

William Graham Gold is a 59 years old man who resides in Dumfries. He is divorced and has a son and a daughter. His son lives with him and helps him run their farm and livestock business.

Questions directed to Graham Gold at the conference

When did you first notice a problem with your memory?

Around 3 –4 years ago, my family/friends and myself noticed difficulties with short-term memory. Being a farmer I couldn't count the sheep in the field on my farm. Something that was previously instinctive.

Tell me about the Memory Clinic experience.

Around 2 years ago now, I went to my doctor and I relayed my difficulties. He took blood and referred me to the Memory Clinic; I was unaware of its existence. In a few months I was seen at Dumfries under 65's Memory Clinic. I went for a scan and then a diagnosis of Alzheimer's was given soon afterwards. I was offered ongoing appointments with my consultant and I currently see him every three months. At first it was a great shock to realise I had this disease and I had severe anxieties. The first lot of drugs gave me bad side effects i.e. hallucinations. I am now on another Memory drug, which I tolerate well along with anxiety tablets. I realise that other areas are not so good at giving out medication and do not even have a Memory Clinic, which is a good resource.

How does having dementia change your life?

Not much change, but I have noticed friends and acquaintances have stopped visits and coming over to chat. Due to my memory being poor it has been hard for me to hold conversation. I have however become less stern and serious as a person and have become more jovial as a person. I can now enjoy a good joke where previously my personality was different. I was a frumpy old man!!

How do you cope with the illness? What helps? What hinders you?

What helps - A good attitude that life is not over. Using calendars etc. Keeping a routine and maintaining my skills for as long as possible. I still drive and buy and sell livestock. I do all aspects of daily living unsupported i.e. cooking, cleaning and personal care. (not ironing)

What hinders – More people look at me now knowing that I have difficulties with my short-term memory. I can go blank without warning, sometimes it comes back quickly, sometimes it doesn't, and then I get frustrated.

With the support of my family, Memory Clinic Link Worker, GP and consultant, I feel I can cope with anything. I had an Occupational Therapist assessment. I now have a Power of Attorney in place and all benefits entitled to me, due to my support with the Memory Clinic's. I am not fearful of the future and I want people to know I live a full and eventful life.