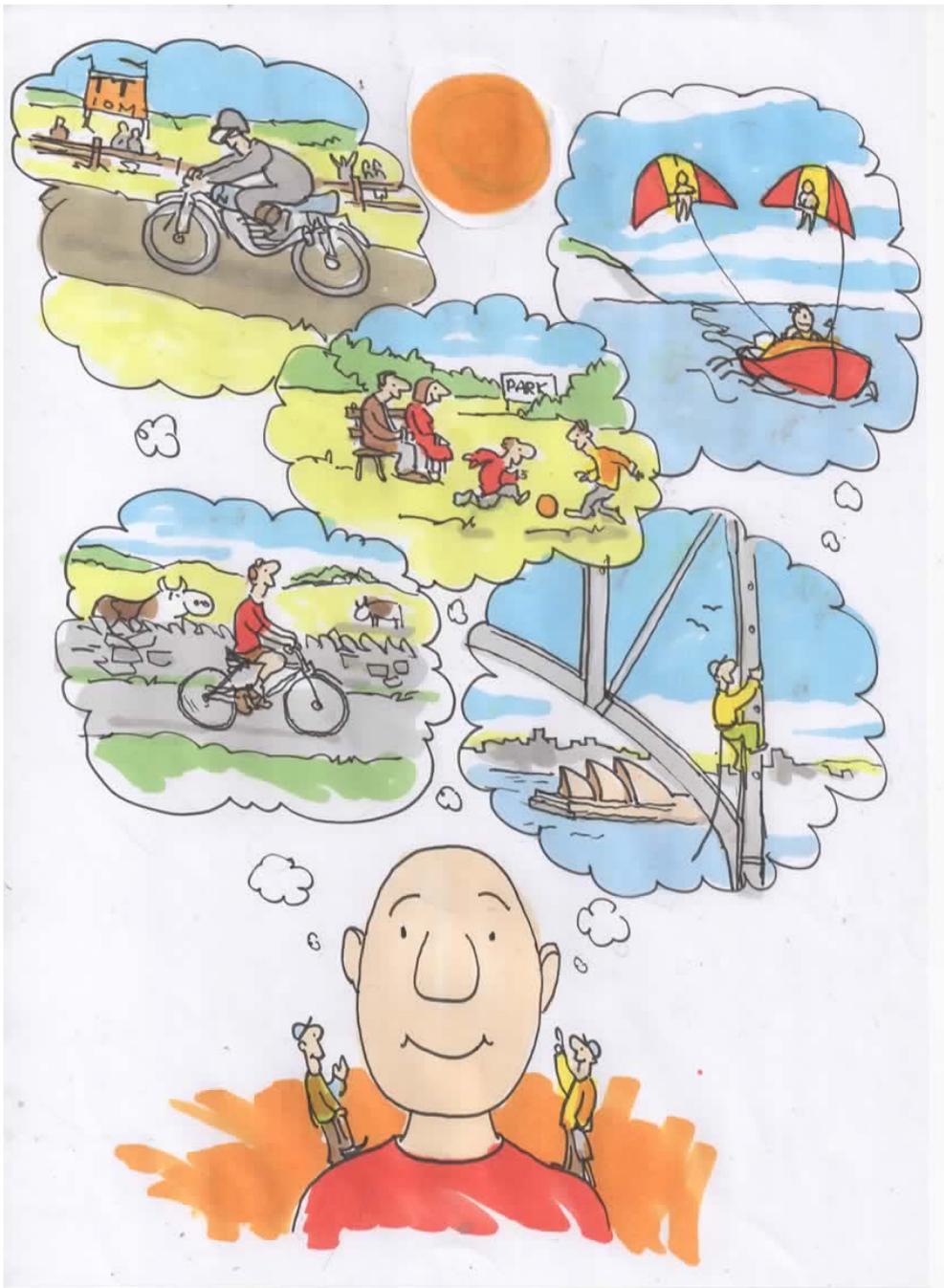
*Or the day before.*

*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





## **MONDAY MEMORIES**

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.

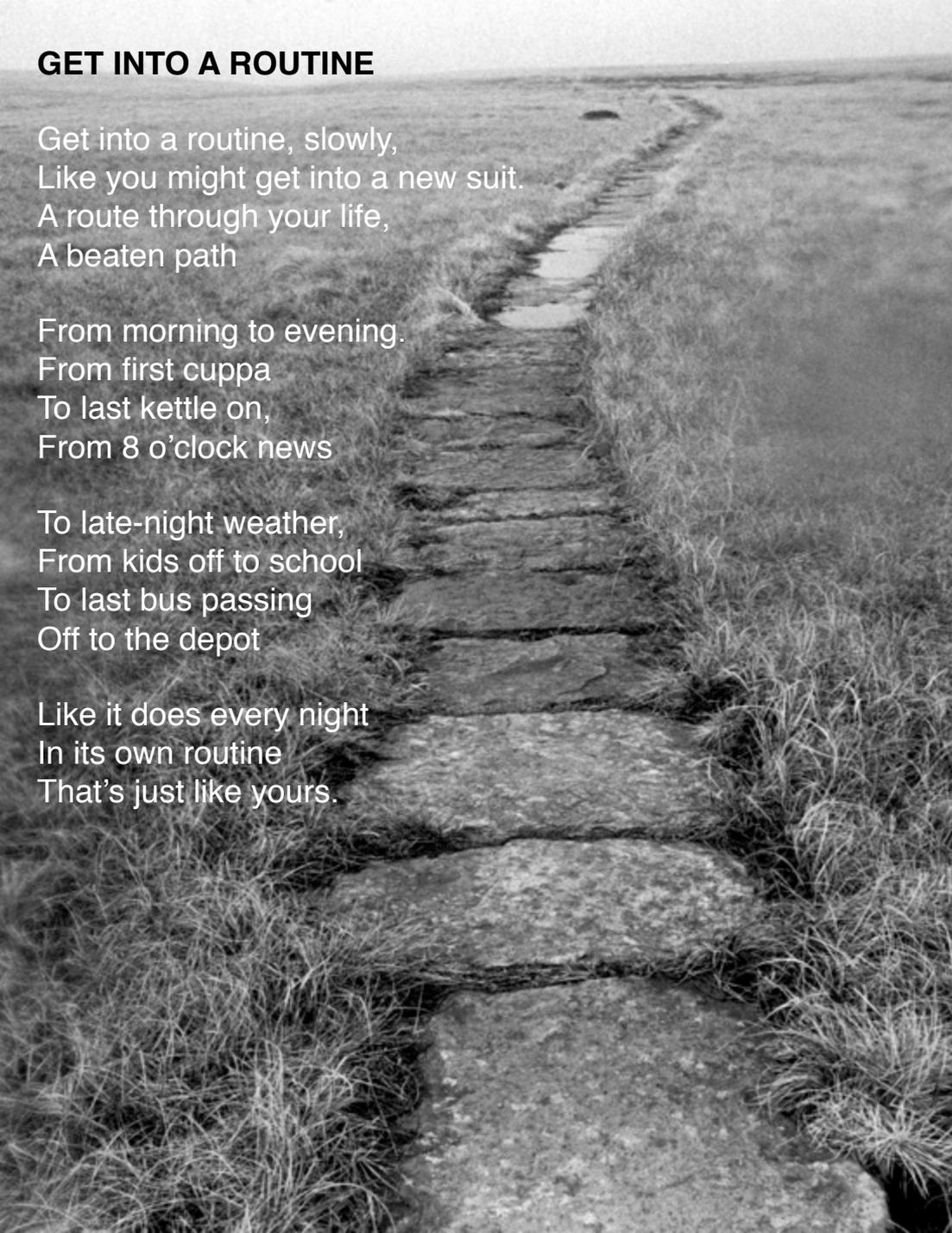
## GET INTO A ROUTINE

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

06

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

814

But can sleep till **814**.

24

And **24** hours make up the day.

38

**38** is the house next door

14

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.

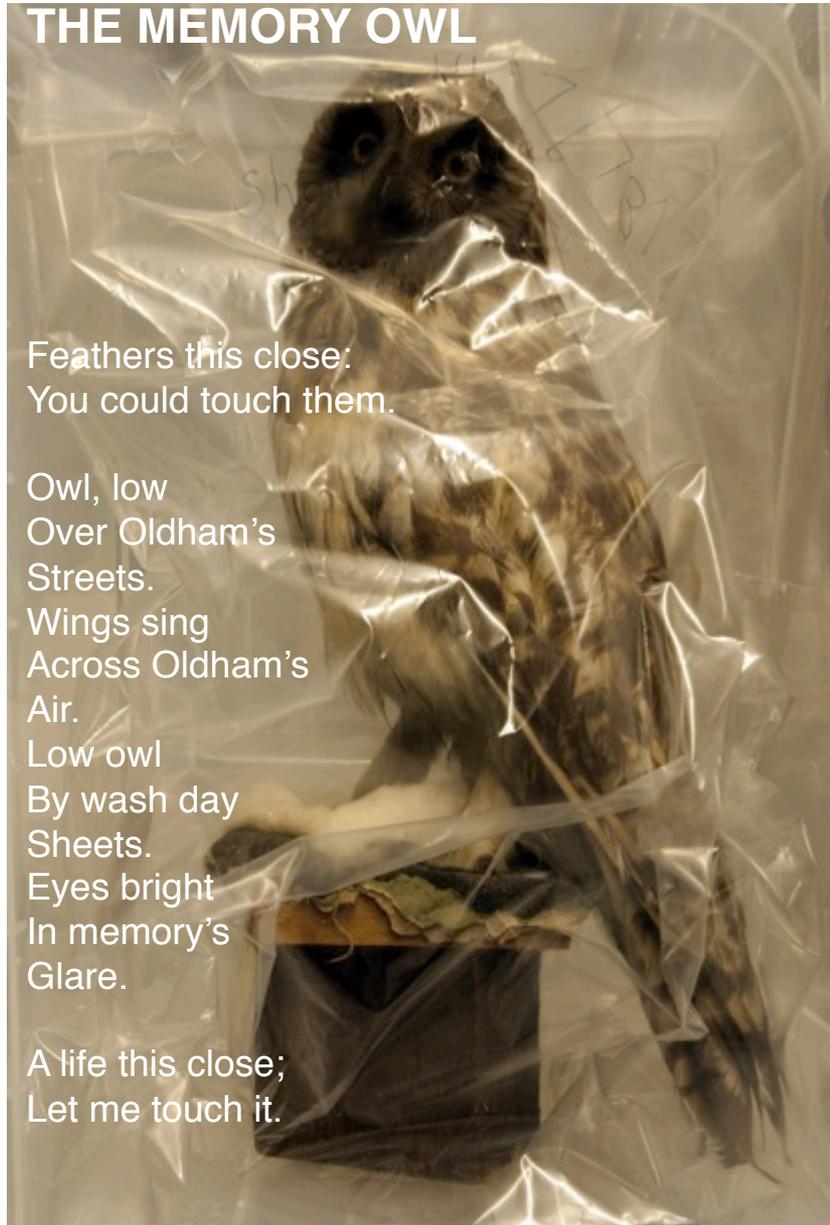
## THE MEMORY OWL

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.



# 2014



## 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.



Issie Howard

@Issie\_HC21

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Go see #fromthenegativetothepositive  
exhibition @GalleryOldham @IMcMillan  
@tonyhusband1 @IanBeesleyphoto  
#livingwithdementia #dementia  
#dementiasupport #realpeople  
#engagingwiththearts #artsengagement  
#loveoldham



9:55 AM - 17 Jan 2018



Polly Kaiser

@pollykaiser

Following



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!



1:03 AM - 9 Jan 2018



**IDEAL study**

@IDEALStudyTweet

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New exhibition @GalleryOldham officially opened by @IanBeesleyphoto @IMcMillan @tonyhusband1 part of #ALifeMoreOrdinary project



6:37 AM - 8 Jan 2018

<http://www.galleryoldham.org.uk/from-the-negative-to-the-positive/>

[http://www.idealproject.org.uk/media/universityofexeter/schoolofpsychology/ideal/documents/from the negative to the positive.pdf](http://www.idealproject.org.uk/media/universityofexeter/schoolofpsychology/ideal/documents/from_the_negative_to_the_positive.pdf)