



Helen's Story

I never thought I would ever have to check into somewhere like The Rutland - in no derogatory slight to this centre in particular, I mean I never thought I'd have to darken the doors as a patient in The Rutland, The Priory, or any rehab centre at all. I mean look at me, I'm 36 years old, handsome enough looking girl, working in finance - doesn't sound like your typical addict does it now?

Maybe that's because there are a few words missing in that description of me - lovingly worded by myself I may add! So let's try it again, with an added dash of truth and dollop of "I don't want anyone to know THIS part of me but...".

I'm 36 years old; I say I could look a lot younger & healthier had I not drank myself to oblivion nearly every day for the last five years. I work in finance - when I manage to get to work that is as I've lost many a job over the years because I abused alcohol. Now that I've laid at least one page bare I'll soldier on because for me, admitting being an alcoholic (the word still makes me pause and think it belongs to an uncle who only visits the family house once a year to drink the entire bottle of sherry), is extremely humbling and entirely uplifting at the same time.

Once you admit it, recognize the disease, there's a freedom from the pain no substance on earth can give you. I've tried most at this stage, trust me enough to read on.

I'm a recovery baby as I write this, I completed the ten week outpatient group in The Rutland Centre relatively recently and the fact that I did that, completely sober, is one of the most amazing achievements of my life. I say one because another one will be when my days in this world are wrapping up and I'll be able to say I've been sober since today, the day I write this.

I don't want to die because of anything to do with alcohol....unless it's something terribly unlucky like I was power walking on a marble floor and some eejit spilled a glass of drink on it and I fall and knock the stuffing out of myself. And as an alcoholic, I do still have that sense of "it could only happen to me" self-pity - like I said, I'm on the mend, not cured!

I started drinking in my teens - like every other Irish person, right? I drank nagins of vodka illicitly obtained from the parents drinks press or the local village just turned 18 year old who'd go in and get it for you from the "off-oh", and a very special mention to homemade ID cards which I believe you wouldn't be able to take out a library book with them these days, the state of them.

I grew up - physically, but mentally I stayed in the teenage time zone for so many years after, my friends went to college at 18 whereas I went to work, and quite soon found my feet in finance and by all means I became quite successful - I ticked every parents box: always smiling, good permanent job, good prospects. I was in my twenties and loved going in the ever cosmopolitan Dublin, little did I know I'd grow from my roaring twenties to ultimately, my roaring drunk thirties. The signs were there, I was always the 'maddest' on nights out, got separated from the group, couldn't remember a stitch the next day when friends or work mates talked about the previous night's goings on. And whereas all their hangovers seemed to be solely physically related - banging headaches and bad tummies, mine was always psychological.

Anxiety would cripple me and in my subconscious addictive state the only answer was, of course, another drink! I got through my twenties fairly intact, managed a few relationships and left jobs because I wanted to, but it was the start of my thirties when I met someone I thought I would marry, and subsequently lost because of my

drinking, then that the 'hair of the dog' prescription took me on a road I never want to set foot on again.

Not soon after this relationship breakdown I also lost my job; I still can't to this day differentiate which hurt me worst, losing that job or my relationship. I started drinking with more and more disdain to "rules" as in - don't drink on a school night, don't drink in the morning - who cares I thought?! My beloved Granny shuffled on up to the big bingo hall in heaven around this time and like a cuckoo in the nest, I ensconced myself in her empty house.

With no job, I spent the next year drinking. Just drinking.

I avoided contact as much as possible, I didn't want to be around people who would see how bad I was. I wasn't a 'bad' person, I just let things get bad - my health, looks, finance, and above all else my relationships with people in my life.

The house was eventually sold and thus heralded the extent of alcoholism to my parents' house where I moved into as I'd no money to live independently.

After two years of living at home, and of course I use the term living in the most basic sense - I slept there, ate maybe, avoided talk and took off for days on end on benders around the country so I could be alone with my secret lover - alcohol.

A close family member died suddenly last year and the shock this, and seeing it break my parent's hearts still didn't stop my spiralling downwards drinking. I kept on at it, sure didn't I just lose someone close, and who'd blame me?! I blamed me, I knew then if I losing someone that I looked up to all my life but never reached out to, couldn't stop me drinking then I was indeed in very real danger.

In June of this year another family member brought me to The Rutland Centre. I had agreed, just for peace, to go and had no more wanting to be there. There I met Gerry, I wanted to plámas him, tell him I was grand and it was just my family over reacting. But there in that room I found I was so tired of lying, so tired of scheming and justifying it all. Gerry was kind, never shocked, just understanding. I was

accepted onto the Rutland outpatient program. It was the best and worst news - best because it'd keep my family off my back, worst because I'd have to stop drinking.

So then I embarked on a ten week journey, I had just started a new job the exact same time and I expected disaster - but unbeknownst to me, when you don't drink and don't lie, things actually work out - what's the catch?! None! Well besides abstinence but that doesn't seem like a catch when life starts to improve right before your eyes.

I had one to one sessions where I was guided to open up about why I drank, and always pointed out the good things I have going myself when I clearly couldn't see them for myself. I was advised that I needed to build something new for myself; a new life, or more so new ways of living the life I have - I thought I'd be happy to go back to being the old me - the goodest of good time girls who was happy go lucky until she wasn't - but I can't go back to that, I have to introduce new approaches and styles to keep me from reverting to the isolation I found at the bottom of a pint glass.

It's extremely hard and humbling to look for help, moreso to accept; but I was and am truly awe struck at the compassion and understanding the staff in The Rutland treat everyone with. You become part of a team and that team wants to win, I urge anyone who is experiencing addiction to take that step and get in touch, you may feel like you've no place in the world now but with their help you'll realize just how worthwhile and deserving of a wonderful life you are.