

The Children's Society

Marystowe Church is delighted to be supporting The Children's Society again at Christmas 2023.

We have chosen to highlight their work through real life records of children they have helped for over 140 years. Stories in pink and blue are from the present day. Stories in yellow are from their archive around the turn of the Nineteenth century. The wording, spelling and attitudes are as found in the archives. They reflect the time when these children needed help.

The stories are represented by the cuddly characters here in the Church. Please help support by giving a donation. If you are moved by a particular story, or their character then you may make a specific donation in the envelopes provided, please mark the envelope with the name of the character and leave us your name and contact details.

We hope all the cuddly characters will be rehomed for Christmas. They will go to the highest donation made in their name. Their new homes will be decided at our Christmas evening on 16th December.

**THANK YOU FOR READING THE STORIES AND FOR ANY DONATION YOU
FEEL ABLE TO MAKE.**

**PLEASE NOTE THESE HAVE BEEN DONATED TO US AND WE CANNOT THEREFORE BE CONFIDENT
THEY ARE SUITABLE AS TOYS.**

Please contact Joy (01822 860630) or Amy (01822 860181) with any questions.

HAYLEY



Hayley was bought sweets, phones and given compliments by a neighbour for five years, she didn't realise she was being groomed. Then one day when he repaired her phone, he said she needed to repay him. *"He wouldn't let me out, he locked all the doors"* In one afternoon Hayley's world was torn apart. She was too afraid to speak to anyone about what had happened. She blamed herself. Hayley believed the only way she could end it was by harming herself. After a stay in hospital, she was referred to one of The Children's Society project workers who specialise in child sexual abuse and trauma. Learning coping techniques Hayley started to hope again. *"The most important thing that I have learned is to love myself and that I need to stop putting myself down. I am a nice person. I've learnt that."*

A few years ago, Andrew was just 13 when he and his family witnessed a terrifying attack that claimed 16 lives and left over 100 injured. They fled the scene and hid in a nearby café.

Afterwards, he really struggled with his mental health. After receiving therapy from one of The Children's Society specialist practitioners he was able to process his traumatic memories safely. Now he feels like what happened that day has helped him to feel grateful about life. It has given him a new sense of purpose and motivation to help others.

"I was so paranoid that another attack might happen...I was afraid and found public spaces too scary to be in"

ANDREW



ALYSSA



When she was younger Alyssa would watch her dad hit her mum. Other times he would hit her too. They moved away, and Alyssa was excited to leave it all behind. However, she began to be bullied in her new school. She kept her emotions bottled up and would then have serious outbursts of anger. *"I didn't know how to cope"*. Alyssa's mum contacted the Children's Society and Alyssa has a weekly meeting with a therapist who *"...brought back the Alyssa that I knew that I love..."* Alyssa now chats to her friends, she is calm; if she feels herself getting anxious or panicked, she knows what to do *"I've learned that I don't have to be perfect for anyone. I don't need to change the way I am because someone else doesn't like it"*

Matthew's parents split up and he was forced to move across the country with his mum. He was lonely and life felt uncertain. He found the sense of belonging through a group of 'friends'. They gave him drugs, they were robbing houses and people, they were selling drugs. Matthew knew it was wrong, but he didn't want to be alone; the drug use led to admission to hospital. Then Matthew was introduced to one of The Children's Society specialist substance misuse practitioners. Over weekly meetings Matthew began to trust because he was being seen for the person he is, not his past. Step-by-step they worked on rebuilding his life. It meant so much to him to know there was someone out there that wanted to help.

He says *"She knows how much she has done for me. I've told her enough times. She saved my life. That's all I can really say."*

MATTHEW



KIRSTY



At a young age Kirsty was abused. She would self-harm as a way of coping. Kirsty toughed it out alone. Kirsty enjoyed chatting with 'friends' she found on social media, but these on-line friends were not harmless. Kirsty was referred to one of The Children's Society project workers who specialises in helping children understand grooming. After working together for a while, they developed a bond. Kirsty finally felt able open up about the earlier abuse she suffered.

"I did a lot of work about self-esteem with The Children's Society, which is still work in progress, and we worked on relationships and what a good relationship is."

No one wants to believe it will happen to their child. But when Sam's son Daniel took two overdoses in a week, he knew they needed help. His son nearly lost his life to depression, anxiety and substance use. After searching online, Sam found our family support group. Then when Daniel got home from rehab, they started sessions with a project worker from The Children's Society.

Sam *'Initially I thought, why would it help me? It's my son that's got the problem. But then I realised I needed to talk about things too.'* Sam found hope *"Hope is keeping the light on no matter how dark it is. Even if you've only got a little bit of light on, don't ever extinguish that flame"*.

Today, Daniel is full of energy and enthusiasm. He laughs easily, his smile wide and eyes crinkling at the corners. He looks free.

DANIEL



MOLLY



"From the age of about 10 I've been looking after my mum (she has a slipped disc and pacemaker), My nan (registered blind), my dad (he had a head injury and has no memory) and my stepdad (he had an aortic valve replacement that went wrong)." Molly cooks, cleans, picks up the medicine and makes sure the bills are paid. Being a young carer impacted her ability to attend school, study after school, make friends and socialise with other children.

Luckily Molly was referred to The Children's Society's young carer programme "It helps to give young carers a break... which we so desperately need...through ...meetings and trips to take our mind off things, like the annual Young Carers Festival."

Molly discovered a life beyond caring. When she left school, she went to university and graduated with a first-class degree in journalism.

"There are people who will do everything to get young carers to find their goals, to get them to where they need to be, and what they want to be."

Some of Leila's earliest memories are of her mum experiencing domestic violence.

"...my mum brought me and my siblings to the UK in search of safety...It was an uncertain, intimidating time, and we lived in fear of being sent back." The big change came when they met project workers from The Children's Society. "They were friendly and kind and offered us the support we needed. They helped us find ways to feel safe and secure in our new lives."

Leila received care and support from The Children's Society practitioners. Piece by piece, she was able to rebuild her life.

Leila went to university, graduated and now works for The Children's Society

LEILA



H was 5 when he was placed in a Children's Home. H. was illegitimate. He had been born in Marylebone Workhouse. There was no knowledge of his father and his mother's health was poor. In 1905, when H was 20, he wrote to his supervisor to let her know about his life. The Children's Society have the letter he wrote:

Dear Miss, Your humble servant H. takes the opportunity & thinks it his duty to write and let you know how I am getting on, and also to thank you for the many kindnesses you have done for me, I am getting on very well in my new place & I like it very much. The Colonel & Mrs. P. are very kind to me, the Colonel has given me one suit of clothes since I have been here. Dear Miss, I lodge at the farm with Mrs C., & I pay her 11s per week, I have everything done for me, and I am very comfortable. I have joined Puttenham Choir & the Colonel is very pleased, it is rather a long way to walk but I do not mind that. The first few Sundays I felt very lonely but I am alright now. Hodgsden the gardner & me gets on very well together now. Since I have been in the choir we have had two treats. We went to the Countess's to supper one night. And we went to Barnum & Bailey's show at Aldershot Wishing you a happy Christmas & again thanking you for your kindness to me I remain

*your obedient servant
H.*

HAROLD



EDGAR



E. came from a home described as "destitute, wretched and deplorable". He had only one eye and was poorly fed and clothed. In December 1889 he was fostered by a couple in Norfolk. In 1892 E's mother wanted him back and he was reluctantly returned to her. In March 1893 he was again put into the Society's care, and he returned to live with his foster family in Norfolk. In 1897, aged about 13, he was working as a bricklayer. In 1911 it was reported that he was still living in same community as his foster parents.

Extract letter from Miss Cholmeley, St. Andrew's House, Hertford dated 24th Feb. 1911

"The boy who came to Carleton Rode in Norfolk was E. He had only one eye, his mother took him away at one time, but then let him return. He is now a pattern young man to the parish, and so good to his foster-mother."

ARTHUR



A. was illegitimate and his mother was indifferent to him, he lived with his grandfather and an aunt. When he was 9 years old A. had one of his legs amputated at the thigh because of tubercular disease of the knee joint. He made a good recovery from the operation and was able to get about on crutches. A clergyman applied for the boy to be put in a Children's Home because it was considered the boy's relations were "rough and without moral instincts." He felt that A. would do best away from his home surroundings with the possibility in due course of learning a trade. He was "bright and intelligent and good and docile." A. trained as a tailor and the Home found him a place in Hatherleigh, Devon. He settled well in Devon and was helped by people who took an interest in his welfare. The Children's Society have a letter written by a local benefactor with regard to his progress and wish to have a cork leg.

Dear Mr Rudolf,
A.

Thank you so much for all the trouble you are taking. the lad is earning 8/. a month at present & has already begun his savings book ready to help buy the cork leg! I do hope you will be able to get some Surgical Aid "Letters" - it is good of you to be so interested.

*Yours sincerely
Editha Peter.*

S. was illegitimate and nothing was known about her father. Her mother married "a respectable fellow in the Army" and he was willing to take responsibility for the care of S. In due course a child was born to the couple. One day the man went out to his work and on his return found his wife had committed suicide. He was later ordered to return to Barracks and having much smaller wages found he could no longer support S., especially as he had to provide for his own child. The child's relations were unable to help and because of the circumstances of her birth no claim could be made on them. S. was admitted to the Victoria Home, she was 9 years old. The Children's Society records include part of a letter about S. written in November 1915. Stating that "*the girl has been trained as a nurse and has passed her 6 months probation with flying colours.*"

SARAH



AGNES



A. was illegitimate. Her father was drowned shortly after her birth. After the death of A's father her mother married and had further children. Her stepfather was cruel to A. and beat her severely. Having 7 other children by her husband, A's mother had her placed in a Children's Home. The ill treatment may have contributed to her restricted growth. In December 1888 the Home arranged for her to be placed in service, the children of the family she worked for wrote about her and The Children's Society have the letter.

Sir,

I am writing on behalf of A who entered the service of my father & mother forty years ago today - when they died, she remained on with me, so its forty years in one family, I think this is almost a record is it not? When she had completed fourteen years, your Society sent her a Certificate for faithful service, at twenty-one years, they sent her a guinea. Mrs. Fitzgerald the Master at Wimbledon who trained her has unfortunately passed on, but I believe the Rev. Rudolf is still alive & he no doubt would feel interested to know that A is well & still in the same family, though living at Clacton

Yours sincerely,